Security, Conflict and Cooperation in the Contemporary World

Roy Jenkins and the European Commission Presidency, 1976–1980

At the Heart of Europe

N. PIERS LUDLOW

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I am also very conscious of my debt to the numerous fellow historians who have helped me to immerse myself in the history of the 1970s. It does not seem too long ago that I used jokingly to claim that this decade

was the one in the post-war period about which I knew least, as I was too young to remember the politics of the decade, and had confined my own research to Western Europe of the 1950s and 1960s. In helping to change this state of affairs, I am grateful to Emma de Angelis, Lindsay Aqui, Liz Benning, Matthew Broad, Jan-Willem Brouwer, Eric Bussière, Maria Chen, Marie-Julie Chenard, Lucia Coppolaro, Véronique Dimier, Vincent Dujardin, Michel Dumoulin, Kenneth Dyson, James Ellison, Jürgen Elvert, Daniel Furby, Giuliano Garavini, Aurélie Gfeller, Tanya Harmer, Jan van der Harst, Mathias Häussler, Martin Herzer, Matthew Jones, Eirini Karamouzi, Johnny Laursen, Wilfried Loth, Ivo Maes, Guia Migani, Daniel Möckli, Emmanuel Mourlon-Druol, Leopoldo Nuti, Helen Parr, Kiran Patel, Silvio Pons, Morten Rasmussen, Angela Romano, Federico Romero, Sarah Snyder, Kristina Spohr, Guido Thiemeyer, Antonio Varsori, Laurent Warlouzet, Arne Westad, Andreas Wilkens, and Vlad Zubok. As will be explained in the introduction, I owe particular thanks to my colleagues in the HistCom2 project without whom I might not have started to write this book at all. At the other end of the project, both James Ellison and Jan van der Harst showed exceptional generosity and goodwill in agreeing to read the torrent of draft chapters with which I showered them in the course of the summer of 2015. Their comments were very helpful and deeply reassuring, although I remain fully responsible for any errors that slipped past their keen-eyed scrutiny. And I should thank my department and the LSE for allowing me the year of sabbatical leave during which the research for this book was largely completed and the first half of the volume written.

Finally, I must thank my family. My parents were fantastic hosts on my numerous visits to Brussels, and also proved very patient with their distracted son in his last frenetic sprint to finish the book while staying with them on an Umbrian hilltop. There was something highly appropriate in finishing the book in such a location—Jenkins used to do much of his own writing while ostensibly on holiday in various beautiful houses around Mediterranean Europe—but it cannot have made me the easiest of guests. Lydia and Eva did not seem to object too much to being abandoned to the company of their cousins and grandparents. And Morwenna has, as always, been a constant source of advice, perspective, proof-reading, encouragement, and much more besides. The prospect of a much-needed Italian holiday with all three of them, meanwhile, was the best possible spur for the final highly productive period of writing.

Exeter, September 2, 2015

Contents

List of Abbreviations

AAPD	Akten zur Auswärtigen Politik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland
ACP	African, Caribbean, and Pacific
AN	Archives Nationales, Pierrefitte, Paris, France
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BBQ	British Budgetary Question
BDT	Bande de transmission
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CDU	Christlich Demokratische Union
CFP	Common Fisheries Policy
CMA	Council of Ministers Archive, Brussels
COM	Communication (Commission document)
COMECON	Council for Mutual Economic Assistance
COREPER	Comité des représentants permanents (Committee of Permanent Representatives)
CSCE	Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe
DG	Directorate General
EAGGF	European Agricultural Guarantee and Guidance Fund
ECHA	European Commission Historical Archives, Brussels
ECOFIN	Council of Economics and Finance Ministers
ECU	European Currency Unit
EEC	European Economic Community
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
EMCF	European Monetary Cooperation Fund
EMS	European Monetary System
EMU	Economic and Monetary Union
ENP	Emile Noël papers, Historical Archives of the European Union, Florence

EPC	European Political Cooperation
EUA	European Unit of Account
Euratom	European Atomic Energy Community
FDP	Freie Demokratische Partei
FPL	Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan, United States
FTA	Free Trade Area
G7	Group of Seven (leading Western economies)
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GNP	Gross National Product
HSP	Helmut Schmidt Papers, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Bonn
IMF	International Monetary Fund
JET	Joint European Taurus
JP	Jenkins papers, Bodleian Library, Oxford
MCA	Monetary Compensatory Amount
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
MP	Member of Parliament
MTN	Multilateral Trade Negotiations
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NEC	Labour Party National Executive Committee
NSA	National Security Advisor
PPE	Politics, Philosophy, and Economics
PV	Procès Verbale
SDP	Social Democratic Party
SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei
TEE	Trans-European Express
TP	Tickell papers, All Souls College, Oxford
UKNA	UK National Archives, Kew
UKREP	UK Permanent Representation, Brussels
UN	United Nations
VAT	Value Added Tax

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Roy Jenkins was a remarkable politician who assumed the post of Commission president at a crucial time. Between 1977 and 1980 he found himself at the heart of a European Community that was in a troubled state, its institutions and policies struggling to cope with the global economic crisis underway since 1973. Jenkins' own country, meanwhile, still appeared unable to come to terms with its 'European choice', uncertain whether its recently attained membership of the European Community was a help, a hindrance, or an irrelevance at a moment when the UK's economic performance and political fortunes reached a post-war nadir. And Jenkins himself was at a personal moment of flux, his earlier rapid ascent towards the very summit of British politics interrupted by electoral misfortune and the changing mood of the Labour Party, the attainability of both his European and domestic ambitions undermined by the increasingly polarised nature of British domestic politics during the 1970s.

The aim of this book is to paint a closely observed portrait of the Jenkins presidency. By so doing it will provide a detailed study of a job, the Commission presidency—a job which is often referred to, yet little understood. A well-documented examination of how one talented and energetic politician sought to impose himself on the position, and the degree to which his ambitions succeeded or failed, will reveal much about the nature of the post and, more broadly, the strengths and limitations of the role that the European Commission is called upon to play.

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Far too political to be just a technocrat, but lacking the electoral mandate or the clout and influence that comes from occupying a leadership role within one of the larger EC member states, Jenkins as Commission president sought to engage with the European leaders of the era and win them over to his position on a wide range of European issues. His successes in doing so say much about the potential importance of the role; his even more numerous failures, by contrast, speak volumes about its inherent limitations. And a close engagement with how Jenkins operated as president, what he sought to do, what he achieved, and how he fell short, will also act as valuable foil to the much better studied Commission presidency of Jacques Delors. Jenkins' successor-but-one dominates current scholarly writing about the Commission's top job. An in-depth investigation of how an earlier and somewhat less successful president fared in the same post will therefore enrich our understanding of the position, and throw into sharper relief some of the methods, approaches, and innovations that helped Delors become the most powerful Commission president to date.

The book will also be a study of a man, or at least the very human story of one man's engagement, both frustrating and rewarding, with a cause and a process of which he had become a prominent advocate. Jenkins' career had become closely associated with the cause of European integration and the idea of Britain's participation in that process. There was therefore logic to Jenkins' decision to withdraw from British politics following the frustration of his ambitions to lead the Labour Party, and to concentrate instead on playing an active role in the integration process. How he fared—and how he regarded his 4 years in Brussels—reveals much not just about his post but also about his personality, his capabilities, and his limitations. This book will also therefore be a biographical contribution to a short, but interesting, important, and less well studied, chapter of Jenkins' life.

It will be a study too of a brief moment when it seemed that Britain's pro-Europeans, of whom Jenkins was one of the most prominent, might finally be able to exercise a degree of that leadership role which much of the UK political elite had assumed that they would automatically inherit upon joining the EEC, but which had proved stubbornly elusive for most of the early years of membership. The waning of such hopes, and Jenkins' painful discovery of how little able he was to influence the evolution of the UK debate about the EEC from his Brussels vantage point, will be one of the sub-plots that run throughout the chapters that follow.

Lastly, the book will provide a snapshot of a vital period, both in Western Europe and in the world more generally.[1] The late 1970s were a time when the leading Western powers were still attempting to comprehend the cessation of the lengthy period of economic growth and prosperity that they had enjoyed since the end of the Second World War. Over 20 years of almost continuous economic advance had come to an abrupt halt in the first years of the decade. Furthermore, the boom had ended in a fashion that seemed to challenge most of the basic assumptions about how growth could be secured and what policies were best designed to provide it.[2] The relevance and value of European integration itself was suddenly unsure. Most of the founding members of the EEC had viewed their participation in the process of ever-closer cooperation with their neighbours as part of the formula that had helped underpin their almost ceaseless economic growth. Now that that growth had come to an end, however, what did this say about the value of integration? Was it part of the solution needed to rediscover economic advance? And if so, how should it change and what objectives should it aim at? Or was it instead another feature of the previous economic template that needed to be jettisoned in light of the economic downturn?

Also particularly challenging for Western Europe was its vulnerability to another of the salient features of the period, namely the sudden rise in oil prices and the realisation of how dependent was Western prosperity on energy and other resources flowing towards Europe, North America, and Japan from the countries of the developing world.[3] Debates about 'producer power', about the need to lessen the ever-growing consumption of primary resources and especially of oil, about the proper relationship between the rich countries of the North and the poorer countries of an increasingly organised and militant Global South, and about how the North could organise itself so as to lessen its vulnerability, were very much a feature of these years.[4] And alongside this new North–South axis of debate and confrontation, the 1970s also saw the persistence of the

[1] The current wave of historical revisionism about the period is well captured by Niall Ferguson, *The Shock of the Global: The 1970s in Perspective* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010).

[2] Stephen A. Marglin and Juliet Schor (eds.), *The Golden Age of Capitalism: Reinterpreting the Postwar Experience* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990).

[3] Fiona Venn, *The Oil Crisis* (London: Longman, 2002).

[4] Giuliano Garavini, *After Empires: European Integration, Decolonization, and the Challenge from the Global South, 1957–1985* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

more established East–West conflict. This too was changing, though, the 1970s seeing the ebb and flow of détente, at its apogee in the middle years of the decade, in trouble by its end, as well as the continuation of a trend away from the superpower dominance of the early Cold War and towards greater multipolarity.[5] Several European countries, either individually or collectively, hoped to benefit from this lessening of the indisputable American leadership of the Western bloc, thereby adding a further interesting but complex dynamic to the list above.[6] And finally it was a period where the political stability of Western Europe itself seemed to be challenged not so much by the menace of terrorism, serious though this became in several European countries during these years, but much more by the collapse of dictatorships in Portugal, Greece, and Spain and the instability, but also the opportunities, that this collapse seemed to bring.[7] Worrying too was the rise of communist electoral success, particularly in Italy but also in France during this period.[8] Most of these problems and trends left some trace on the dossiers that crossed the Commission president's desk and in the conversations that Jenkins had with most of the Western leaders of his time. A detailed study of what he said and how he regarded some of these issues can thus offer a valuable, if tightly focused, view of a rich and eventful period of recent history.

The pages that follow will thus have four main purposes. First and foremost they will be a study of the role that Jenkins filled, a portrayal of a presidency that will shed light not just on what Jenkins was and was not able to do, but also permit a better understanding of how his predecessors and successors have fared. Second, the book will offer an in-depth biographical contribution to a period in Jenkins' life that has been less well captured by most of the existing literature. Third, it will add a further chapter to the troubled tale of Britain's difficult relationship with the European Community/Union. And fourth, the study will offer one individual, but distinctive, vantage point from which to better understand the challenges and complexities facing both Europe and the wider Western world in the latter half of the 1970s.

[5] Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, Vol. 3: *Endings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

[6] Daniel Möckli, *European Foreign Policy during the Cold War: Heath, Brandt, Pompidou and the Dream of Political Unity* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2008).

[7] Mario Del Pero, Victor Gavin, Fernando Guirao, and Antonio Varsori, *Democrazie: l'Europa meridionale e la fine delle dittature* (Florence: Le Monnier, 2010).

[8] David Childs, *Eurocommunism* (London: Croom Helm, 1980).

A Unique Source Base

This close-up portrayal of Roy Jenkins' 4 years as Commission president is made possible by a very full and highly distinctive source base. Indeed, this book differs from most other articles or books that I have written in as much as the source base led to the project, rather than the project defining the source base.

The roots of my decision to write a study of the Jenkins' presidency lie in my earlier participation in a team of historians assembled to write a history of the European Commission during the period from 1973 to 1986. In order to produce this volume, those taking part in the project were granted extensive access to the Commission archives for the years in question. This was, for many of us, one of the key attractions of taking part. But we were also very strongly encouraged by the European Commission itself which was financing the project, and by Michel Dumoulin, who had assembled the consortium that was to write the volume, to interview over 200 of those who had worked in Brussels during the 1970s and the first half of the 1980s. Like the first volume of Commission history covering the 1958–72 period published in 2007, this analysis of a second tranche of the Commission's past was to rest on oral sources and eyewitness testimonies as much as on archival documents.[9]

To make it feasible for a relatively small team of historians to interview so many eyewitnesses in a comparatively short period of time, one of the key criteria used in deciding who should interview whom, was geographical proximity. As the sole British member of the research consortium, I therefore ended up interviewing a large number of Britons who had played some role in Brussels between 1973, the year the UK joined the EEC, and 1986. In the process, I gradually realised, I was seeking out and talking to many of those who had worked most closely with Jenkins during his presidency. Between 2010 and 2012 I thus interviewed Sir Crispin Tickell, his *chef de cabinet* in Brussels (i.e. the head of his private office), Sir Hayden Phillips, his deputy *chef*, and Michael Emerson, another member of his inner team and Jenkins' specialist advisor on monetary issues during the first part of the presidency. In addition, I spoke to Christopher Tugendhat and Richard Burke, both of whom were Commissioners during the 1977–80 period,

[9] Michel Dumoulin, Marie-Thérèse Bitsch, and European Commission, *The European Commission, 1958–72: History and Memories* (Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2007).

Sir Christopher Audland, who was the deputy secretary-general of the Commission while Jenkins was president, and David Marquand, who like Jenkins had made the transition from being a Labour MP to working in Brussels in 1977. Without really aiming to do so, I had thus ended up speaking to most of those who had worked most closely with Jenkins. And as a member of the team collaborating on this Commission history volume, I also had access to several relevant interviews carried out by other colleagues, including those with Graham Avery and Michel Vanden Abeele, two further members of his *cabinet*, and with Étienne Davignon, another of his fellow Commissioners.[10]

All of these conversations served to increase my interest in Jenkins' 4 years in Brussels. Along with the published *European Diary* which Jenkins had kept while president—itself another almost unique and fascinating source, since no other Commission president has published anything comparable—and his very well-written memoirs, these interviews also gave me more than enough material to write the short profile of Jenkins and his presidency which I had been asked to do as part of the Commission history volume.[11] But valuable though these oral sources proved to be—and my participation in the Commission history project had served substantially to diminish my previous somewhat jaundiced view of how useful oral testimonies could be for political history—I was still too wedded to the importance of written sources to go any further on the basis of the interviews and the published *Diary* alone.

The crucial breakthrough in terms of realising that I had the makings of a book on my hands was thus the discovery of the Tickell papers preserved in All Souls College, Oxford. This was a direct outcome of my interview with Jenkins' former *chef de cabinet*, since one of the questions that we had been asked to pose to all of those that we interviewed for the Commission history project was 'do you have any private papers relating to your time

[10] Many of the interviews are now available at http://archives.eui.eu/en/oral_history/#ECM2. Unfortunately, some of those interviewed declined to allow the transcripts of their interviews to be posted online. A small number of the interviews that will be used in this volume are not therefore accessible to the general public. In all other cases the URL of the interview in question has been included in the relevant endnote.

[11] Roy Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981* (London: Collins, 1989); Roy Jenkins, *A Life at the Centre* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991); for my brief profile of Jenkins see Éric Bussière, Vincent Dujardin, Michel Dumoulin, N. P. Ludlow, J. W. L Brouwer, and Pierre Tilly, *The European Commission 1973–86: History and Memories of an Institution* (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2014).

in Brussels?' To this routine enquiry, Tickell provided the unexpected but exciting answer that he did indeed have 27 boxes' worth of papers which had been sitting in the cellar of All Souls since his departure from Brussels 30 years earlier. With his permission and with the collaboration of the librarians and archivists of the college who went and retrieved the boxes and files from the cupboard where they had been stored since 1981, I thus became the first person since the end of the Jenkins presidency to gain access to the detailed paper work of his private office in Brussels.

This proved to be a collection utterly different from most normal Commission sources. In general, the European Commission has not had a particularly good track record of recording its internal deliberations. The Commission archives which I knew well from both the Commission history project and earlier research contain an odd but highly patchy assortment of policy papers, official correspondence, and semi-public materials, most often press cuttings and the texts of speeches. Several of the key documentary series, notably the minutes of the weekly Commission meetings, are notoriously terse and Delphic, only hinting at the arguments and debates that preceded each Commission decision. And the records of the meetings that Commissioners held with other politicians, whether in the Community or beyond, are highly sporadic and only intermittently worthwhile. As a basis for writing a comprehensive history of the organisation and its activities they are useful and frustrating in equal measure.

The records kept by Tickell and the other members of Jenkins' team were of a totally different calibre, however. Here was a group of Whitehall-trained civil servants transplanted to Brussels working for a political master also used to the methods and record-keeping traditions of the British civil service. It was therefore unsurprising that they brought with them a pattern of record-keeping seldom if ever seen within the Commission before. In place of the customarily incomplete file series, or the rather opaque records of how decisions were taken, were instead detailed minutes for virtually every meeting between Jenkins and his European or international interlocutors, a voluminous series of files on the internal correspondence between Tickell and his president, a number of very full thematic dossiers on issues such as monetary integration or the British budgetary question, and extensive paperwork relating to the each of the G7 summits in which Jenkins had taken part. Also neatly filed away were the briefs prepared for Jenkins for all of the meetings of the Commission and many of those of the Council of Ministers, his speaking notes for Commission meetings, Council gatherings and European summits, and several informal records

of ministerial meetings and European Councils that Jenkins had attended. As a bonus there were also lengthy accounts written up by Tickell of certain key episodes, notably the trip to China in 1979 and the 1980 negotiations that would temporarily resolve the row over the British contribution to the Community budget. It was in other words the most detailed set of internal Commission papers that I had ever seen—and quite possibly the most complete file series on any Commission president's activities before 1977–80 or since.

In due course this breakthrough was complemented by the further coup of being allowed by Lady Jenkins to make a brief visit to East Hendred to delve into Jenkins' own private papers and in particular to photograph the unpublished version of his *European Diary*. This was extremely worthwhile since, as Jenkins himself acknowledges in the preface to the published edition, quite extensive cuts were made prior to publication, particularly of those sections most directly focused on internal Commission business.[12] For an inside story of the Commission presidency it was therefore very important to be able to read the full text rather than edited version. Half of the diary text had disappeared, though, so I was only able to track down the portions covering 1979 and 1980 2 years later when they were made available by the Bodleian Library in Oxford. This unexpurgated diary text has proved a further invaluable source, allowing an even more detailed reconstruction of exactly what Jenkins did—and thought—while president than was possible from the Tickell collection.

Needless to say, other sources have also been used. These include a range of further Commission materials, primarily from the Commission archives in Brussels, including for instance the complete run of *procès-verbaux* (i.e. minutes) of the weekly Commission meetings for the Jenkins years. To these have been added the very valuable private papers of Emile Noël, the Commission secretary-general, now posted online by the Historical Archives of the European Union in Florence,[13] as well as a range of public and semi-public Commission materials also preserved digitally thanks to the Archive on European Integration at the University of Pittsburgh.[14] A small number of archival sources from the British, German, and French governments have also been read, notably those relating to Jenkins' appointment as Commission president. But I have quite deliber-

[12] Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, x.
[13] http://archives.eui.eu/en/fonds/110729?item=EN
[14] http://aei.pitt.edu

ately chosen not to explore extensively the sizeable collections now open for consultation in many of the European capitals, since to do so would be to risk turning the book into a general history of the European integration process in the 1976–80 period, rather than a much more targeted volume focused almost exclusively on the Commission presidency. For the same reason, the use of press sources has been limited mainly to the coverage of key episodes from Jenkins' years in Brussels and not expanded to include the much greater amount of more general press copy about the European Community and its development between 1976 and 1980.

Existing Scholarship

An in-depth look at Jenkins' experiences as Commission president adds something new to existing scholarship both about Jenkins' life and career, and about the evolution of the European integration process. As far as the former is concerned, there were several biographical studies of Roy Jenkins already in existence, although by far the best and the most detailed only came out when I was more than half-way through this project. The earliest was the relatively short biography by John Campbell, commissioned by Jenkins himself in the early 1980s as part of his efforts to raise his public profile in Britain and thereby improve the electoral prospects of the Social Democratic Party (SDP).[15] To this Jenkins himself had then added the *European Diary*, which came out in 1989, and his much-praised volume of memoirs, *A Life at the Centre*, published 2 years later.[16] And 1995 saw the appearance of an in-depth retrospective on the short but eventful life of the SDP, which inevitably also added a valuable new perspective on Jenkins' role and contribution.[17] After Jenkins' death in 2003 there was then a further flurry of publications. The first to appear was Giles Radice's triple biography of Jenkins, Anthony Crosland, and Denis Healey, an attempt to trace the interweaving trajectories of three of the brightest stars of the post-war Labour Party.[18] This was followed by *Roy Jenkins: A Retrospective* edited by Keith Thomas and Andrew Adonis which was a collection of short essays often by those who had worked or served with

[15] John Campbell, *Roy Jenkins: A Biography* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1983).

[16] Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*; Jenkins, *A Life at the Centre*.

[17] Ivor Crewe and Anthony King, *SDP: The Birth, Life and Death of the Social Democratic Party* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

[18] Giles Radice, *Friends and Rivals: Crosland, Jenkins and Healey* (London: Abacus, 2003).

Jenkins at various points of his life.[19] Both Christopher Tugendhat and Crispin Tickell had, for instance, contributed pieces on the Brussels phase of Jenkins' career.[20] And then last, but most certainly not least, in 2014 Campbell brought out a second Jenkins biography, this one much more complete than that written three decades earlier.[21]

This literature means that we now have a pretty comprehensive coverage of Jenkins' life and career. The recent Campbell biography in particular is meticulously researched and grounded in a very thorough reading of many of Jenkins' private papers, now progressively becoming available for consultation at the Bodleian Library, Oxford, but to which Campbell, as official biographer, had been granted earlier, privileged access. It therefore assembles a huge amount of information about Jenkins' origins and education, his very active social life, and about his domestic political career, both before 1977 and after 1980. It also includes two, perfectly competent chapters on Jenkins as Commission president. But despite the book's length, these chapters are too short to do full justice to Jenkins' period in Brussels. They are written furthermore by someone whose forte is the biographical study of prominent British politicians, and who is hence most at home when analysing the ebb and flow of Jenkins' domestic career.[22] This applies with even greater strength to Radice's study also, and, unsurprisingly, to the volume on the rise and fall of the SDP. An in-depth study of the 1976–80 period, written by an author whose main academic focus has been the workings of the European integration process and Britain's troubled relations with it, would therefore add something rather new and different to these earlier accounts.

The other body of literature to which this book is intended to contribute is that on European integration history. Historical scholarship on the European Community in the 1970s and early 1980s is still rather patchy. There have been a profusion of edited volumes showcasing the

[19] Andrew Adonis and Keith Thomas (eds.), *Roy Jenkins: A Retrospective* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[20] Christopher Tugendhat, 'The European Achievement', and Crispin Tickell, 'President of the European Commission', in *Roy Jenkins: A Retrospective*, ed. Adonis and Thomas, 179–202 and 205–9.

[21] John Campbell, *Roy Jenkins: A Well-Rounded Life* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2014).

[22] Campbell's earlier output includes detailed studies of both Edward Heath and Margaret Thatcher: John Campbell, *Edward Heath: A Biography* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1993); John Campbell, *Margaret Thatcher: Grocer's Daughter to Iron Lady* (London: Random House, 2009).

most recent findings in the archives.[23] Also important have been a number of trail-blazing journal articles which have begun to shed light on the very important changes to the European Community system that took place in what had once been seen as a stagnant decade.[24] And a slow trickle of detailed monographs on important aspects of the integration process during the 1970s has gradually begun to appear.[25] To this should also be added the volume on the history of the European Commission mentioned earlier, as well as an official history of the European Parliament.[26] But important gaps remain, especially in terms of Europe's internal evolution and in the coverage of the latter half of the time period. This book should help address both of these weak points.

The incomplete nature of the literature is particularly striking in the case of the Britain and Europe sub-plot to the wider integration story,

[23] Jan van der Harst, *Beyond the Customs Union: The European Community's Quest for Deepening, Widening and Completion, 1969–1975* (Brussels: Bruylant, 2007); Johnny Laursen (ed.), *Institutions and Dynamics of the European Community, 1973–83* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2014); Antonio Varsori and Guia Migani, *Europe in the International Arena during the 1970s: Entering a Different World* (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2011); Guido Thiemeyer and Jenny Raflik-Grenouilleau (eds.), *Les partis politiques européens face aux premières élections directes du Parlement Européen* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2015); Claudia Hiepel, *Europe in a Globalising World: Global Challenges and European Responses in the 'Long' 1970s* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2014).

[24] Emmanuel Mourlon-Druol, 'Filling the EEC Leadership Vacuum? The Creation of the European Council in 1974', *Cold War History* 10, no. 3 (August 2010): 315–39; Angela Romano, 'Untying Cold War Knots: The EEC and Eastern Europe in the Long 1970s', *Cold War History* 14, no. 2 (April 2014): 153–73.

[25] Laura Scichilone, *L'Europa e la sfida ecologica: storia della politica ambientale europea (1969–1998)* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2008); Angela Romano, *From Détente in Europe to European Détente: How the West Shaped the Helsinki CSCE* (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2009); Daniel Möckli, *European Foreign Policy during the Cold War: Heath, Brandt, Pompidou and the Dream of Political Unity* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2009); Emmanuel Mourlon-Druol, *A Europe Made of Money: The Emergence of the European Monetary System* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012); Maria Gainar, *Aux origines de la diplomatie européenne: les neuf et la coopération politique européenne de 1973 à 1980* (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2012); Aurélie Elisa Gfeller, *Building a European Identity: France, the United States, and the Oil Shock, 1973–1974* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012); Eirini Karamouzi, *Greece, the EEC and the Cold War, 1974–79* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Véronique Dimier, *The Invention of a European Development Aid Bureaucracy: Recycling Empire* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

[26] Bussière et al., *The European Commission 1973–86*; European University Institute, *Building Parliament: 50 Years of European Parliament History* (Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2009).

given the intensity of the debate about EEC membership within the UK during the 1970s. There is now a second volume of the official history of Britain's relations with European integration which covers the period up until 1975.[27] And there are a number of older titles that cover some of the main milestones of the decade.[28] But the best new study of the membership negotiations has yet to be published.[29] Likewise important new work on the renegotiation and the referendum is still being written.[30] And little has yet appeared on the early years of the Thatcher government and the European issue.[31] So all that there is to show so far for new scholarship in this field are a smattering of useful journal articles and a few chapters in edited volumes.[32] There is hence plenty of scope for a study of the Jenkins' presidency to add to this rather meagre spread.

Finally, a detailed look at Jenkins' 4 years in Brussels will complement the existing literature on the Commission presidency. The bulk of this centres on Jacques Delors' tenure as Commission president. Most was written by political scientists and journalists while Delors was still in

[27] Stephen Wall, *The Official History of Britain and the European Community*, vol. 2: *From Rejection to Referendum, 1963–1975* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012).

[28] Uwe W. Kitzinger, *Diplomacy and Persuasion: How Britain Joined the Common Market* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1973); David Butler and Uwe Kitzinger, *The 1975 Referendum* (London: Macmillan, 1976); Anthony King, *Britain Says Yes: The 1975 Referendum on the Common Market* (Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1977).

[29] Daniel Furby, 'The Revival and Success of Britain's Second Application for Membership of the European Community, 1968–71' (PhD, Queen Mary University of London, 2009).

[30] In the case of the referendum, work is being done by Rob Saunders at Queen Mary University of London. Lindsay Aqui, a PhD student in the same department is preparing a study of the renegotiation.

[31] The best sources so far are Stephen Wall, *A Stranger in Europe: Britain and the EU from Thatcher to Blair* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Hugo Young, *This Blessed Plot: Britain and Europe from Churchill to Blair* (New York: Overlook Press, 1999).

[32] Aoife Collins, 'The Cabinet Office, Tony Benn and the Renegotiation of Britain's Terms of Entry into the European Community, 1974–1975', *Contemporary British History* 24, no. 4 (December 2010): 471–91; Mathias Haeussler, 'A Pyrrhic Victory: Harold Wilson, Helmut Schmidt, and the British Renegotiation of EC Membership, 1974–5', *International History Review* 37, no. 4 (2015): 768–89; N. Piers Ludlow, 'Safeguarding British Identity or Betraying It? The Role of British "Tradition" in the Parliamentary Great Debate on EC Membership, October 1971', *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 53, no. 1 (January 2015): 18–34; Matthew Broad, 'Awkward Partners? The British Labour Party and European Integration in the 1970s', in *Les Partis Politiques Européens Face Aux Premières Élections Directes du Parlement Européen*, ed. Thiemeyer and Raflik-Grenouilleau, 119–41.

office or shortly after he had stepped down.[33] It is rich on detail, but often lacking in the perspective that comes with a greater distance from the events being described. Beyond this, there is a little bit on Walter Hallstein, the first president of the Commission, and the only president able to rival Delors in terms of impact and success.[34] There is a biography of Sicco Mansholt, although inevitably this focuses more on his lengthy tenure as Commissioner for agriculture than on his 2 years as Commission president.[35] And there is a volume on François-Xavier Ortoli, Jenkins' immediate predecessor, but this too seeks to cover his whole career and hence can only devote a couple of chapters to his stint in charge of the Commission.[36] Finally, there is a very recently published edited volume on the Commission presidency that devotes a chapter to each of those to have held the post.[37] That on Jenkins, by Melissa Yeager, is well-written and offers some interesting insights.[38] But it was put together without access to most of the key archival documents and is also constrained by the need to fit its analysis within the confines of a single chapter. It too is thus a complement to this volume, rather than a rival which steals its thunder.

The Structure of the Volume

The chapters that follow are arranged in a mixture of the chronological and the thematic. Chapter 2 will thus look at Jenkins' life and career prior to his appointment as Commission president, highlighting in particular

[33] Charles Grant, *Delors: Inside the House That Jacques Built* (London: Nicholas Brealey, 1994); George Ross, *Jacques Delors and European Integration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); George Ross, 'Inside the Delors Cabinet', *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 32, no. 4 (December 1994); Helen Drake, *Jacques Delors: Perspectives on a European Leader* (London: Routledge, 2000); Ken Endo, *The Presidency of the European Commission under Jacques Delors: The Politics of Shared Leadership* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999).

[34] Wilfried Loth, William Wallace, and Bryan Ruppert (eds.), *Walter Hallstein: The Forgotten European?* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998); Jonathan White, 'Theory Guiding Practice: The Neofunctionalists and the Hallstein EEC Commission', *Journal of European Integration History* 9, no. 1 (2003): 111–31.

[35] Johan van Merriënboer, *Mansholt: A Biography* (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2011).

[36] Laurence Badel and Eric Bussière, *François-Xavier Ortoli: quel numéro de téléphone?* (Paris: Descartes & Cie, 2011).

[37] Jan van der Harst and Gerrit Voerman (eds.), *An Impossible Job? The Presidents of the European Commission, 1958–2014* (London: John Harper Publishing, 2015).

[38] Melissa Yeager, 'Roy Jenkins (1977–1981): "My Fear Always Is That We Shall Go Too Slow"', in *An Impossible Job?* ed. Van der Harst and Voerman, 133–50.

his youthful interest in European culture, politics, and travel, and his early political conversion to the idea of British EEC membership. The cause of British Europeanism constituted a central theme in his subsequent political trajectory: it was one of the issues that first brought him to prominence, it was an important concern and interest during the most successful period of his ministerial career, and it was the key factor in souring his relations with his party following Labour's 1970 electoral defeat. It was hence highly appropriate that the first Briton to hold a major post at the head of a European Community institution should be someone whose lobbying on the European issue ever since the late 1950s had earned him the reputation as Britain's leading pro-European alongside Edward Heath.

Chapter 3 will look at the period immediately before Jenkins' arrival in Brussels. It will explore the circumstances that led to his being offered the post, and the reasons he decided to accept. Next it will look at the manner in which the president-elect used the summer, autumn, and early winter of 1976 to prepare himself for Brussels. Of particular interest will be the manner in which he learned his way around a European system the inner of workings of which he had had little opportunity to experience, the advice he received, especially from the first cohort of Britons to have held posts in the European Commission, and the plans that he inherited for Commission reform. Also of importance in this chapter will be Jenkins' energetic but only partially successful efforts to influence the identity of those the member state governments appointed to his Commission. This campaign involved extensive discussions with leaders across the EEC and the bandying about of the names of many prominent politicians who might be lured to Brussels. In the end, however, a significant number of those whom Jenkins wanted could not be persuaded to join the Commission whereas some of those who did join the Jenkins' Commission were candidates whose appointment the president-to-be had sought to block. The chapter will conclude with a look at the delicate allocation of jobs to the incoming Commissioners in the course of the so-called 'night of the long knives'.

Chapters 4 and 5 focus on two of the main controversies to mark the first half of Jenkins' presidency. The former looks at the battle to secure a seat for the Commission president at the new international top table constituted by the G7 summits. This was fight that Jenkins inherited from his predecessor, but which absorbed a significant portion of his energies and time in the first part of 1977. Ultimately the Commission president was invited to the Downing Street summit held in May of that year.

But procuring this invitation involved a bitter battle with the French, who were aided and abetted by a Callaghan government which showed little sympathy for a fellow Labour Party politician. It was also only a partial success in the short term, in that the French and the British between them ensured that Jenkins was present for only some of the summit and was subject to a number of petty humiliations while there, intended to differentiate between the national leaders and a mere official. Over time, however, Jenkins would be able to consolidate his presence at these Western global summits, leaving an inheritance of full participation that has been passed down to all of his successors.

Chapter 5 focuses in on the single best-known achievement of Jenkins' presidency, namely his role in the launch of the European Monetary System (EMS). It will begin by explaining why Jenkins felt he urgently needed a big new policy priority by the summer of 1977, why he identified monetary integration as the objective to pursue, and how he set about winning support for this cause. This did not prove easy, since the president's new enthusiasm cut across an established Commission approach to economic and monetary union and faced serious internal opposition from Ortoli, his predecessor and colleague. The member states were also deeply divided on the issue. But the chapter will argue that Jenkins' advocacy did play a key role in persuading the German and French leaders to adopt the objective of greater monetary integration as their own. Once Schmidt and Giscard assumed a lead position in the push to create the EMS, Jenkins' own direct contribution fell away rapidly, although his interest in the issue remained high. The chapter will nevertheless contend that Jenkins' relatively brief period as standard bearer for monetary integration was of considerable importance and deserves to be seen as amongst the greatest successes of his years in Brussels.

Chapter 6 adopts a more wholly thematic approach, looking at Jenkins' engagement with international partners beyond the European Community across all 4 years of his presidency. The opening portions of the chapter will look at one very specific but highly important type of international engagement in the form of Jenkins' efforts to promote the enlargement of the EEC to Greece, Spain, and Portugal. Such efforts, it will be argued, were highly important since the Commission had hitherto been more of a sceptic about southern European membership than an enthusiastic supporter. Under Jenkins' presidency, however, the Commission's approach was transformed, in a fashion that would be vital in helping the Greeks join in 1981. For all its enthusiasm for further enlargement, however, the

Commission was largely powerless to prevent the French from seriously delaying Spanish and Portuguese membership. The enlargement story is therefore a particularly striking illustration of both what a Commission president can achieve and of the limitations of his power. The latter half of the chapter then looks at Jenkins' travel patterns more generally, examining his interaction with the EEC's principal economic partners, the US and Japan, before explaining why it was useful and important for the Commission president to also travel to Africa, China, and India.

The next two chapters then consider the final portion of Jenkins' term of office. Chapter 7 examines the various candidates to become the core policy priority for Jenkins during 1979 and 1980, before explaining why none of them quite fitted the bill. Amongst the options considered were the internal reform of the Commission, the policy response to the first direct European parliamentary elections held in 1979, root and branch change to the Community's flagship policy, the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), and a major push to create a genuine European policy on energy. In each case, however, there were a number of factors that prevented each of these policy fields assuming the centrality to the latter stages of Jenkins' presidency that monetary integration had had to the first 2 years. While this lack of a central policy priority did not mean that the Commission president was inactive during the 1979 and 1980 period, it did accurately capture the waning enthusiasm and focus of Jenkins during these final 2 years.

Entitled 'The Curse of British Politics: Thatcher, the British Budgetary Dispute, and the Lure of Domestic Politics', Chap. 8 will then look at the issue that, largely unbidden, did come to dominate much of Jenkins' last 18 months in Brussels, namely the controversy caused by Britain's complaints that it contributed too much to the Community budget. The campaign by Britain's forceful new Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, to 'get her money back' monopolised a succession of European Council meetings and greatly alarmed Britain's partners, requiring a careful but energetic response from the Commission. In the end, Jenkins succeeded in playing a significant role in securing a temporary truce on the issue. But getting to this point had not been easy, nor did the deal struck really address the underlying problems that had caused the row in the first place. The final portion of the chapter will then explain how Jenkins' attention was progressively drawn back to British domestic politics in the course of 1979 and 1980. At first there was so much still to do in the Commission that this re-engagement with politics within his home country could only

be very partial. But from mid-1980 onwards it became increasingly apparent that the president's energies and enthusiasms were channelled more towards plotting a return to British politics and the launch of a new centre party, than they were to the job of running the European Commission.

A concluding chapter then looks at the broader lessons that can be derived from a detailed look at Jenkins' 4-year term. It suggests that a number of conclusions about the nature of the Commission presidency, and the extent and limitations of its powers, can be drawn from Jenkins' experiences. Some of these have implications for the way in which we should view other holders of the post, notably Jacques Delors. Switching focus to the individual, it will go on to ask how well Jenkins adapted to the very different and distinctive challenges of the Commission job. The verdict arrived at will be somewhat mixed. In many respects, Jenkins adapted impressively well and brought a great deal to the post. Ultimately, however, his enthusiasm flagged, the frustrations of the job combining with the gravitational pull of British politics to ensure that a moderately successful presidency ended earlier than it might have done and in somewhat anti-climactic fashion. To a very large extent, this less than triumphal end was a product of the context in which Jenkins had held the post, rather than the consequence of any flaws or mistakes of his own. For as the final pages of the book argue, the late 1970s were a moment when the European powers with whom any Commission president has to work had neither decided what they really wanted or needed from the integration process, nor settled in their own mind on the relative priority of global and European cooperation. By the time a pan-European consensus on such factors began to emerge, providing the context where an energetic and skilful Commission president might be able to attain real success, Jenkins had left Brussels and returned to British politics.

CHAPTER 2

The Very British Trajectory of a Pro-European: Roy Jenkins and Europe Prior to 1976

As the first, and to date the only, Briton to have occupied the presidency of the European Commission, it was highly appropriate that Roy Jenkins had earned a reputation as one of the most outspoken pro-Europeans in British politics. The task of this opening chapter is to examine the development of Jenkins' views on Europe rather more closely, so as to gain a better sense of the hopes, expectations, and assumptions that he brought to the Commission job. In the process the chapter will not seek to recount all of Jenkins' life and career up until 1976—a task that has already been done with skill and great thoroughness by John Campbell's recent biography.[1] Instead it will zero in on Jenkins' Europeanism, probing its roots, charting its development, identifying the effects it had on Jenkins' political career, as well as analysing its main characteristics as they emerge from Jenkins' numerous writings and speeches on the subject and from a number of key episodes in his UK political career.

An initial section will thus examine Jenkins' background and education, plus his wartime experience, asking whether such formative periods were at all relevant to his later political stances. A second part will then look at his early years as a Member of Parliament, paying particular attention to his involvement in the Council of Europe in the mid-1950s, an episode

[1] John Campbell, *Roy Jenkins: A Well-Rounded Life* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2014).

N.P. Ludlow, *Roy Jenkins and the European Commission Presidency, 1976–1980*, DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-51530-8_2

to which Jenkins himself traced the roots of his later pro-Europeanism.[2] A larger third section will look at his emergence in the early 1960s as one of the leaders of the pro-European minority within the Labour Party, the relatively slight interconnections between such pro-Europeanism and his highly successful ministerial career under Harold Wilson, and his part in the Cabinet discussions that preceded Britain's second application to the EEC in 1967. By 1970, it will argue, Jenkins seemed likely to be appointed Foreign Secretary in a new Wilson government, and as such would have played a pivotal role in the key foreign policy task ahead, namely negotiating British entry to the European Community now that the obstacle posed by de Gaulle had been removed and six founder members of the EEC had agreed to open talks with Britain and its fellow applicants as soon as the British general election was over. Instead, as the fourth part of the chapter will discuss, the Conservatives' surprise victory in June 1970 meant that Jenkins was powerless to resist the Labour Party's slide back into a position of opposition to British EEC membership, a development that both helped destroy Jenkins' standing within the party and contributed strongly to his growing disillusionment with Labour politics. Jenkins' own reputation as a leading advocate of British involvement in Europe, however, continued to grow, bolstered by his role as the leader of the 69 Labour MPs who defied a three-line whip to vote in favour of the European Communities Bill in October 1971, and by his presidency of Britain in Europe, the cross-party group who successfully campaigned for a 'yes' vote in the June 1975 referendum on British membership of the EEC. As the time period covered by this chapter came to end, therefore, Jenkins' standing as a leading pro-European was much more solidly established than his position within the political party he had once aspired to lead. There was a strong degree of logic to Jenkins' 1976 decision to move out of British politics and into a leading European job.

The Early Years

Roy Jenkins' childhood contained much that is likely to have predisposed him to his later pro-European views. Famously, he was the son of a Welsh coal-miner. But Arthur Jenkins was no ordinary pit-worker. A determined autodidact, Roy's father had won a miner's scholarship to Ruskin College, Oxford and had then spent nearly a year in Paris, during which time he

[2] Roy Jenkins, *A Life at the Centre* (London: Macmillan, 1991), 104.

met Jean Jaurès, the French Socialist leader, made numerous other contacts in French left-wing milieux, and learnt good French. Roy would hence grow up in a Francophile household, filled with French translations of Russian classics.[3] His later love of Proust and Simenon, and his ability to hold a lengthy dinner-time conversation about French literature, with an erudite Francophone host like Leopold Senghor, the Senegalese president, owe much to this background.[4] Jenkins also became familiar with continental travel much sooner than most British children growing up in the interwar years. His first trip abroad was at the age of eight, to Brussels amusingly, where Arthur Jenkins was to participate in an international socialist conference. A family trip to Paris followed 2 years later, and prior to starting at Balliol, the 17-year-old Roy would spend a month by himself in the French capital, acquiring a good knowledge of the city's geography and improving his French.[5]

Also of significance was his father's burgeoning political career. Arthur Evans Jenkins' trajectory from miner's agent, to Labour MP, and then finally to minister in Clement Attlee's post-war Labour government was clearly essential in ensuring that Roy started his own political career with excellent connections within the British Labour movement. Attlee, then still deputy Prime Minister, was, for instance, a guest and speaker at Roy and Jennifer Jenkins' wedding in January 1945.[6] But Arthur's experience prior to becoming MP also ensured that the Labour Party within which Roy more or less grew up was not an insular grouping, concerned solely with the struggles of the British working class, but instead a Labour Party with strong interconnections with other left-of-centre parties abroad, particularly in Europe. Socialist internationalism was an important formative influence, and socialist internationalism moreover tilted more towards France (and to some extent Germany) than either Scandinavia or the non-European world.

In the context of later debates about Britain and Europe it probably also mattered that Roy Jenkins seems to have grown up in a family and intellectual setting where ties with the British Empire/Commonwealth were weak or non-existent. Neither Jenkins' memoirs nor his biographers refer to any close relatives living in Australia, New Zealand, or Canada

[3] Campbell, *Roy Jenkins: A Well-Rounded Life*, 9–25; Jenkins, *A Life at the Centre*, 3–25.
[4] See Chap. 6 for his visit to Senegal.
[5] Jenkins, *A Life at the Centre*, 3–25.
[6] Ibid., 55.

or any other colonial or former colonial territory.[7] This stands in marked contrast to Hugh Gaitskell, who grew up in India, or Harold Wilson who made his first trip abroad, aged ten, to Australia to visit his numerous relatives there.[8] Nor did the Commonwealth loom large in Jenkins' early travel patterns, visits to Australia and New Zealand coming only in 1965 and then, in the case of the former, again in 1973.[9] The contrary pull of Empire/Commonwealth that was to affect the approach of so many British politicians to the European issue, thus seems to have been almost entirely absent from Jenkins' upbringing.

Jenkins' 3 years in Oxford seem only to have reinforced these pre-existing trends. To some extent this reflected his actual studies. The syllabus for PPE (Politics, Philosophy, and Economics) in the late 1930s included a paper on International Relations 1919–39 which is likely to have been highly European-focused, another on European Diplomatic History, 1870–1914, and a third on contemporary politics that focused on the British, US, and French governmental systems.[10] He also did a course on the History of Labour Movements, 1815–1914 taught by G. D. H. Cole, who, as a leading left-wing intellectual well-connected in socialist debates across Europe, would have been in a position to deepen Jenkins' awareness of the interconnections between British labour history and parallel developments in much of Europe. His degree would thus have significantly increased his expertise on European politics and history, as well as furnishing him with the training in economics he would later deploy in making the case for British involvement with the EEC.

Almost certainly more important, though, was the atmosphere of the time, especially for a student as politically committed as Jenkins. His first year in Balliol coincided with a celebrated Oxford by-election when the college Master, A. D. Lindsay, stood as an independent and anti-Munich candidate against the Conservative Quintin Hogg.[11] The Conservatives

[7] Giles Radice, *Friends and Rivals: Crosland, Jenkins and Healey* (London: Abacus, 2003); Campbell, *Roy Jenkins: A Well-Rounded Life*; Jenkins, *A Life at the Centre*.

[8] Philip Maynard Williams, *Hugh Gaitskell: A Political Biography* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1979); Ben Pimlott, *Harold Wilson* (London: HarperCollins, 1992), 19–20.

[9] Jenkins, *A Life at the Centre*, 177–8 and 357.

[10] Ibid., 41; Malcolm Vout, 'Oxford and the Emergence of Political Science in England 1945–1960', in *Discourses on Society: The Shaping of the Social Sciences Disciplines*, ed. Peter Wagner, Björn Wittrock, and Richard Whitley (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1991), 171.

[11] Iain McLean, 'Oxford and Bridgewater', in *By-Elections in British Politics*, ed. Chris Cook and John Ramsden (Abingdon: Routledge, 2003), 112–29.

would eventually hold the seat albeit with a much-reduced majority, but Jenkins had thrown himself energetically into campaigning for Lindsay, joining forces in the process with Edward Heath, then in his final year at the college. Jenkins had also attended a packed and emotional Oxford Union debate on Munich where the accord with Hitler had been decisively rejected in the final vote.[12] Jenkins remained highly politically engaged throughout most of his 3 years at Oxford, much involved in both the Union and the Oxford University Labour Club. He participated for instance in debates on the Soviet invasion of Finland, in a debate on who had been to blame for the occupation of Czechoslovakia (at which the deposed Czech premier Edvard Beneš also spoke), and in a series of debates about the early course of the Second World War.[13] Such political involvement can only have fuelled a strong sense that Britain's own fate was deeply entangled with that of its continental neighbours, for good or for ill. And even his leisure activities arguably reinforced his European interests. Five weeks of his first summer vacation for instance were spent in Paris employed by the Labour-affiliated Workers' Travel Association meeting parties of British visitors on their arrival at Gare du Nord and leading them to their hotel or to whichever station they needed for onward travel. In return he earned a first class rail pass for unlimited travel around France, using it to go as far as Biarritz and Toulon. Jenkins' love and knowledge of France was thus increased, despite his having to hurry back to England somewhat earlier than planned following the shock announcement of the Molotov–Ribbentrop pact in August 1939.[14] It was at Oxford furthermore that Jenkins would begin to acquire that taste for, and knowledge of, fine claret for which he would later become renowned.[15] His enduring love of architecture is also likely to have been strengthened both by his time at university and by his explorations during the summer breaks.[16] Cultural predispositions of this type, although certainly not determining his later political choices, are likely to have made it easier for Jenkins later to advocate closer ties between the UK, France, and other European countries. They also contributed strongly to the way in which he would later use his free time while Commission president: the pages of the

[12] Campbell, *Roy Jenkins: A Well-Rounded Life*, 29.
[13] Ibid., 36 and 41.
[14] Jenkins, *A Life at the Centre*, 33–4.
[15] Campbell, *Roy Jenkins: A Well-Rounded Life*, 28–9.
[16] David Cannadine, 'Writer and Biographer', in *Roy Jenkins: A Retrospective*, ed. Andrew Adonis and Keith Thomas (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 275.

European Diary abound with references to weekend forays to discover good French or Belgian restaurants or to explore the towns and cities of the many European countries he would visit while in office.[17]

It has been suggested that one factor that pushed many young Britons of Jenkins' generation to later develop an interest in European integration and a desire to see the UK play a part in that process was military service in continental Europe during the Second World War.[18] Jenkins does not, however, fit with this hypothesis since he did not see active service on the continent in the years following his graduation. Instead, after initial military training, he was recruited to work as a cryptographer at Bletchley Park. This involved studying some German, although he never learnt the language properly, and made no apparent attempt to use it during his later political career. But he was spared the encounter with conditions in wartime Italy, Germany, or France that would make such an impression on some of his Oxford contemporaries like Heath or Denis Healey.[19] Despite missing out on what may for others have been a crucial formative episode, however, Jenkins was by 1945 and the start of his political career already someone who had acquired an extensive knowledge of continental Europe—and had tastes and interests that were likely to ensure that such expertise would be added to in the years ahead.

A Young MP

Jenkins' early reputation as an MP was forged as an Attlee and then Gaitskell loyalist, with a particular penchant for economic issues. The early debates in which he spoke and the first causes with which he became associated were domestic in focus and had little to do with either foreign or European policy.[20] When votes on European issues arose, such as in 1950 when a division was called on the Labour government's rejection of the Schuman Plan, the young MP dutifully filed into the government lobby.[21]

[17] Roy Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981* (London: Collins, 1989). There are many more such references in the original, pre-publication version of the diaries, now preserved in the Bodleian Library.

[18] George Richardson Wilkes, 'British Attitudes to the European Economic Community, 1956–63' (PhD dissertation, University of Cambridge, 2003).

[19] John Campbell, *Edward Heath: A Biography* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1993); Denis Healey, *The Time of My Life* (London: Penguin Books, 1990).

[20] Campbell, *Roy Jenkins: A Well-Rounded Life*, 111–42.

[21] Ibid., 188.

He was hence a less precocious pro-European than Heath, who used his maiden speech in the Commons to urge Britain to join what would become the European Coal and Steel Community from the outset.[22] It was, of course, rather easier for a Conservative like Heath to oppose the policy of the Attlee government on this than it would have been for a Labour backbencher, but there is no evidence whatsoever that Jenkins felt strongly about the issue and was even tempted to rebel.

By the mid-1950s, however, his attitudes were beginning to evolve. Of particular importance seems to have been the 2-year period during which he belonged to the Labour Party delegation to the Council of Europe in Strasbourg. The Council itself had limited influence, the British government having contrived in the late 1940s to curb the powers that the French had originally planned to give the new body.[23] But participation in the work of the Strasbourg Assembly gave Jenkins a ring-side seat during a crucial phase in the early history of European integration. For 1955 and 1956, the 2 years when Jenkins was involved, were the time of the so-called *relance européenne*, the moment when an integration process which had seemed moribund following the 1954 rejection by the French National Assembly of the planned European Defence Community, emerged from its grave and the Six initiated serious discussions on the establishment of a European Atomic Energy Community and, more importantly, a European Economic Community (EEC).[24] Much of the discussion in Strasbourg during this period centred on the progress and consequences of the negotiations underway in Brussels. Nor was Jenkins just a passive spectator. The young Labour delegate was asked to be one of two *rapporteurs* on the economic implications of the planned EEC. He thus participated in detailed committee debates about the EEC and was made responsible for providing the main assessment of the impact of the planned Common Market on those states, such as Britain, that had chosen not to take part.

Jenkins' speech as committee *rapporteur* to the Council plenary was a thoughtful reflection on an enduring problem of European integration,

[22] Edward Heath, *The Course of My Life: My Autobiography* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1998).

[23] John W. Young, *Britain, France, and the Unity of Europe, 1945–1951* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1984).

[24] The classic exploration of the 'relaunch' remains Enrico Serra (ed.), *Il Rilancio dell'Europa e i trattati di Roma* (Brussels: Bruylant, 1989); for a revisionist assessment, which disputes the very notion of a '*relance*' see Alan S. Milward, *The European Rescue of the Nation-State* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000).

namely the relationship between those countries that wish to progress fastest, and those which want to remain involved but do not feel able to match the speed set by the front runners.[25] Looking back at his words when writing his memoirs, Jenkins was dismissive. His fault, he later believed, was his refusal to contemplate full EEC membership because of the damage that this would do to the Imperial Preference system: 'that Strasbourg speech contained little clear-sighted rejection of the conventional British wisdom on Europe'.[26] Campbell broadly accepts this judgement.[27] But both are arguably somewhat unfair. To be sure, Jenkins did continue to rule out full British participation in the planned customs union. As such, full membership of the EEC was impossible. But running through Jenkins' speech are three crucial arguments. First, the perception that while the planned EEC was to be an economic entity, its existence would have profound political implications, both for those who took part and for those unable to do so. It therefore followed, moving to the second argument, that the creation of a tightly linked economic grouping within Europe would be politically deeply divisive. Britain and other states unable to join would suffer in commercial terms, and possibly in lost prosperity. 'More important than either of these factors, I believe, is the fact that we should be contributing to a new political division in Europe.' Third, it was vital, Jenkins went on, that Britain's putative plans to lessen the gulf between the six countries likely to form the EEC and their neighbours by means of a wider Free Trade Area (FTA) not only succeeded, but were followed up in such a way that the distinctions between the Six and those only able to join the FTA were kept as small as possible. 'Therefore, I would say: do not make those of us who come from countries which may participate in the free trade area feel too inadequate, too second-rate, too peripheral, too benighted, because we cannot come into the full central core.' If Western Europe as a whole was to prosper, especially in the context of a Cold War threat from the Soviet Union, and economic competition from the United States, it needed to find a formula able to bind in all of its states, not just those able to join the EEC as full members.[28]

[25] Council of Europe, *Consultative Assembly. Eighth Ordinary Session. Official Report of Debates*, vol. 2 (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 1956), pp. 613–16.

[26] Jenkins, *A Life at the Centre*, 104–5.

[27] Campbell, *Roy Jenkins: A Well-Rounded Life*, 188–9.

[28] Council of Europe, *Consultative Assembly. Eighth Ordinary Session. Official Report of Debates*, vol. 2, pp. 613–16.

Such a stance had important implications for Jenkins' later views. First, it clearly demonstrated that in marked contrast to figures like Anthony Eden, Rab Butler, or Hugh Gaitskell, Jenkins was neither 'bored' by the idea of European integration nor complacent about its likely effects on Britain regardless of whether the UK joined or not.[29] As such, Jenkins' position was much more akin to that of Harold Macmillan, the progenitor of the FTA plan, and someone who was also strongly aware of the political and economic damage that might be done were too stark a divide to emerge between 'core Europe' and its periphery.[30] Second, and again like Macmillan, because when it became clear in late 1958 that the hoped-for FTA would not materialise, the logic of Jenkins' own arguments made it almost inevitable that he would have to contemplate Britain actually joining the EEC. If total exclusion was dangerous and a half-way house was impossible, only full membership would do. The underlying assumptions of Jenkins' 1956 Strasbourg speech thus already pointed in the direction of British EEC membership, especially once the FTA foundered. Jenkins' European debut was much more radical than either its author or his leading biographer are prepared to acknowledge.

In the meantime, the young Labour MP's busy professional and social life only served to bolster his fascination with, knowledge of, and attraction to the rest of Europe. During the late 1940s and early 1950s, Jenkins seized every opportunity to explore the continent, whether in a professional capacity or simply on holiday. In 1949 he managed to get himself included in a parliamentary delegation visiting Italy, where he not only spent time in Rome and Naples, but also dined (magnificently) with a host of senior Italian politicians including the premier (and leading European enthusiast), Alcide De Gasperi. The same visit also included a meeting with the Pope and, for Jenkins and one other, with the Italian philosopher Benedetto Croce.[31] In 1951 he travelled to Brussels for a meeting of the European Movement and then, later in the year, visited Yugoslavia.[32] In 1952 he holidayed in Brittany and gave at least one lecture

[29] David Dutton, *Anthony Eden: A Life and Reputation* (London: Arnold, 1997); for an indication of Butler's tendency to be dismissive of the 'relaunch' see Michael Charlton, *The Price of Victory* (London: BBC, 1985); Williams, *Hugh Gaitskell*, 703.

[30] James Ellison, *Threatening Europe: Britain and the Creation of the European Community, 1955–58* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000); Miriam Camps, *Britain and the European Community, 1955–1963* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1964).

[31] Campbell, *Roy Jenkins: A Well-Rounded Life*, 115–16.

[32] Ibid., 153 and 188.

in Berlin.[33] The following year he accompanied Attlee to another meeting about Europe, this time in Wiesbaden.[34] And these are just the trips of which his biographer is aware; there are likely to have been others. In an era when foreign travel was still a comparative luxury, out of reach for most, Jenkins had already acquired a strong taste for it. Such predilections were strengthened, furthermore, by Jenkins' ever more active social life which brought him into contact with an extremely well-heeled and urbane group of friends and acquaintances. Amongst those with whom he met regularly in London or at numerous gatherings in country houses, foreign travel, a taste for expensive food and wine, and extensive experience of the more attractive towns and cities of France, Italy, or Switzerland were not unusual; but the gulf between Jenkins and either his constituents in Birmingham or the majority of his fellow Labour MPs grew ever wider.[35]

The fascination in Europe was in no sense diminished by Jenkins' simultaneous discovery during the 1950s of the United States. His first crossing of the Atlantic was in 1953 and was followed by a 2-month tour of the East Coast.[36] It was to be the first of many such visits. In the process he quickly built up an extraordinary range of contacts within the US political and economic elite, concentrated as it still was on the eastern seaboard.[37] Unsurprisingly this strengthened his pre-existing Atlanticism—in other words his positive attitude towards the Atlantic Alliance and a significant US role in the affairs of Western Europe. But the pull of America was entirely compatible with the pull of Europe. After all, amongst the great and good of Washington DC, New York, or Boston with whom Jenkins mixed it was all but axiomatic that European unity was a good thing, to be supported for political and Cold War reasons, and that Britain's place should be amongst its fellow Europeans, not in some semi-detached state on the margins of the continent.[38] Rubbing shoulders with Arthur Schlesinger, John Galbraith, John Kennedy, John McCloy, and George Ball encouraged Jenkins' Europeanism rather than diminished it. Again,

[33] Ibid., 166–7.
[34] Ibid., 188.
[35] Ibid., 158–71.
[36] Ibid., 154–5; Jenkins, *A Life at the Centre*.
[37] Jenkins' memoirs overflow with references to almost all the great and the good of East Coast America. Jenkins, *A Life at the Centre*.
[38] Pascaline Winand, *Eisenhower, Kennedy, and the United States of Europe* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996); Geir Lundestad, *'Empire' by Integration: The United States and European Integration, 1945–1997* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

however, such exposure to East Coast elite views pulled Jenkins away from the vast majority of his party colleagues, few of whom were as well-travelled or as well-connected. Jenkins' growing Europeanism was a distinctly minority viewpoint in the Labour Party of the mid-to-late 1950s, as Jenkins himself was soon to be made painfully aware.

An Advocate of British EEC Membership

By the end of the 1950s, Jenkins had clearly made up his mind that Britain's future lay within the fast-developing EEC. This was not yet official Labour policy. But Jenkins seemed optimistic that it soon would be. His 1959 booklet, *The Labour Case*, which sought to set out why British voters should choose Labour (and hence Hugh Gaitskell) rather than the Conservatives (and Harold Macmillan) in that year's general election, was transparently clear in its pro-European sentiment. Its opening pages began with the observation that West German manufactured exports had just overtaken those of Britain and attributed this development to the fact that 'our economy is much less dynamic than theirs'. This tendency was likely to be exacerbated by the failure of the Free Trade Area 'and our consequent isolation from the Common Market countries': as a result, 'There is a real danger that the United Kingdom may become a stagnant economic backwater, cut off from the swift flowing main stream of European economic growth.' He then continued:

> The prime duty of any British Government in the next five years is to prevent it by pulling this country out of the morass of stagnation. There is no point in proclaiming our role as an imperial power and a unique world influence, or even in boasting of the strength and influence of sterling, if it is all to be done on the hollow foundation of a decaying economy at home. Indeed, these grandiose boasts, by straining our resources, are likely to make the decline in our relative position still more rapid. That is one reason why I regret that the Government has so far failed to associate us with the movement for European integration. Our neighbours in Europe are roughly our economic and military equals. We would do better to live gracefully with them than to waste our substance by trying unsuccessfully to keep up with the power giants of the modern world.[39]

[39] Roy Jenkins, *The Labour Case* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1959), 10–11.

In the event, however, Britain's voters opted for the Conservatives rather than Labour in 1959. Jenkins' career would continue on the opposition benches for 5 more years.

Macmillan's government was not immune from the political and economic pressures that Jenkins had identified. Indeed, Jenkins' analysis of both the economic pressures at play on Britain and the implications of such pressures for Britain's world role were in many ways closer to the views of the Conservative Prime Minister than they were to those of Gaitskell.[40] By early 1961 it was hence increasingly clear that the Conservative government would adopt the course of action that Jenkins had prescribed for Labour and apply to join the EEC. This prospect had a galvanising effect on the wider debate about Britain's European role and on discussions within the Labour Party.

Jenkins threw himself into support for the first British application with great enthusiasm. As early as the summer of 1960 he had resigned from a minor opposition spokesman's position so as to be free to speak in favour of European Community membership.[41] By the following spring he was actively involved in attempts to establish a cross-party grouping to lobby on the issue. In early March he asked Lord Gladwyn, formerly British ambassador in Paris, to serve as chairman for the Common Market Campaign, explaining that 'we must mount a campaign to show the Government that important people in every party and every walk of life are in favour of this. I have the impression that Macmillan wants to apply for membership of the EEC if he can get enough support.'[42] When the grouping was officially launched in May, Jenkins himself became one of several deputy chairmen, carefully selected to indicate the cross-party nature of the cause.[43] And, in due course, he would also become the chairman of the Labour Common Market Committee, formed in September 1961.[44] By the time negotiations

[40] There is a substantial literature on the Conservatives' turn to Europe. See, for example, John W. Young, *Britain and European Unity, 1945–1999* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000) and Alan S. Milward, *The Rise and Fall of a National Strategy, 1945–1963: The UK and the European Community*, vol. 1 (London: Whitehall History Pub. in association with Frank Cass, 2002).

[41] Jenkins, *A Life at the Centre*, 144.

[42] Hubert Miles Gladwyn Jebb, *The Memoirs of Lord Gladwyn* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1972), 338.

[43] Robert J. Lieber, *British Politics and European Unity: Parties, Elites, and Pressure Groups* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1970), 215.

[44] Ibid.

opened in Brussels in the autumn of 1961, Jenkins, despite still being no more than a back-bencher, had already marked himself out as the Labour Party's most engaged pro-European.

Such organisational efforts were flanked with a great deal of speaking and journalism on the European issue. A month before the British officially applied he spoke in a Commons debate on the issue called by a fellow Labour MP opposed to the prospective application. His speech contained a carefully reasoned demolition of all of the arguments that Sidney Silverman had advanced against British membership.[45] He also used one of his regular columns in *The Spectator* to deplore the fact that neither the government nor the opposition had made parliamentary time available for a substantive discussion of the issue, meaning that the arguments for and against had been aired only in a private member's motion.[46] In early August he spoke again in the Commons, this time in the main debate that followed the announcement of Macmillan's decision to submit a conditional membership application to the EEC. His was one of the few clearly pro-European interventions from a Labour MP, in a debate where most opposition speakers felt obliged to adopt a cautiously non-committal stance.[47] On this occasion, however, Jenkins did comply with party instructions and abstained in the final vote. The same month he also published a long piece in *Encounter* again analysing the state of the debate and reiterating his strongly favourable views.[48]

The most awkward aspect of this high-profile campaign, however, was the struggle to win over majority opinion within his own party. A substantial portion of his August 1961 Commons speech had clearly been directed at his own side of the chamber rather than at the government. This applied to some extent to those portions of the speech rejecting the idea that Britain had to choose between Europe and the Commonwealth. Jenkins' suggestion that the developing countries of Africa and Asia would be better served by a prosperous Britain that had joined the EEC and was able to supply them with the capital and markets that they needed, rather than a stagnating Britain left on the margins of Europe, was very much a Labour

[45] House of Commons debates, 28 June 1961, vol. 643, cc. 519–80, available at http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1961/jun/28/european-common-market

[46] 'Teetering towards Europe', *The Spectator*, 7 July 1961.

[47] House of Commons debates, 2 August 1961, vol. 645, cc. 1480–606, available at http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1961/aug/02/european-economic-community

[48] Reprinted in Roy Jenkins, *Essays and Speeches* (London: Collins, 1967), 117–23.

iteration of the Commonwealth issue. Most Tory speakers would have placed much greater emphasis on the views and needs of the white former Dominions, rather than on the newly independent countries of South Asia or sub-Saharan Africa. But the effort to woo Labour members was even clearer in the passages exploring the likely effects of EEC membership on Britain's capacity to pursue a progressive domestic agenda:

> Is it suggested that by entering the Common Market Britain would become more of a Tory nation? Is it suggested that she would be less capable of advances towards social progress than she would be if she stayed out? Whatever view we may take about certain policies of Dr. Adenauer and General de Gaulle, anyone who looked at the situation in Europe at the present time and said that from a left-wing point of view this country was far in advance of the Europe of the Six must have gone to sleep in 1949 and not woken up since. He would be living in a world of twelve years ago.
>
> Let us consider what has been done in Europe. We have the most rapid rise in national incomes shown by France, Germany and Italy; the fullest of full employment shown by France and Germany; a model system of economic planning in France; highly successful nationalised industries in France; a very developed system of retirement benefits, which makes anything that we have in this country look a disgrace, in Germany, and excellent family allowances in France. In many respects the Europe of the Six has far more to offer the people, and has shown a greater achievement in the last ten years, than anything we have been able to get in this country.[49]

Such efforts would continue at the Labour Party conference in Blackpool. The substance of Jenkins' remarks was broadly similar to those made in Parliament. Once more he suggested that the Commonwealth/Europe choice was a false one; again he asserted that EEC membership would in no sense obstruct a future Labour government's ability to reform Britain in a progressive manner. But he ended with an impassioned call on his fellow party members to steer clear of an anti-EEC campaign based on 'narrow nationalist xenophobia' which would ill-suit an internationalist party. 'Don't forget, if you fight the Common Market you will have the *Daily Herald*, the *Daily Mirror*, the *Guardian* and the *Observer* against you. And who will be on your side? The *Daily Express* and the *Daily Worker*

[49] House of Commons debates, 2 August 1961, vol. 645, cc. 1480–606, available at http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1961/aug/02/european-economic-community

and nothing else.'[50] As the *Daily Herald*'s conference report acknowledged, however, the general mood of the debate was very hesitant, if not hostile. The official result was to confirm the party's so-called 'wait and see' policy. But 'what the debate did show was that a section of the Party will oppose British entry whatever the terms turn out to be'.[51] Jenkins' Europeanism was badly out of step with a substantial portion of his own party.[52]

The key prize in the battle over Europe within the Labour Party was Gaitskell. Throughout the first 12 months or so of the first application, the Labour leader adopted a studiously neutral stance on the issue.[53] Behind the scenes, however, a huge amount of lobbying was underway in an effort to convince him to come down on one side or other of the fence. Jenkins was deeply involved in this struggle. In April 1962, he stage-managed a dinner attended by both Gaitskell and Jean Monnet, in the hope that the man generally regarded as the father of the integration process could win over the Labour leader. The plan misfired disastrously, however, with Gaitskell and Monnet totally unable to comprehend one another. 'I have never seen less of a meeting of minds' conceded Jenkins with hindsight.[54] Next Jenkins resorted to a direct appeal, addressing a long handwritten letter to Gaitskell in May, in which he sought to identify the multiple dangers which would result from a negative Labour line on Europe. According to Jenkins this would play badly in terms of parliamentary arithmetic, would complicate relations between Gaitskell and the Kennedy administration, and domestically would alienate 'neutral intelligent opinion'.[55] And finally, in September when confronted with ever-clearer evidence that Gaitskell's hostility towards the EEC was growing, Jenkins sought to discuss the issue with his party leader over lunch.[56]

[50] *Report and Opinion from the Labour Party Conference, Blackpool 1961* (Daily Herald, 1961), 41.

[51] Ibid., 39.

[52] In the absence of a detailed archival study of the European debate within the Labour Party during this period, the best sources are Roger Broad, *Labour's European Dilemmas: From Bevin to Blair* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001); Lynton Robins, *The Reluctant Party: Labour and the EEC, 1961–75* (Ormskirk: Hesketh, 1979); Uwe W. Kitzinger, *The Second Try: Labour and the EEC* (Oxford and New York: Pergamon Press, 1969).

[53] Williams, *Hugh Gaitskell*, 702–18.

[54] Jenkins, *A Life at the Centre*, 145. The meeting is also discussed in Campbell, *Roy Jenkins: A Well-Rounded Life*, 220–1; Williams, *Hugh Gaitskell*, 708–9.

[55] Campbell, *Roy Jenkins: A Well-Rounded Life*, 221–3.

[56] Jenkins, *A Life at the Centre*, 145.

In the autumn of 1962 it would become clear, however, that all such efforts had been to no avail. In September/October Gaitskell did come down off the fence on Europe, but he did so resolutely on the Eurosceptical rather than pro-European side. The Labour leader's conference speech contained a passionate and emotional defence of the Commonwealth and a famous denunciation of British European membership as 'the end of a thousand years of history'.[57] Jenkins was upset but defiant, declaring in his own conference speech that 'I am still convinced that Britain's destiny lies with Europe and that unless we go in we shall be both poorer and weaker than we need be.'[58] He could also draw some comfort from being joined in his minority position by several other prominent Gaitskellites, hence his inclusion in his memoirs of Dora Gaitskell's reported comment to her neighbour in the aftermath of her husband's speech, 'Charlie, all the wrong people are cheering.'[59] But the gulf between Jenkins' ever-more pronounced pro-European views and the majority current of opinion within the Labour Party had never been wider.

Gaitskell and Jenkins soon managed to patch up their differences.[60] But the long-term significance of their divergence over Europe was soon called into question, first by the Labour leader's unexpected death in January 1963—something that came as a huge shock to Jenkins—and then, days later, by de Gaulle's veto and the abrupt end of the Britain's first membership bid.[61] In the wake of the General's 'no', the immediacy of Britain's European choice largely disappeared and with it the fissile effect it had been having on the Labour Party.[62] Harold Wilson, who succeeded Gaitskell, was thus able to plan his shadow Cabinet, and then, following his triumph in the 1964 general election, his first government, without giving too much thought to the positions that each Labour member had adopted on Europe, a subject close neither to his heart nor to the party's manifesto.

[57] For substantial extracts from Gaitskell's speech, see *Report and Opinion from the Labour Conference, Brighton 1962* (Daily Herald, 1962), pp. 31–2. For the wider context, see Williams, *Hugh Gaitskell*, 718–49.

[58] *Report and Opinion from the Labour Conference, Brighton 1962*, p. 34.

[59] Jenkins, *A Life at the Centre*, 146.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Milward, *The Rise and Fall of a National Strategy, 1945–1963*; N. Piers Ludlow, *Dealing with Britain: The Six and the First UK Application to the EEC* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 200–30.

[62] The idea of Europe having a 'fissile effect' is borrowed from Hugo Young, *This Blessed Plot: Britain and Europe from Churchill to Blair* (New York: Overlook Press, 1999).

From the point of view of Jenkins' early ministerial career, this was almost certainly a good thing. His appointments initially as Minister of Aviation and then, from December 1965, as Home Secretary reflected Jenkins' very evident talent rather than Machiavellian calculations of party balance.

Neither job, furthermore, had any close connection with European integration. There was an international dimension to the job as Minister of Aviation of course, not least the need to manage the collision between the incoming government's desire to save money and the soaring costs of the Anglo-French programme to produce Concorde.[63] One of Jenkins' first ministerial duties would be to visit Paris in order to convey the news that the British government had decided to cancel the project—something of a baptism of fire in terms of international diplomacy.[64] But in a period where Wilson showed no interest in trying to revive the question of British EEC membership, the direct links between this Anglo-French spat and the more fundamental issue of Britain's place in Europe were fairly tenuous. The Home Office meanwhile constituted, as the name implies, one of the most domestic facing of all the major ministerial portfolios. Here too, Jenkins was able to operate, to some acclaim, without the issue of his European views being at all relevant.[65] The early stages of Jenkins ministerial career, therefore, mattered as far as the scope of this chapter is concerned, primarily because of the way in which they cemented Jenkins' reputation as one of the rising stars of the Labour Party. As a result, when the European question did, at length, resurface, Jenkins was no longer an ambitious and well-connected but relatively junior party member, but instead one of the more powerful figures in the Labour government.

The reasons that drove Harold Wilson eventually to submit an application for EEC membership to which he had initially been strongly opposed lie outside the remit of this chapter.[66] But by the middle of 1966, if not

[63] Jenkins, *A Life at the Centre*, 160–6; Campbell, *Roy Jenkins: A Well-Rounded Life*, 247–8.

[64] The decision was subsequently reversed—something that Jenkins felt retrospectively ambivalent about. Jenkins, *A Life at the Centre*, 166.

[65] Ibid., 175–213; Campbell, *Roy Jenkins: A Well-Rounded Life*, 259–308; Philip Allen, 'A Young Home Secretary', in *Roy Jenkins: A Retrospective*, ed. Adonis and Thomas, 61–82.

[66] The best sources are: Helen Parr, *Britain's Policy Towards the European Community: Harold Wilson and Britain's World Role, 1964–1967* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006); John W. Young, *The Labour Governments 1964–1970*, vol. 2: *International Policy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003); Stephen Wall, *The Official History of Britain and the European Community*, vol. 2: *From Rejection to Referendum, 1963–1975* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012).

earlier, the issue of EEC membership which had all but vanished off the political radar during Labour's early years in power was back at the very centre of British political debate. Jenkins unsurprisingly was much involved.[67] His views had not changed over the intervening period and he was now in the privileged position of being able to make the case for Europe from a seat at the Cabinet table rather than from the opposition backbenches. In April and May 1967, he thus lent his voice to both the economic and political cases for a new British entry bid, and thereby contributed to the launch of the second British application.[68] Interestingly, though, Jenkins' contributions to these discussions, while forceful and well-informed, were much less significant, in frequency, length, and effectiveness, than those of George Brown, Michael Stewart, and the Prime Minister himself. To a certain extent of course this was simply the inevitable consequence of departmental responsibility. Brown, the Foreign Secretary, and Stewart, the Secretary of State for Economic Affairs, had to be at the heart of any government discussion of EEC membership; the Home Secretary, by contrast, while able to intervene in a personal capacity during Cabinet discussions, had little by way of departmental responsibility for the issue and partly as a result lacked the civil service support on the EEC question that Brown or Stewart enjoyed. But it may also have reflected the fact that Jenkins had adopted so high profile a stance in the previous round of European discussions that his position on the issue was well known and could largely be taken for granted. He hence mattered rather less in a Cabinet debate that was primarily about winning over the undecided ministers than he otherwise might have done. Indeed as Wilson adroitly steered discussions in the direction that he wanted them to go, too prominent a role for a leading advocate of European integration might have been counter-productive.

A second Gaullist veto put paid to Wilson's application.[69] This time, however, the French obstruction failed to subdue the ongoing debate

[67] Although as Pimlott points out, he was not included in the key Cabinet committee established to consider the European issue. Pimlott, *Harold Wilson*, 434.

[68] No fewer than eight Cabinet meetings discussed 'The Approach to Europe' between 6 April and 2 May 1967. The relevant Cabinet minutes are in UKNA, CC(67) 17, CC(67) 20, CC(67) 21, CC(67) 22, CC(67) 23, CC(67) 24, CC(67) 26, and CC(67) 27. But individual ministers' contributions are not identified in these records. In order to reconstruct Jenkins' role, rather more useful is the account in Wall, *The Official History of Britain and the European Community*, vol. 2: *From Rejection to Referendum, 1963–1975*, 187–200.

[69] Parr, *Britain's Policy Towards the European Community*, 172–8.

in the same way as had happened in 1963. Both at a Community level and within British domestic politics, discussions and debate about EEC enlargement continued, however slight the prospects of the UK actually being able to join while de Gaulle remained in power.[70] The political significance of Jenkins' European views within a British government that continued to aspire to join the European Community remained high, despite the short-term frustration of such hopes. But Jenkins' prominence within the Labour Party's internal debate about the EEC rose still further because of three other factors. The first was the relative decline in importance of the more senior pro-Europeans within the party. George Brown's fall from grace was particularly obvious; the deputy leader was not reappointed to a major ministerial post once he resigned as Foreign Secretary in March 1968. But Michael Stewart's star was waning also, despite stepping in to fill the job vacated by Brown for the last year and a half of the Wilson government. Jenkins was thus left increasingly unchallenged as the dominant pro-European figure. Second, Jenkins' new job as Chancellor of the Exchequer which he inherited in November 1967 following the devaluation of the pound and the resignation of his predecessor, James Callaghan, gave him a direct departmental stake in the European debate that he had lacked while at the Home Office. And third, the success of his period steering the UK economy back from the turmoil of 1966 and 1967, together with the temporary dip in Callaghan's fortunes, made Jenkins seem an ever-more likely candidate to succeed Wilson. As the 1970 general election approached, Jenkins was widely tipped as the probable Foreign Secretary in a new Wilson government, and as such the man who would play a major part in steering the new set of entrance negotiations with the EEC that had become all but inevitable following de Gaulle's resignation the previous year. In private, Wilson had also let it be known that he was unlikely to serve out his third term in full; Number 10 Downing Street seemed tantalizingly close for Jenkins. And Labour's commitment to European integration seemed secure.

Before turning to the effects of the unexpected Labour defeat in June 1970, there are, however, several aspects of Jenkins' 2 and half year stint

[70] For Britain's ongoing attempts to join, see Melissa Pine, *Harold Wilson and Europe: Pursuing Britain's Membership of the European Community* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2007); and for the simmering dispute amongst the Six, see N. Piers Ludlow, *The European Community and the Crises of the 1960s: Negotiating the Gaullist Challenge* (London: Routledge, 2006), 146–98.

as Chancellor that need briefly to be discussed. The first is the way that his handling of the job gave him an international standing and prominence that help explain his later selection as Commission president. Thanks to his excellent networking skills, his taste for foreign travel, and his pro-Europeanism, Jenkins had already gained some reputation abroad prior to 1967. His ability, while still a backbencher, to lure Monnet to London for the ill-fated 1962 meeting with Gaitskell had been a demonstration of this.[71] But serving as Chancellor of the Exchequer at the height of an intense period of international debate not just about how to steady the pound but more widely about the best response to the imbalances and vulnerabilities of the global monetary system, gave Jenkins an unprecedented level of international exposure. That he was generally seen as having done well in piloting the UK economy back from the brink of disaster, thus gave him an international standing to match his growing stature within British politics. Furthermore, in his capacity as Chancellor, Jenkins had to interact with a number of key figures whose paths he would cross again as Commission president. His French counterpart for instance during most of this period was none other than Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, later French President; his Japanese opposite number, Takeo Fukuda, would be the Prime Minister when Jenkins travelled to Tokyo as Commission president in 1977.

Finally, Jenkins' stint as Chancellor gave him a brutal introduction into the world of international monetary politics that would undoubtedly colour his attitudes towards European monetary questions during his period in Brussels. In December 1968, for example, the Chancellor found himself at a traumatic international meeting in Bonn that is widely seen as the moment when West Germany's new centrality and power in the global and European monetary system was made starkly apparent.[72] Much of the later European debate about monetary integration would centre on how to exploit but also cope with this new German economic and financial pre-eminence. Interestingly, though, Jenkins does not seem to have responded to what

[71] Somewhat surprisingly, Jenkins was not amongst the three Labour MPs selected to represent the party in Jean Monnet's influential lobby group, the Action Committee for the United States of Europe, when this body decided in 1968 to invite British members to join. Instead the people selected were George Brown, Michael Stewart, and Walter Padley. Action Committee for the United States of Europe, *Statements and Declarations 1955–67* (London: Chatham House/PEP, 1969), 102–3.

[72] Jenkins, *A Life at the Centre*, 265–8; for the wider context, see William Glenn Gray, 'Floating the System: Germany, the United States, and the Breakdown of Bretton Woods, 1969–1973', *Diplomatic History* 31, no. 2 (April 2007): 295–323.

would turn out to be the start of the break-up of the Bretton Woods system, by rejecting the whole goal of fixed exchange rates and embracing the brave new world of floating currencies, but instead by seeking new international (and European) structures able to restore that level of monetary stability that Bretton Woods could no longer provide.[73] This probably helps explain the enthusiasm with which he was able to assure Giscard in February 1970 that were Europe to move decisively in the direction of closer monetary union—a goal which had been proclaimed at the Hague summit in December 1969—Britain as a future member of the EEC would participate fully.[74]

Defeat and Disillusionment

The surprise victory of Edward Heath and the Conservatives in the June 1970 general election was a disaster for Jenkins. In the short term it put on hold his ambitions to serve as Foreign Secretary, en route, he hoped to the fourth major office of state, that of Prime Minister. It also meant that for the first time since 1964 he was not a government minister. His memoirs convey vividly the disorientation involved in the abrupt withdrawal of the ministerial car and driver, and of the office support.[75] But much more seriously, in the long run, it meant that it was a Conservative and not a Labour government that was responsible for the negotiations that would take Britain into the EEC. This in turn meant that Labour's fragile pro-European commitment shattered under the pressures of being in opposition. Many Labour MPs had never been strongly favourable anyway and a sizeable minority had remained hostile even while in government. It was hence not surprising that when to support EEC membership also meant supporting the flagship policy of an unpopular Conservative government, the pro-European majority within Labour began to fall apart. The process was accelerated when Jim Callaghan, sensing the shifting party mode, made a strongly anti-European speech in May 1971. This in turn obliged Wilson, who was always acutely sensitive to possible challenges to his leadership, to adjust his own stance so as to avoid being outflanked. A sustained drift into a more sceptical position had begun.[76]

[73] See his revealing aside in his memoirs about the demise of the Bretton Woods system and its consequences: Jenkins, *A Life at the Centre*, 326.

[74] Wall, *The Official History of Britain and the European Community*, vol. 2: *From Rejection to Referendum, 1963–1975*, 348.

[75] Jenkins, *A Life at the Centre*, 307–8.

[76] Wall, *The Official History of Britain and the European Community*, vol. 2: *From Rejection to Referendum, 1963–1975*, 415–20.

Committed Labour pro-Europeans were thus left in an almost impossible position—and none more so than Jenkins, by now the deputy leader of the party. The Heath government was carrying out a policy that they had advocated for well over a decade, and negotiating furthermore on the basis of briefs and positions drawn up by the Labour government prior to June 1970.[77] It was hence all but impossible for Labour's pro-Europeans to criticise the outcomes of the ongoing membership talks or to contemplate voting against any eventual membership treaty. And yet by not doing so they were increasingly perceived by a substantial portion of their own party as surrendering a potentially powerful and popular set of arguments that could be used against the Heath government. This in turn might help sustain the Conservatives in office. The right of the Labour pro-Europeans to maintain their stance was hence increasingly contested within the Labour Party.

Needless to say Jenkins and his allies sought to counter the party's move towards Euroscepticism.[78] Jenkins tried to persuade Wilson on a one-to-one basis.[79] He also made a passionate and highly effective speech to a gathering of the parliamentary party, only to realise with hindsight that while enthusing his supporters it also provoked his opponents and made them ever more determined to campaign against British membership of the EEC.[80] And he worked hard, helped by colleagues like Bill Rodgers, to ensure that a solid phalanx of Labour pro-Europeans (or pro-Marketeers as they were then more often described) remained united, despite the huge pressures to which they were subjected.[81] He could do little, however, to prevent the wider drift of the party or that of the Labour leader. As Jenkins' memoirs put it, witnessing the new line that Wilson felt obliged to adopt at the special Labour Party conference convened on the European issue in July 1971 was 'like watching someone being sold down the river into slavery, drifting away, depressed but unprotesting'.[82]

Labour's shift on the issue meant that in October 1971, when the House of Commons was asked to approve in principle Britain's accession to the European Community, Jenkins and his pro-European allies felt that

[77] The best study of the negotiations is Daniel Furby, 'The Revival and Success of Britain's Second Application for Membership of the European Community, 1968–71' (PhD dissertation, Queen Mary University of London, 2009).

[78] Campbell, *Roy Jenkins: A Well-Rounded Life*, 360–96.

[79] Jenkins, *A Life at the Centre*, 319–20.

[80] Ibid., 322–3; Campbell, *Roy Jenkins: A Well-Rounded Life*, 375.

[81] Jenkins, *A Life at the Centre*, 328.

[82] Ibid., 320.

they had no option other than to defy party instructions and vote with the government.[83] They had hoped that Wilson would grant Labour MPs a free vote on the issue, as Heath had done for the Conservatives.[84] But this wish had not been granted and instead Jenkins and 68 other Labour parliamentarians, including several front rank figures, defied a three-line whip and voted for British membership. Twenty others abstained. Jenkins, like other front-bench rebels, had been unable to speak in the 'great debate' that had stretched over the 6 days preceding the final vote on 28 October 1971. But the pro-European position was ably set out by a combination of rising young party members, as yet unconstrained by front-bench disciplines, like David Owen and Roy Hattersley, and former ministers no longer gagged in the same manner as Jenkins, Shirley Williams, or George Thomson. Notable in this last category was the former Foreign Secretary, Michael Stewart.[85] This major rebellion had made the difference between success and failure for the government, since Heath had a small majority and rebels of his own. Thanks to the Labour revolt, however, the decision in principle to join the EEC on the basis of the terms that had been negotiated in the Brussels entry talks was approved by 356 votes to 244.

With British membership now likely to go ahead, the focus of the battle within the Labour Party shifted instead to what a Labour government would do about the EEC if and when it came back to power. Here too Jenkins and his allies were forced into a desperate and ineffective rearguard struggle firstly against too strong an insistence on renegotiation and secondly against the outcome of any renegotiation being subject to a referendum. It was defeat over the latter question that would precipitate Jenkins' resignation as deputy leader of the party in April 1972.[86] A man

[83] Uwe W. Kitzinger, *Diplomacy and Persuasion: How Britain Joined the Common Market* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1973); N. Piers Ludlow, 'Safeguarding British Identity or Betraying It? The Role of British "Tradition" in the Parliamentary Great Debate on EC Membership, October 1971', *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 53, no. 1 (January 2015): 18–34.

[84] Jenkins had asked for this as early as February 1971, at which point Wilson had still hoped that the party as a whole might vote in favour of entry rather than against. The Labour leader had at that point regarded a free vote as a worst-case scenario. Six months later he had not felt able to grant even this. Jenkins, *A Life at the Centre*, 316.

[85] For a recent analysis of the arguments, for and against British membership, deployed during the debate see Ludlow, 'Safeguarding British Identity or Betraying It?'

[86] Jenkins, *A Life at the Centre*, 333–49; Campbell, *Roy Jenkins: A Well-Rounded Life*, 383–96.

seemingly on course for the party leadership only 2 years earlier, was now stepping away from his principal remaining party responsibility.

The European issue was not the only factor behind Jenkins' growing disillusionment with the Labour Party (and the party's disillusionment with him). The more general shift towards the left of the party during these years would always have been problematic for someone like Jenkins who was to the right of the party and committed to a vision of social democracy very different from the more radical aspirations of the party left. Likewise, the early 1970s also saw Jenkins outmanoeuvred by Jim Callaghan in particular. Callaghan was much quicker than Jenkins to pick up the direction in which sentiment amongst Labour MPs and activists was moving, and to trim his own sails accordingly. Jenkins' own links with the party rank and file were less good—David Marquand, a former close ally, highlights Jenkins' reluctance to socialise with other parliamentarians, let alone with party activists[87]—and his willingness to tailor his political priorities so as to accommodate the mood within the wider party was much less great. And Jenkins' personal irritations with Wilson continued to grow. The two men had never been close, and Wilson had harboured great suspicions throughout the latter 1960s and into the 1970s that Jenkins was plotting to oust him as party leader. But Jenkins had lacked the killer instinct to act against Wilson when his own prestige was highest. By 1972, therefore, there was an air of wistful regret about Jenkins' gradual realisation that his best opportunities to have acceded to the top of the political pile probably now lay in the past.[88] But the European issue was undoubtedly the single biggest cause of Jenkins' fall from grace with the party. After all it was very much at the heart of his social democratic vision—and consequently one of the issues where the gulf between his views and those of the Labour left were least reconcilable. It was also the main cause that Callaghan had been able to exploit in his efforts to rebuild his own position within the party and displace Jenkins as Wilson's heir apparent. For someone like Callaghan who never regarded Britain's position in Europe as the key issue in British politics, adjusting his own stance on Europe was possible; for Jenkins it was not. And Europe was at the heart of Jenkins' irritations at Wilson, the very embodiment of Wilson's tendency to be, in Jenkins' words, 'a weak leader of a broad party'.[89] There

[87] Interview with David Marquand, 7 June 2011.
[88] Jenkins, *A Life at the Centre*, 336.
[89] Ibid., 349.

was hence a very clear connection between Jenkins' pro-European views and his progressive marginalisation within the Labour Party.

The upshot was that when Labour won the 1974 general election and Wilson returned to power, Jenkins was already a much less central figure within the party than he had been only 4 years earlier. He was also someone whose views on the big foreign policy issue of the day, namely European integration and Britain's role in it, were so far out of line with the party mainstream that Wilson did not feel that he could ask Jenkins to serve as Foreign Secretary—the job to which he aspired and for which he was in most respects eminently qualified.[90] Instead, Jenkins had no option other than to accept reappointment to the Home Office, despite his self-confessed lack of appetite for a second stint as Home Secretary. It was to Callaghan that the position of Foreign Secretary would go and it was Jenkins' nemesis in Labour Party politics who would hence be in charge of the 'renegotiation' process between Britain and its European partners.[91]

Ironically, though, the issue that most excited and enthused Jenkins during his 3 years in the third Wilson government was the European referendum that he had fought so hard to prevent and over which he had resigned as deputy leader of the party.[92] For the months prior to the June 1975 national vote on Britain's membership of the EEC saw Jenkins return to a role as lobbyist on the European issue akin to his earlier efforts in 1961–3 but with the added advantage of much greater seniority. Jenkins thus became the chairman of Britain in Europe—the organisers of the 'yes' campaign—and played a prominent part in the successful effort to persuade the British public to endorse the Heath government's

[90] Campbell, *Roy Jenkins: A Well-Rounded Life*, 414.

[91] There is as yet no detailed study of the renegotiation process. The best sources are Wall, *The Official History of Britain and the European Community*, vol. 2: *From Rejection to Referendum, 1963–1975*, 511–80; Mathias Haeussler, 'A Pyrrhic Victory: Harold Wilson, Helmut Schmidt, and the British Renegotiation of EC Membership, 1974–5', *International History Review* 37, no. 4 (2015): 768–89; Aoife Collins, 'The Cabinet Office, Tony Benn and the Renegotiation of Britain's Terms of Entry into the European Community, 1974–1975', *Contemporary British History* 24, no. 4 (December 2010): 471–91.

[92] The referendum too awaits a major new study, although one is in preparation by Robert Saunders at Queen Mary University of London. In the meantime the available literature includes: Wall, *The Official History of Britain and the European Community*, vol. 2: *From Rejection to Referendum, 1963–1975*, 580–90; David Butler and Uwe Kitzinger, *The 1975 Referendum* (London: Macmillan, 1976); Anthony King, *Britain Says Yes: The 1975 Referendum on the Common Market* (Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1977).

European choice.[93] This involved multiple public speeches across the country, normally for events organised by Britain in Europe, sometimes for those run by the parallel Labour Committee for Europe, the writing of several prominent newspaper articles, and several important appearances on television, notably a lengthy on-screen joust with Tony Benn on the *Panorama* programme on the BBC.[94] He also reportedly entirely rewrote the text of the single brochure that the 'yes' campaign were entitled to send to all registered voters.[95]

Jenkins' own recollections of the referendum campaign are extremely positive.[96] The experience of campaigning closely with politicians from other parties—he often shared platforms with the Conservative, Willie Whitelaw and the Liberal leader, Jeremy Thorpe—proved largely positive, and the cause was one that he felt able to strive for with an enthusiasm and energy mostly lacking from his recent role during the 1974 general election. The 'yes' campaign furthermore benefited greatly from the fact that its platforms and manifestations were populated by a cross-section of politicians from all of the main political parties, whereas those of the 'no' campaign were dominated by figures like Tony Benn, Enoch Powell, or Ian Paisley whom voters regarded as extreme and antipathetic.[97] The highly gratifying nature of the outcome with an overwhelming victory for the 'yes' campaign with 67.2 % of the vote, as against 32.8 % for 'no', also helps explain Jenkins' retrospective enthusiasm for the experience. With the exception of Shetland and the Western Isles, the whole country had clearly voted to remain within the EEC.[98] But in many ways this important triumph only hastened Jenkins' sense of discomfort within Labour.

[93] Butler and Kitzinger, *The 1975 Referendum*, 75ff.

[94] For some of the materials used by Jenkins in his speeches during the campaign, see Jenkins Papers, Bodleian Library, Oxford (henceforward JP), Box 304; for an example of his print journalism, see 'Why only a resounding "yes" can stave off the real possibility of national decline', *The Times*, 12 May 1975; for discussion of the *Panorama* programme, Butler and Kitzinger, 204–5; Campbell, *Roy Jenkins: A Well-Rounded Life*, 447.

[95] Britain in Europe, *Why You Should Vote 'Yes'* (1975); for the claim that Jenkins intervened personally to rewrite it, see Butler and Kitzinger, *The 1975 Referendum*, 94.

[96] Jenkins, *A Life at the Centre*, 399–418.

[97] King, *Britain Says Yes*, 111–12. An *Evening Standard* cartoon of March 1975 portrayed the main 'no' campaign leaders leading a march made up an assortment of wild and alarming figures, including the Trotskyists, the National Front, the Orange Order, and the Scottish Nationalists. Reprinted in Butler and Kitzinger, *The 1975 Referendum*, 167.

[98] For an analysis of the outcomes, see Butler and Kitzinger, *The 1975 Referendum*, 263–78.

Coexisting in the same party with those like Benn with whom he had tangled most directly would be hard; doing so in a party whose leading figures, Wilson and Callaghan, he still so mistrusted and one of whom, Callaghan, he thought had contributed very little to the satisfactory outcome would be even harder.[99] And suspicions within the party of someone who seemed much more at home sharing platforms with prominent figures from other parties than he did at Labour party gatherings only increased still further.[100] Successful and stimulating though it proved, the referendum episode did nothing to halt Jenkins' steady slide out of the Labour Party, and may well even have accelerated it.

What Type of Europe?

The reputation as a pro-European with which Jenkins arrived in Brussels was hence well-earned. 'Europe' had been one of the first causes and ideas to bring Jenkins to prominence within British politics. It had been a consistent theme in his political activities from the mid-1950s through to the mid-1970s. And it was the cause that had been most closely linked to the frustrations and career setbacks which had afflicted Jenkins during the 1970–6 period. It would be an over-simplification to say that Jenkins had been both made and unmade as a Labour politician by the European question, but it would be an observation that contained more than a kernel of truth.

Yet viewed as a launching pad for a European career, as opposed to a British one, Jenkins' Europeanism was also somewhat limited. Jenkins' main focus after all, from 1957 through to 1975, had been on what Europe could do for Britain, how it would affect Britain's world role, and how it would impinge upon Britain's political future, rather than on how the European Community itself would and should develop. His speeches and his writings had endlessly explored the new possibilities that British European involvement would open up—hence the recurrent strand of his thought linking EEC membership with the type of progressive policies that he saw being carried out in much of Western Europe. And they had also outlined, sometimes in lurid terms, the dangers that non-involvement

[99] Jenkins, *A Life at the Centre*, 415.

[100] There were persistent rumours throughout the campaign that the intra-party cooperation that characterised the 'yes' campaign would result in an attempt to form a coalition government. See Campbell, *Roy Jenkins: A Well-Rounded Life*, 449.

would entail. This was as true of his early interventions in the Council of Europe, as it was of his activities during the referendum campaign in the latter stages of which Jenkins had taken to warning that to vote to leave the EEC would oblige Britain to retire into 'an old people's home for fading nations'.[101] Entering the EEC was thus associated in his mind with Britain carving out for itself a realistic, but still activist, place in world politics, as well as shaping its own internal development by borrowing or imitating the most positive aspects of French or West German domestic and economic policy.

He had, by contrast, written and spoken much less about Europe's likely collective trajectory. To be sure, he had realised ever since the mid-1950s, that the integration process was a political and not just an economic process. He clearly regarded it furthermore as something that had helped transform the Western half of the continent bringing not just greater stability but also an unprecedented level of political stability and peace.[102] But he showed little inclination to follow Heath in presenting European Community membership as a great civilisational choice, embedding Britain in the glories of Europe's past culture. Nor did he spend much time setting out in detail how exactly the European structures functioned and might develop over time. Not for Jenkins, the endless discussions of how best the European Community's internal institutional structures and processes might be improved or fine-tuned. A few general statements about the desirability of improved democratic accountability or more effective decision-making apart, Jenkins' pre-1976 output is almost entirely free of discussion of how exactly the Community that he so wanted Britain to join (and then remain within) should operate.[103] Nor is there much detail about what this Community should do in terms of policy priorities. Like many Britons, Jenkins had serious misgivings about the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) but little specialised knowledge about how it worked. The Community's flagship policy was thus something that he had hoped that Britain would be able to alter from within,

[101] Butler and Kitzinger, *The 1975 Referendum*, 183.

[102] See, for example, his put-down in the Commons in June 1961 when a Labour opponent had sought to recall Germany's wartime role. House of Commons debates, 28 June 1961, vol. 643, c.537, available at http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1961/jun/28/european-common-market

[103] Jenkins, *Essays and Speeches*, 126.

but what exactly such change would entail had not been thought out.[104] He had an open mind on monetary integration, although again readiness to contemplate British involvement in collective European efforts to tame the excesses of the global currency system had not been flanked by any prolonged or detailed study of the subject. It is revealing that both the public speeches that he made on monetary issues during the early 1970s were about global currency matters and not European arrangements.[105] His general internationalist political instincts were always likely to favour EC policies that emphasised commercial openness, cooperation with the other major Western powers, and a degree of engagement with the developing world.[106] And having staked so much of his career on emphasising the importance of the integration process, he had every reason to hope that the European Community could demonstrate its ability to help the various states of Europe, including Britain, recover from the economic crises of the mid-1970s.[107] But these broad principles fell some way short of a full European programme. Proven European though he undoubtedly was, Jenkins would thus have to make most of the decisions about what sort of Europe he wished to work for after his appointment as Commission president rather than before.

[104] The argument that Britain would be able to change more once inside the Community than it could hope to do from without recurred across Jenkins' early speeches and writings. See, for example, ibid., 126–7.

[105] *The Guardian*, 17 March and 27 May 1973.

[106] For an eloquent *plaidoyer* for an activist and outward-looking Community with a committed Britain at its heart, see Jenkins' speech to the Kensington and Chelsea Chamber of Trade and Commerce, 13 October 1976. JP, Box 305.

[107] Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 2–3.

CHAPTER 3

Preparing for Brussels: Priorities, Personalities, and Portfolios

Roy Jenkins was meant to be a very different Commission president from his predecessors. This did not just reflect his nationality, although the appointment of a Commission president from the largest of the three new member states only 4 years after the first enlargement of the EEC was undoubtedly an important symbolic gesture. It was also apparent from his career prior to assuming the presidency: none of those to have held the office before had enjoyed the same degree of domestic political success or could boast so substantial an international reputation. And his distinction emerged too in the manner in which he was appointed. Jenkins was approached about the post significantly earlier than any of his predecessors had been, would be treated as president-elect for a full 6 months before arriving in Brussels, and would benefit from a lengthy preparatory period in the course of which he could begin a dialogue with the member states about both the personnel and the policies of his Commission. Any detailed account of his presidency thus needs to begin well before 4 January 1977, the day he actually arrived in Brussels to take up his new functions, and to explore both the circumstances that led to his appointment, and the crucial months he and his team spent readying themselves for Brussels. For, as will be seen, this prelude to power did much to determine Jenkins' mood and fortunes upon first assuming office, and highlighted many of the themes and dilemmas that would recur throughout his presidency.

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A Very Political Choice

The Treaty of Rome contains no provisions relating to the nationality of the Commission president, stipulating simply that the president and vice-presidents should be chosen from those selected as members of the Commission. In practice, however, it had become customary by the 1970s for the post to rotate on an informal basis between the different member states. Given that each of the founding members other than Luxembourg had already held the post, it had been unofficially agreed that the successor to François-Xavier Ortoli, the Frenchman who took up office in January 1973, would be from one of the three new entrants. Exactly when this deal was struck, or who was party to it, is not clear from the documentary record. The most likely time and place was the Paris summit of Community leaders, held in October 1972—the first EC gathering also to include representatives of the three countries due to join at the end of that year. The other possibility is the General Affairs Council in December 1972 which formally approved the members of the first, post-enlargement Commission. But by October 1974 it was already possible for a note prepared for Harold Wilson, the British Prime Minister, to assert: 'It was tacitly accepted before enlargement that if the United Kingdom nominated to the Commission a candidate of sufficient calibre, he would succeed to the Presidency on M. Ortoli's retirement.'[1] A Briton could have the post, in other words, provided someone of sufficient quality and stature could be persuaded to take the job.

The initial front-runner for the presidency was Sir Christopher Soames, one of the two British Commissioners serving in the Ortoli Commission. A former Cabinet minister under Harold Macmillan, Britain's ambassador to Paris during the period when UK EEC membership had been negotiated, and an energetic and charismatic figure, Soames was widely seen as having been a success as the Commissioner responsible for external affairs.[2] Of particular note had been his role in planning a high-profile visit to Beijing that had led to the opening of diplomatic relations between the EEC and the People's Republic of China—a coup almost wholly organised and plotted by Soames and his staff, with minimal involvement of either

[1] UKNA, PREM 16 384, P. J. Weston to Lord Bridges, 25 October 1974.

[2] Daniel Furby and N. Piers Ludlow, 'Christopher Soames, 1968–1972', in *The Paris Embassy: British Ambassadors and Anglo-French Relations, 1944–79*, ed. John W. Young and Rogelia Pastor-Castro (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 138–61.

his fellow Commissioners or the member state governments.[3] But he had also proved able to work effectively with the Americans while still maintaining the trust and the respect of the French government in particular, an achievement of some note during a fraught period of relations between Washington and Paris.[4] Furthermore, his dynamism and enthusiasm had brought much to the Commission more generally. It was hence no surprise that Wilson discussed the presidency with Soames in October 1974.[5]

The autumn of 1974 was not, however, an ideal moment at which to put forward the name of a British candidate for one of the EEC's most responsible positions. Wilson's government was in the process of renegotiating Britain's terms of entry to the EEC and was also committed to having the revised membership terms approved either by a referendum or a new general election. The outcome of neither could be guaranteed, given the persistently high levels of Euroscepticism apparent from British opinion polls.[6] With such uncertainty surrounding the very continuation of Britain's place within the Community, nominating Soames to succeed Ortoli once the latter's initial 2-year term came to an end in 1975 was not a realistic proposition. Instead the British government was obliged to acquiesce in the renewal of the French Commission president for a further 2 years.[7] Soames' candidacy would have to wait.

In late 1975, the renegotiation completed and the question of Britain's EEC membership seemingly settled by the positive outcome of the June 1975 referendum, the issue was raised again. Wilson referred to the possibility of a Soames presidency in a conversation with Ortoli, and then broached the topic with Soames himself in November. The Commissioner for external relations was clearly interested in the prospect. Very sensibly,

[3] Marie Julie Chenard, 'The European Community's Opening to the People's Republic of China, 1969–1979: Internal Decision-Making on External Relations' (PhD, London School of Economics, 2012).

[4] Interview with David Hannay, 14 August 2011, available at http://archives.eui.eu/en/oral_history/INT172. See also David Hannay, *Britain's Quest for a Role: A Diplomatic Memoir from Europe to the UN* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2013).

[5] UKNA, PREM 16 384, Robert Armstrong minute, 28 October 1974.

[6] Stephen Wall, *The Official History of Britain and the European Community*, vol. 2: *From Rejection to Referendum, 1963–1975* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), 511–90.

[7] UKNA, PREM 16 384, Acland to Butler, 1 November 1974. The British government actually wanted Ortoli to be renewed for a single year only, but this would have been an administrative nightmare, liable either to deprive all of the other Commissioners of their fourth year in Brussels, or to allow the nomination of the president to get out of synch with the rest of his team. It is thus unsurprising that the UK view did not prevail.

however, he indicated that he would only be able to take up this position were the other member state governments, and notably those of France and Germany, in favour of his appointment. He therefore asked Wilson to sound out his fellow European leaders.[8] This may well have happened on the margins of the European Council meeting in Rome in December. In January, however, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, the President of France, admitted to misgivings about Soames as Commission president in the course of a bilateral telephone conversation with Helmut Schmidt, the German Chancellor. Soames, he felt, was too spontaneous, and too preoccupied with international relations, properly to be able to control the Brussels bureaucracy. Might not Roy Jenkins be a better candidate?[9] This French position was then relayed by Schmidt back to the British, initially to James Callaghan, the Foreign Secretary in the course of a gathering of European socialist leaders at Elsinore in Denmark on 18 and 19 January.[10] Three days later, Wilson floated the possibility of the Commission presidency to Jenkins.[11]

The choice of Jenkins reflected a desire on the part of both the British and the Germans, and most probably also the French, to see the rather technocratic figure of Ortoli succeeded by someone of greater political stature.[12] Schmidt and Wilson both agreed, when they discussed various candidates in play in early February, that a key requirement for the next Commission president was 'greater political weight'. The names of Edward Heath and Denis Healey were also raised as possibilities in the course of the same encounter. But the German Chancellor was very clear that a Jenkins candidacy would be particularly welcome to Germany and France.[13] Both Giscard and Schmidt, as former ministers of finance, had been impressed by Jenkins' tenure as the Chancellor of the Exchequer and were aware of his ability to handle complex issues of international

[8] UKNA, PREM 16 384, Wright to Ferguson, 6 November 1975.

[9] *Akten zur Auswärtigen Politik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (henceforward AAPD) 1975, volume 1, document 10. Giscard's mind may have been encouraged to move in this direction by a conversation with Nicholas Henderson, the new British ambassador in Paris. Nicholas Henderson, *Mandarin: The Diaries of an Ambassador, 1969–1982* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1994), 98.

[10] AAPD 1975, vol. 1, document 39.

[11] Roy Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981* (London: Collins, 1989), 3.

[12] For a generally favourable assessment of the Ortoli presidency, see Laurence Badel and Eric Bussière, *François-Xavier Ortoli: L'Europe, Quel Numéro de Téléphone?* (Paris: Descartes & Cie, 2011), 119–66.

[13] AAPD 1975, vol. 1, document 39.

finance and economics.[14] But every bit as important was the fact that Jenkins was not simply an economic expert or technician. Giscard and Schmidt shared a vision of European governance in which the crucial decision-making body was the recently created European Council, the regular meetings of the Heads of State and Government—i.e. a forum in which the key political decisions about Europe's future would be taken by Europe's most senior politicians.[15] It was hence of particular importance to Giscard and Schmidt that the Commission was led by someone of sufficient stature to make a meaningful contribution at this highest level of discussion—something that Ortoli had struggled to do, despite the Commission president's attendance, as of right, at every summit meeting. Jenkins was thus specifically selected as someone able to give the post of Commission president a new and more political significance within a European Community that was still struggling to prove its relevance at a time of serious economic downturn.

Jenkins himself shared this political vision of the job. As Chap. 2 made clear, his Europeanism had always been a political creed, not just an economic choice. He had the ambition and the self-confidence furthermore to believe that he belonged amongst the presidents, prime ministers, and chancellors with whom he would have to work. His aspirations to become British Prime Minister may have been repeatedly thwarted, but his fundamental sense that Number 10 Downing Street was an address to which he was well suited had not gone away. And he harboured legitimate aspirations of being able 'to help Europe regain the momentum which it had signally lost since the oil shock at the end of 1973'.[16] In the process, he would also be able to help the cause of Britain's European vocation with which so much of his career had been associated. EEC membership would only truly be able to deliver the type of benefits, political and economic, which Jenkins and many others had predicted, were the Community able to shake off its current difficulties and regain the dynamism and momentum that it had displayed during its formative decade. Revitalising Europe would thus be in line with Jenkins' long-term ambitions. Serving once more as Home Secretary in a Labour government and party whose views

[14] The Germans had earlier suggested Jenkins as a candidate for the post of managing director of the International Monetary Fund, an offer that Jenkins had turned down. *The Guardian*, 21 May 1973.

[15] Emmanuel Mourlon-Druol, 'Filling the EEC Leadership Vacuum? The Creation of the European Council in 1974', *Cold War History* 10, no. 3 (August 2010): 315–39.

[16] Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 4.

were increasingly out of step with his own would not be. Despite initially turning down Wilson's offer, Jenkins had written again within 4 days to the Prime Minister to make clear that this was an opening in which he was genuinely interested. He also travelled to Paris to discuss the position with Giscard, who reiterated that the offer was being made in the name of both the French and German leaders. On the same visit to France Jenkins further visited Jean Monnet who urged him to accept the job. As he put it in his *European Diary*, 'Insofar as I was increasingly tempted, I was exhilarated by being blessed by the spiritual as well as the temporal authorities of Europe.'[17] Thus as soon as it became clear from his disappointing performance in the succession battle triggered by Wilson's surprise resignation in March that he had no short-term prospects of becoming British Prime Minister, Jenkins was able to announce that he was ready to take on the Commission presidency. His interest in the job became public knowledge in early April and in July his selection was enthusiastically confirmed by the assembled European leaders as they met in Brussels.[18]

The timing of this endorsement gave Jenkins an opportunity to prepare for his presidency which had been unavailable to all of his predecessors. Ortoli, for instance, had been approached about the job only in July and endorsed as the next Commission president in December—less than a month before the new Commission would be due to convene.[19] He had hence had little scope to prepare. Jenkins by contrast had nearly a full 6 months as president-elect, the last four of which were unencumbered by any governmental responsibilities as he stepped down from the Home Office in September. He also had some expectation of being able to use this time to strike up a dialogue with the member states about who would be appointed to his Commission. The recent Tindemans Report into the way in which Europe was governed—a report that was still under discussion amongst the European leaders who had commissioned it—had strongly recommended giving such power to the incoming Commission president and while the governments had not yet decided whether to accept Tindemans' recommendations or not, in the absence of a formal decision one way or the other it would be hard for them to refuse to hold such

[17] Ibid., 5.

[18] *The Financial Times*, 3 April 1976; Presidency Conclusions, Brussels European Council, 12–13 July 1976, available at http://www.european-council.europa.eu/media/849707/bruxelles_july_1976__eng_.pdf (accessed 27 January 2014).

[19] Badel and Bussière, *François-Xavier Ortoli*, 119.

discussions with Jenkins.[20] The incoming president's 6 months prior to taking up office would hence be every bit as busy—and every bit as important—as each of the 4 years that Jenkins would spend in the Commission job.

Assembling a Team

The first key task was to assemble a high quality team to assist him in Brussels. Each European Commissioner is entitled to recruit a private office, normally referred to by the French term *cabinet*. This inner team plays a number of crucial roles. First of all they are a source of advice and expertise upon which the Commissioner can draw. This matters particularly in an institution like the European Commission where each Commissioner is expected to be able to contribute intelligently to collegial discussions about all of the policy areas that fall within the Community's remit. The Commissioner responsible for industry thus needs someone close at hand who can brief him on agriculture, external relations, or development aid. Second, the *cabinet* acts as the Commissioner's eyes and ears, keeping track of what other Commissioners are working on, and liaising between the Commissioner and his (or her)[21] department(s)—or Directorate(s) General, to use the normal Commission term. Third, the head of the private office or *chef de cabinet* participates in the weekly coordinating meetings which prepare the ground and identify the key decisions needing to be taken by the weekly meeting of the Commission. Fourth the *cabinet* provides administrative support to the Commissioner, helping to organise his time, screen visitors, and ensure that proper records are kept, briefs prepared in time, and speeches drafted. A further function often although not always fulfilled by a *cabinet* is to keep in touch with the Commissioner's political hinterland by maintaining contact with the country, party, and possibly government from which they came—and to which most aspire to return.

[20] 'European Union. Report by Mr Leo Tindemans, Prime Minister of Belgium, to the European Council', *Bulletin of the European Communities*, Supplement 1/76.

[21] In Jenkins' time all of the Commissioners were men. Jenkins did slightly mischievously suggest to Giscard that he live up to his rhetoric and appoint a female Commissioner, but while France would eventually be one of the first two countries to appoint a woman to the European Commission, this would not happen until François Mitterrand nominated Christiane Scrivener in 1989. Vasso Papandreou became the Greek member of the second Delors Commission at exactly the same time. TP, Box 1, folder on 'France', record of Mr Jenkins' talk with President Giscard d'Estaing, 28 October 1976.

Who to recruit to these functions is the Commissioner's personal choice, although there are limits on the size of the private office. Most individual Commissioners were limited in the mid-1970s to a team of three or four A-grade officials, plus secretarial and administrative support. The president by contrast was allowed seven or eight A-grade staff of varying levels of seniority. By the time Jenkins had to confront such issues there was also a growing convention, although not yet a rule, that whereas the majority of a *cabinet* would almost certainly be the same nationality as the Commissioner, a small number of non-nationals should be included as well. Likewise it had become normal to balance outside officials, often brought in from the party or governmental system from which the Commissioner themselves came, with Brussels insiders recruited to the private office from existing jobs on the Commission staff. The former would bring familiarity with the Commissioner himself and the manner in which he was accustomed to working; the latter would contribute expertise about the Commission and the integration process more generally. Wherever they came from, however, the quality of staff of the *cabinet* was a crucial factor in determining the efficiency, effectiveness, and impact of any Commissioner. And needless to say, they mattered even more for a president, given the need for a strong leader to be well informed on all of the individual policy issues likely to be discussed at the weekly Commission meetings, as well as up to speed with any problems brewing amongst his colleagues and within the administration. Jenkins' early recruits would thus make a huge difference to the success or failure of his time in Brussels.

Throughout his career Jenkins had a strong preference for working closely with those he knew already and as a result the first person he persuaded to accompany him to Brussels was Hayden Phillips, his private secretary at the Home Office.[22] Phillips was, however, both somewhat young to act as *chef de cabinet* and rather too inexperienced in the ways in which Brussels worked. He would therefore become Jenkins' deputy head, cooperating closely with Crispin Tickell, who became the head of the private office. Tickell was a diplomat and knew the Community system well thanks to the time that he had spent as private secretary to Geoffrey Rippon, the ministerial leader of the team that had negotiated Britain's EEC membership between 1970 and 1972. He thus provided the inside knowledge and the linguistic range that Jenkins himself and Phillips both lacked.

[22] Roy Jenkins, *A Life at the Centre* (London: Macmillan, 1991), 446–8; Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, xx–xxii.

Tickell in turn then took charge of the recruitment of the other members of the inner team, selecting Graham Avery as an agricultural expert, Michael Emerson as an advisor on monetary issues, Roger Beetham, from the Foreign Office, as the press spokesman, Klaus Ebermann, a German who would deal with industrial affairs and overseas development, Étienne Reuter, from Luxembourg, who would assist Tickell with external relations, and Laura Grenfell, who would be responsible for parliamentary affairs. Avery, Emerson, Ebermann, and Reuter were already working for the European Commission. Michael Jenkins, another Foreign Office man and someone who had served as *chef de cabinet* to George Thomson in the Ortoli Commission, prolonged his stay in Brussels by 6 months in order to help the Jenkins team settle in. And outside of the *cabinet* officially,[23] but close to it in practice, was David Marquand, a former Labour MP who was encouraged by the president-elect to follow him to the Commission, primarily to deal with relations with the European Parliament but also to act as a conduit back to Jenkins' allies within the Labour Party.[24]

Learning How the Commission Worked

In spite of his passionate pro-Europeanism, Jenkins had little direct experience of the operation of the European institutions in general, and the European Commission in particular. He had briefly been a member of the Council of Europe assembly, but not of the European Parliament. More importantly, the bulk of his ministerial career pre-dated Britain's entry into the EEC. He had thus had little cause to travel to Brussels during his time as Minister of Aviation, Home Secretary (for the first time), or Chancellor of the Exchequer. Nor had the need really arisen when he returned to the Home Office in 1974, since in the 1970s the integration process barely impinged upon the Home Secretary's remit. There were thus no regular ministerial meetings of Home and Interior ministers, let alone the Justice and Home Affairs Councils of more recent times. And there was little need for a Home Secretary to work at all closely with the European Commission since the overlap between their respective competences and responsibilities was all but non-existent. His hands-on experience of the system in which he was soon to play a central role was hence very slight indeed.[25]

[23] His official position was attached to the Secretariat General.
[24] Interview with David Marquand, 7 June 2011.
[25] Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 2.

The incoming president was to admit as much in his first speech to the European Parliament:

> Despite this deep, long-standing and active commitment to the European cause, I have never worked closely within the institutions of the Community. I recall a remark of Winston Churchill's. When asked what was his relationship with the Church of England, he said: 'I could hardly be called *pillar* of the church. I am more in the nature of a *buttress*. I have supported it from the outside.'[26]

As a result, the second great priority of the months Jenkins was able to spend preparing to assume the role of Commission president was to become much more expert in the operation of the Community system.

To some extent this was done through reading. The *European Diary* contains an intriguing, if vague, remark about spending 'many hours on the history of the Community and on the structure of the Commission', although given the dearth of serious writing on the Community's past available in 1976 it is hard to work out exactly what Jenkins can have had in mind as far as history was concerned.[27] Rather more important were the exchanges that he and his closest collaborators began with three sets of interlocutors: the Secretary-General of the European Commission, Emile Noël and his deputy, Christopher Audland; the two serving British Commissioners, Soames and Thomson, and their respective *cabinets*; and possibly, although rather less easy to document, portions of the British civil service and government. It was, in other words, through an extensive exchange of ideas and documents with a set of key insiders, and perhaps, to a lesser extent, with his own former government, that Jenkins set about remedying his inadequate understanding of the Community system.

Emile Noël was in many respects the perfect guide to the intricacies of the European Commission. In post since the body's formation in 1958 he had been the right-hand man of all Commission presidents since Walter Hallstein, the minute-keeper of every meeting of the Commission, and a central player in virtually every administrative development or change of importance.[28] He had also fulfilled before the role of explaining the

[26] Roy Jenkins speech to EP, 11 January 1977, available at http://aei.pitt.edu/10997/

[27] Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 8.

[28] Gérard Bossuat, *Émile Noël, premier secrétaire général de la Commission européenne* (Brussels: Bruylant, 2011); Hussein Kassim, 'The Secretariat General of the European Commission: A Singular Institution', in *Politics and the European Commission*, ed. Andy Smith (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004), 47–66.

mysteries of the Commission system to an outsider, performing exactly this service for Franco Malfatti, the Italian Commission president in post for 18 months in the early 1970s and the only previous holder of the post devoid of Brussels experience.[29] His meetings with both Tickell and Phillips, and the fairly extensive correspondence with the president-elect's closest aides in the months before Jenkins took up his new post were hence of great value.[30] Equally useful were the frequent exchanges with Noël's deputy, Christopher Audland. Although of more recent Brussels vintage than the Secretary-General, Audland was also ideally qualified to guide Jenkins' team through delicate issues of Community procedure. One of his initial tasks, after arriving in Brussels as part of the first cohort of British officials in 1973, had been to draw up the first ever *Manuel de Procedures*, a guide to Commission procedures and practices that had been made necessary by the influx of new staff, but which has gone on being updated and reissued ever since.[31] He was hence highly familiar with the manner in which the Commission operated. And with a background in the Foreign Office he was particularly well equipped to demystify it for someone like Jenkins who was more accustomed to Whitehall working methods. He too struck up a regular correspondence with both Tickell and Phillips, as well as comparing notes frequently with the second key category of those 'educating' the incoming presidency about Brussels, namely the two existing British Commissioners and their key advisors.[32]

In terms of sheer volume, the quantity of information received by Jenkins and his team from the British Commissioners and their entourages far exceeded that from any other source. Soames wrote to Jenkins in July and then met him in August.[33] Senior members of his *cabinet* and that of Thomson also met Phillips in July. Then over the spring, summer, and autumn several fairly sizeable batches of papers were forwarded to the

[29] Bossuat, *Émile Noël, premier secrétaire général de la Commission européenne*, 171–4.

[30] Tickell papers, All Souls College, Oxford (henceforward TP), Box 1, folder on 'Brussels visits', record of Tickell–Noël meeting, 27 September 1976; Box 1, folder on 'Reform of the Commission', Phillips note 'My discussions in Brussels', 27– 28 July 1976 and Phillips to Jenkins, 'Meeting with Noël', 7 October 1976.

[31] Interview with Christopher Audland, 8 August 2010, available at http://archives.eui.eu/en/oral_history/INT100

[32] See, for example, TP, Box 1, folder on 'Commission Working Methods', Audland to Tickell, 20 October 1976.

[33] TP, Box 1, folder on 'Reform of the Commission', Soames to Jenkins, 14 July 1976; folder on 'Portfolios of the Commissioners', Jenkins–Soames meeting, 2 August 1976.

incoming team, both setting out how the Commission actually operated in practice, and advising on how such procedures might be improved. The flow of information began with two notes by Michael Jenkins, written up in late April, the first on 'The Commission', which described its purpose as 'to point up some of the more obvious shortcomings in the Commission and suggest areas where improvements could be made', and the second a document identifying 'Priorities for the President Designate'.[34] This too recommended a number of changes to the workings of the institution. These notes were soon followed by a letter from David Hannay, *chef de cabinet* to Soames, outlining his views as to how responsibilities for the Commission's information policy might be reallocated after 1977.[35] And over the summer the trickle turned into a flood. In certain instances the papers sent were pre-existing studies and reports commissioned to investigate aspects of the European system that did not appear to be functioning well—such was the case for example of the two reports on the Commission's information policy forwarded by Michael Jenkins to Phillips in July 1976.[36] In others they were new items, drafted by the British pioneers in Brussels and passed on to their successors. Hannay thus wrote up a piece entitled 'The Best Use of the President of the Commission's Time', and this was flanked by other unsigned contributions on 'Suggestions as to the priorities of the new President', 'Short notes on the Directorates General', and 'The Commission's Role in the Community Budget and the Control of Expenditure'.[37] A later consignment in November included a series of highly opinionated overviews of each of the main Commission policy areas.[38] Slightly unconnected, but essentially belonging in the same category, was a long reflective letter about ways in which the Commission could be altered for the better, sent directly to Jenkins in July by Gwyn Morgan, formerly Thomson's *chef de cabinet*, but now back in Wales.[39]

A third, slightly more sensitive source of information, was the British government and civil service. No Commission president can afford to be

[34] TP, Box 1, folder on 'Portfolios of the Commissioners', M. Jenkins' note, 'The Commission', 29 April 1976, and M. Jenkins' note, 'Priorities for the President Designate', undated.

[35] TP, Box 1, folder on 'Reform of the Commission', Hannay to Jenkins, 14 May 1976.

[36] TP, Box 1, folder on 'Reform of the Commission', M. Jenkins to Phillips, 29 July 1976.

[37] Ibid., enclosures with Soames to Jenkins, 14 July 1976.

[38] TP, Box 1, folder on 'Portfolios of the Commission', M. Jenkins to Tickell, 15 November 1972 plus attachments.

[39] TP, Box 1, folder on 'Reform of the Commission', Morgan to Jenkins, 27 July 1976.

seen as the 'envoy' or 'representative' of a single member state and Jenkins and his team had to tread carefully in order to avoid giving the impression that too many of their opinions about the Commission were 'made in London'. But there are enough British government documents scattered throughout that part of the Tickell papers collection which covers the months prior to Jenkins' arrival in Brussels for it to seem likely that the new team received a good range of information, advice, and special-pleading from 'the country they knew best'—to use the standard Brussels euphemism for country of origin.[40] Nor is the lack of paperwork relating to actual meetings with prominent members of the British government necessarily an indication that such encounters did not take place. Jenkins after all remained a Cabinet minister until September and an MP until early December. He was also supplied with a suite of rooms in the Cabinet Office out of which to work in the period between his departure from the Home Office and his arrival in Brussels.[41] There was thus plenty of scope for quiet conversations with present and former colleagues that need not have been recorded by his aides. Further evidence that discussions of this sort did occur is provided by a passage in the *European Diary* for 28 November 1977, when Jenkins writes of Michael Palliser, the Permanent Undersecretary of the Foreign Office, that he was 'not on as good a form as he was when dealing so confidently and reliably with the problems of my transition to Europe in the summer of 1976'.[42] Nor would Tickell have lacked opportunities to be told what the Foreign Office's priorities were for Jenkins' presidency. Phillips' recorded set of discussions with members of the United Kingdom Permanent Representation in Brussels (UKREP) or Jenkins' participation in a Whitehall discussion of the allocation of portfolios in the next Commission referred to in a letter from a senior Bank of England official are unlikely to have been unique events.[43]

Naturally such British views were counter-balanced to some extent by the opinions and assessments to which the future president was exposed in the course of his ever more intensive visits to the capitals of the member states in the second half of 1976. Helmut Schmidt certainly pulled no

[40] See, for example, ibid., Denman to Jenkins, 'The Presidency of the Commission 1977–80. Myths and Realities', 15 September 1976.

[41] Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 8.

[42] Ibid., 178.

[43] TP, Box 1, folder on 'Reform of the Commission', Phillips note 'My discussions in Brussels', 27–28 July 1976; folder on 'Portfolios of the Commission', C. McMahon to Jenkins, 30 June 1976.

punches in his assessments of the Commission, especially in a remarkably frank discussion with Jenkins in late May, asserting that the incoming president 'should aim to get seven first-rate Commissioners but the rest could be third-rate. He believed that second-rate people simply made trouble.'[44] This outburst was just one of many instances where the German Chancellor expressed, sometimes privately, often publicly, his criticism of the Commission as currently constituted. Giscard is also likely to have put forward trenchant views in the March meeting with Jenkins referred to above, but for which I have not been able to locate a record. And in the autumn months Jenkins would make over 20 visits to the member state capitals, augmented by telephone calls, letters and multiple more indirect messages, thereby giving himself every opportunity to learn how the Commission was viewed by each of the national governments with which it worked. The timing of most of these visits, however, concentrated primarily in the final months of 1976 rather than over the spring and summer when Jenkins was most engaged in learning about his new job, combined with the fact that, as time progressed, an ever greater portion of such encounters was devoted to very concrete questions of who would actually be appointed to the Jenkins' Commission, does mean that it seems fair to regard Noël, Audland, the British Commissioners and their aides, plus, to some extent, the British government, as the main sources of information towards which Jenkins and his team would turn in their initial quest better to understand the manner in which Community Brussels functioned—and, as important, the ways in which it did not.

Interestingly, though, the one thing that Jenkins did not do very often during these months was actually to visit Brussels. This was the result of a quite conscious choice. As he explained in his *European Diary*, 'I kept away from Brussels. I decided that if I was to make any impact both upon bureaucracy (which I thought of as being dedicated but rigid) and upon the tone of Europe, I must arrive only with full powers and not become a familiar figure hanging about in the corridors in the preceding months.'[45] He thus made just one visit to the Belgian capital in November—primarily to find a house—and otherwise contented himself with information relayed to him by those already there and a succession of visits from members of the current Commission. He dined with Ortoli for instance in November,

[44] TP, Box 1, folder on 'Germany—Visits', note on Mr Jenkins' discussion with the Federal German Chancellor, 26 May 1976.

[45] Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 8.

when the Commission president was in London to talk to the British Foreign Secretary, Tony Crosland, about Britain's forthcoming stint holding the rotating 6-month presidency of the Council of Ministers.[46] Firsthand knowledge of the environs within which he would be working for the next 4 years, and direct experience of the manner in which the Community institutions operated, would have to await January 1977 and his physical arrival in the Berlaymont building.

Devising a Programme of Commission Reform

The way in which many of those to whom Jenkins initially turned for information and advice were critical of important features of the Commission's operation, helps explain the third key aspect of these preparatory months, namely how the incoming president and his team used them to draw up plans for an extensive programme of Commission reform. To some extent the origins of this desire for reform should probably be traced back before 1973, to the era when the British had been excluded from the Community but close and critical observers of many of the ways in which it functioned. Certainly there had been plenty of discussion within Whitehall in the period immediately prior to Britain's accession about how the EEC could be improved, including changes to the Commission, once the UK was able to take its place alongside the founder-members.[47] Several of the ideas debated amongst British civil servants in 1972 bore a strong resemblance to the themes to which Jenkins and his team would return 4 years later.[48] This reformist zeal had, however, been deliberately stayed in 1973, as the government of Edward Heath decided that it would be neither tactful nor tactically astute to press for extensive change as soon as enlargement had occurred. Instead, British hopes of effecting substantial change would be more likely to meet with success if it was attempted once the British in general and the

[46] TP, folder on 'FCO', Tickell to Jenkins, 25 October 1976.

[47] UKNA, CAB 164 1347, Frank Cooper to Kenneth Christofas, 25 July 1972, and 'Organisation of the European Commission', note by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, September 1972.

[48] For details see N. Piers Ludlow, 'The British Are Coming: The Arrival and Impact of the First Cohorts of British Fonctionnaires in the European Commission', in *Teilungen überwinden. Europäische und Internationale Geschichte im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert. Festschrift für Wilfried Loth*, ed. Michaela Bachem-Rehm, Claudia Hiepel, and Henning Türk (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2014).

two UK Commissioners in particular 'had had some experience of its [the Commission's] working from the inside'.[49]

The timetable for change had then been pushed back still further by the uncertainties created by Heath's fall from power in 1974 and the arrival of a Labour government whose commitment to EEC membership was open to question.[50] It was all but impossible for either the British government or the various British officials now working in Brussels to press energetically and effectively for wide-ranging change, at a time when their country seemed to be hesitating by the gangway, uncertain whether or not to jump ship. The underlying desire for change had not gone away, however. Indeed both those at work within the Community institutions, and the UK officials and ministers who travelled frequently to the Community capital in order to attend the councils, working groups, and other committee meetings through which the integration process is run, seem to have found that closer proximity only fuelled their desire to tinker with the machine rather than dimming it. The deluge of advice and of suggestions for change that poured over Jenkins and his team in 1976, whether from the British in Brussels or from Whitehall, was thus a flood that had been building up over the years and which now burst loose at a moment when Britain did, at last, seem to have an opportunity to carry out constructive Commission reform. It was all but inevitable that Jenkins and his team were influenced by this pent-up urge to alter the institution he was about to lead. Furthermore, the president-elect had been strongly advised to act quickly on such matters, rather than delaying a push for change until he himself was more familiar with the system. Soames had been particularly outspoken on this, counselling Jenkins in the summer of 1976 that

> in my view unless they [the organisational problems listed by his aides] are tackled very early on—when changes will be expected, indeed sometimes welcomed—people will again get set in their ways and progress will be far harder. The beginning is certainly the best and probably the only moment, especially since many of the changes can only go ahead if they form an overall package. And this means it must be prepared in advance as much as possible.[51]

So what was it that Jenkins was advised to change? And how much of this extensive programme did he seek to carry out as he arrived in Brussels?

[49] UKNA, CAB 164 1347, Christofas to Hunt, 2 November 1972.
[50] Wall, *Official History*, vol. 2, 511–90.
[51] TP, Box 1, folder on 'Reform of the Commission', Soames to Jenkins, 14 July 1976.

The first category of problem highlighted by those counselling Jenkins was the distribution of jobs amongst the 13 members of the Commission. For a start there were not enough good jobs to go round. The ideal solution to this would be to reduce the number of Commissioners, most logically by depriving the four larger member states—France, Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom—of their second Commissioner, but since such a step would require treaty change and hence unanimous agreement amongst the member states it was not something that would be easily or quickly realised.[52] A more attainable solution would hence be an improved division of labour amongst the 13 members of the Jenkins Commission. Furthermore several key functions had traditionally been undervalued, resulting in their allocation to Commissioners who were already overburdened with other responsibilities and were hence unable, or unwilling, to put in the necessary time.[53] This was true of responsibility for the budget, currently assigned to Claude Cheysson, the French Commissioner who was also responsible for Community development aid and relations with its Third World associates, duties that inevitably kept him away from Brussels for a significant portion of the time; of personnel and administration, which for most of the Ortoli period had been allocated to the Luxembourg Commissioner, Albert Borschette, who also was in charge of Competition Policy; and of enlargement, which fell within the extensive remit of the External Relations job, held by Soames during the Ortoli years. Finally, Jenkins was also advised to break up certain national 'fiefdoms' that had been built up as a result of certain nationalities having held a specific portfolio for a particularly long period of time. The two prime examples of this were agriculture which had always been in the hands of the Dutch, and development aid and association policy which had become a *chasse gardée* of the French.

Also problematic was the manner in which the weekly meetings of the assembled Commissioners had been handled.[54] Under Ortoli, attendance

[52] The idea was discussed with Schmidt, but there was agreement that it was unlikely to be realistic in the short term. TP, Box 1, folder on 'Germany—Visits', note on Mr Jenkins' discussion with the Federal German Chancellor, 26 May 1976.

[53] TP, Box 1, folder on 'Reform of the Commission', folder on 'Portfolios of the Commissioners', M. Jenkins' note, 'The Commission', 29 April 1976, and M. Jenkins' note, 'Priorities for the President Designate', undated.

[54] TP, Box 1, folder on 'Reform of the Commission', folder on 'Portfolios of the Commissioners', M. Jenkins' note, 'The Commission', 29 April 1976, and M. Jenkins' note, 'Priorities for the President Designate', undated.

at these had been poor, with too many members away from Brussels or otherwise engaged. Furthermore, the paperwork for these meetings had often been inadequate and distributed late, resulting in a situation where only the Commissioner officially responsible for the issue, plus often the president, had sufficient knowledge about the subject to contribute usefully to debate and decision. Indeed the British analysts outlining this problem suspected that this had been employed as a deliberate tactic, both by certain Commissioners—Pierre Lardinois, in charge of agriculture was singled out for particular blame—and by Ortoli himself.[55] And contact between Commissioners outside of these formal meetings held each Wednesday, had been limited, aggravating a pre-existing weakness in the coordination between different policy areas.

This problem of coordination also sprang from a lack of dialogue between the different Directorates-General (DGs), the departments into which the vast bulk of the Commission's staff were divided, and an over-reliance on the weekly meeting between the *chefs de cabinet* to resolve contradictions or tensions between policies.[56] What was needed was a far greater degree of discussion amongst the Directors-General—the most senior officials within each 'functional' section of the Commission—and also an increase in staff mobility between different DGs. This last would also help alleviate some of the personnel and career problems highlighted in the various reports submitted to Jenkins. At present, there was too little scope for officials to climb the hierarchy on merit, since the allocation of many of the top jobs was governed more by the requirement for an approximate balance between the different nationalities than by the qualities and relevant experience of the candidates. The frequent 'political' interventions into appointment processes, either by member state governments directly, or by the *cabinets* of their Commissioner(s), and the practice of *parachutage*, whereby senior figures were brought in from outside of the Commission to fill the most attractive jobs, further compounded the staffing problems. The outcome was damaged staff morale amongst junior or medium ranking staff who were deprived of the promotion prospects they deserved, and a number of senior positions filled by officials who lacked the qualities and skills to operate at the required level.[57]

[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid.

Finally, there were a series of Commission policies that just did not work well. Amongst the most serious of these—in the eyes of most British observers at least—was the Commission's efforts to explain to the public what it did, where it wanted to go, and how it intended to get there. What was normally referred to in Brussels as 'Information Policy', but which might better have been dubbed 'Communication Strategy' or even 'Public Relations', was the subject of two particularly scathing reports drawn up by senior British observers.[58] These highlighted the Commission's failure to equip itself for an age when much of the public followed current events through television rather than the written press, an overall information strategy that remained too reliant on the dissemination of materials to a small number of restricted target groups, like farmers or universities, in place of the general public, and the failure to mesh together the efforts of the spokesman's service, the information policy directorate, and the several individual DGs that also sought to communicate directly with the public and press. Jenkins was hence left in no doubt that the whole area was in dire need of a radical overhaul.

The pressure for change was augmented by the decision of the British government to raise the theme of European Commission reform at European Council level. The roots of this initiative are almost certainly traceable back to that same well-established British desire to improve the Community institutions that drove those advising Jenkins. But despite these shared origins, there seems to have been no deliberate coordination between the British government action and most of those in Brussels with whom Jenkins was interacting. Rather the reverse, as Jenkins and his team were embarrassed and put out to learn that James Callaghan, the new British Prime Minister, had suggested at the July 1976 summit that the Commission president be given a 'mandate' for reform. Apart from anything else, the idea of the European Council instructing the Commission president to modify the working of his own institution infringed strongly held beliefs about the independence and autonomy of the European Commission and revived fears that the recently created European Council sought to supplant the Commission's role. The Ortoli Commission reportedly held an anxious discussion of Callaghan's proposal in the immediate aftermath of the summit meeting, concluding that the manner in which this idea had been advanced was quite 'improper' in legal terms.[59] Jenkins' own priority became to limit

[58] TP, Box 1, folder on 'Reform of the Commission', M. Jenkins to Phillips, 29 July 1976.
[59] TP, Box 1, folder on 'Reform of the Commission', M. Jenkins to Tickell, 27 September 1976.

the scope and the language of the British initiative and to ensure that it respected the Commission's institutional prerogatives. Tickell thus wrote to Roy Denman, one of the Whitehall officials coordinating the British government move, asking that the terms of reference being put together for this review of the Commission be modified, both so as to lessen the chances of inter-institutional wrangles 'which would obviously help no-one, least of all the new President' and to avoid differentiating between the incoming president and other members of the Commission. It would be for the Commission collectively to decide to review its operation, rather than this being a decision attributable solely to its president.[60] Such efforts were not enough wholly to quash the damaging suspicion that Jenkins and the British government were in cahoots over the whole affair, however. A note to Giscard from his chief diplomatic advisor, Gabriel Robin, denounced the 'collusion' between a member state government and the future president of the Commission. He complained that the draft mandate devised by the British government was 'inélégant' and liable implicitly to condemn the outgoing president, 'inutile' since the Commission could not be told how to organise itself, 'inopportun' since it was intended to strengthen the hand of Jenkins vis-à-vis his future colleagues, and 'dangereux' in as much as it would prolong the institutional debate begun by the Tindemans Report—a debate that France wanted to close down—and would focus it on the mistaken issue of the internal reform of the Commission rather than the role of the Commission within the wider institutional system.[61] And while probably less extreme, comparable suspicions may well have been harboured elsewhere in the Community. It is thus not at all clear whether Callaghan's well-meaning attempt to raise the issue of Commission reform in the European Council helped Jenkins' cause or hindered it.

Despite such distractions, Jenkins and his team pressed on regardless. Some of the difficulties set out above, such as the rigidities of the promotion and appointment system within the Commission, were not amenable to rapid change and would hence be something that could only be tackled at a later stage of the Jenkins Commission. Other weaknesses, by contrast, could be addressed as soon as the new Commission assembled, as the next chapter will make clear.

[60] Ibid., Tickell to Denman, 1 October 1976.

[61] Archives Nationales, Pierrefitte, Paris (henceforward AN), Giscard papers, AG/5(3)/911, Subfolder: Conseilleur Diplomatique. Conseil européen de La Haye (29–30 novembre 1976), Note pour le Président, 'a.s. Document anglais sur la Commission', 20 November 1976.

Steps were also taken to address the deficiencies in the weekly Commission meetings. In the months prior to arrival, Jenkins and his team collaborated with Noël and Audland to draft a new set of rules covering the way in which this meeting would be prepared and run. Members of the Commission were firmly reminded of the need to be present at both the Wednesday meeting itself, and on Thursday mornings when ad hoc coordinating meetings would be organised. Those unable to attend were to seek the president's permission beforehand. The relevant paperwork meanwhile was to be circulated 6 days prior to each Commission meeting, except in the most exceptional circumstances. Efforts were also made to improve the coherence of the Commission's overall approach and to minimise the extent to which individual policy proposals might work against the aims of other policy priorities. Thus, the Commissioner responsible for the budget was given the right to block any proposal which had financial implications and force it to a 'second reading' by which time the budgetary consequences could have been reviewed more thoroughly. Similarly, the Commissioner responsible for economic and monetary affairs was given the power to initiate studies into the effects of any proposals submitted and to inform the Commission of his findings. Procedures for early coordination between DGs were also tightened up. And Commissioners were reminded of the principles of collective responsibility: disagreement was permitted, even normal, but once a decision had been reached all members should support it in public.[62] There should be no repetition of the scenes that had followed the Commission's 1975 adoption of a highly cautious 'opinion' on potential Greek membership, when at least one Commissioner had convened a press conference to denounce the document that had just been approved.[63] How well such strictures would be heeded, however, was another question. As Noël had warned the incoming presidency in November, the problems in past Commissions had not tended to lie with the rules of procedure themselves; instead they reflected a failure on the part of too many Commissioners to heed such rules.[64] Whether Jenkins would be able to impose the required discipline on his colleagues would thus remain to be seen.

[62] European Commission Historical Archives, Brussels (henceforward ECHA), SEC (77) 6, 3 January 1977.

[63] Eirini Karamouzi, *Greece, the EEC and the Cold War, 1974–79*, pp. 45–49 (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

[64] TP, Box 1, folder on 'Commission Working Methods', Noël to Tickell, 19 November 1976.

The single greatest preoccupation of Jenkins and his aides as they laid their plans for the Commission presidency was the distribution of responsibilities amongst the members of the Commission. Here, they clearly felt, was an instrument that would enable some of the difficulties outlined above to be redressed, and to do so in a fashion, moreover, that was largely within the incoming president's control. Greater oversight could be exercised over the way in which the Commission spent its money by upgrading the budgetary portfolio; better staff management might result from ceasing to regard responsibility for personnel and administration as a minor chore, to be appended to some other, more interesting, duty; the potential for some Community expenditure to be used at cross-purposes with other types of EEC funding might be lessened were a single person made responsible for both regional policy spending and the European social fund; and the priority accorded to enlargement—but also to the consequences of enlargement being properly thought through—could be signalled by making control of the process a key component of a single Commissioner's portfolio rather than it remaining one duty amongst many for the Commissioner in charge of external relations. Furthermore, the capacity to redefine the exact jobs on offer within the Commission could also become an important tool in Jenkins' hands as he sought to persuade the member states to appoint high quality individuals to Brussels. Top-quality jobs would only go to top-quality individuals, the president-elect could point out to the various national leaders he met to discuss those who would be sent to Brussels. But by the same token, the exact (re)distribution of responsibilities amongst Jenkins and his 12 colleagues could only really be determined once it had become apparent exactly who would be joining the new Commission. It is therefore to the delicate, taxing, and ultimately frustrating discussions between Jenkins and the member state governments on this issue that we must now turn.

The Quest for a Strong Commission

The president's ability to turn his Commission into a truly effective executive, able to revive the fortunes of an integration process that appeared to be struggling, would depend greatly on the quality of those appointed to his team. A collegiate body, obliged to discuss and take all decisions jointly, the Commission could perhaps afford to 'carry' a few weaker figures within it. But if it was to achieve much it would also need a number of really effective operators, able and willing to work with the president

in leading the Community out of the doldrums. Little wonder then that Jenkins attached such hopes to the discussions that he planned to have with each of the member state governments. No previous Commission president had been able to exercise any influence at all over those with whom he would be obliged to work. Instead Ortoli and all of his predecessors had been appointed at the same time as their colleagues, and had been obliged to divide up the responsibilities amongst whomsoever had been 'dispatched' to Brussels by the member state governments. This time by contrast Jenkins hoped that his personal intervention would help spark a real upward spiral in quality, with national governments competing with one another to send the strongest candidates to Brussels. The president-elect thus threw himself with great energy into discussions with each national capital, canvassing opinions amongst both ruling parties and those in opposition, and willing at times to suggest names rather than just review those that were suggested to him. In the process he undertook a schedule of travel around Europe every bit as intense as that which he would face at any point of his actual presidency.

Fairly quickly, however, it became clear that Jenkins faced two major obstacles in his hopes of attracting the strongest possible team. The first was simply that the post of European Commissioner, even when sweetened with the lure of one of the top portfolios, was not powerful or prestigious enough to attract the calibre of candidate upon whom Jenkins had set his sights. Some of those targeted by the president-elect would indeed have greatly added to the lustre of the new Commission and might well have proved extremely effective. Emilio Colombo is perhaps a case in point. The former Italian Prime Minister had a substantial international reputation and was widely seen as particularly skilled in the conduct of negotiations at European level. He had for instance been one of the stars of the 1961–3 membership negotiations when Britain had first applied to join the EEC.[65] And his name was invariably raised whenever the question arose of who might be the ideal Italian candidate for a Brussels job.[66] But he was also someone who had been offered the presidency of the European Commission

[65] N. Piers Ludlow, *Dealing with Britain: The Six and the First UK Application to the EEC*, Cambridge Studies in International Relations 56 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 164–5.

[66] His was the first name Schmidt came up with for instance. TP, Box 1, folder on 'Germany—Visits', note on Mr Jenkins' discussion with the Federal German Chancellor, 26 May 1976.

in 1967 and had turned it down.[67] It does therefore need to be asked how likely it was that he would settle for a post as an ordinary Commissioner nearly a decade later. His letter to Jenkins declining the job was friendly and polite, citing the delicate state of Italian domestic politics as the main reason why he felt unable to commit himself to a position in Brussels.[68] But there was nothing in it to indicate that his acceptance of the job offer had ever really been on the cards. Nor was Colombo the only example of a first-rate candidate turning down the prospect of joining Jenkins in Brussels. Garret Fitzgerald and Max van der Stoel, the serving foreign ministers of Ireland and the Netherlands respectively, were both raised as possibilities by the president-elect, but neither seems to have leapt at the opportunity. Peter Carrington, the former British Defence Secretary, was also unsuccessfully approached about serving in Brussels.[69] Similarly, several of the potential German candidates that Jenkins tried out in his conversations with Schmidt seem not to have been tempted. Hans-Jürgen Wischnewski turned the job down, while Karl-Otto Pöhl—a future head of the Bundesbank who Jenkins mentioned as a candidate for the budget portfolio—could not be spared by the Finance Minister, Hans Apel.[70] The European Commission was just not alluring enough to attract the most ambitious and able politicians, even with a heavyweight president like Jenkins at the helm.

Even more damaging was the second problem, namely that while the nine national governments were very willing to talk to Jenkins and to allow names to be batted back and forth, their ultimate decisions owed more to their own convenience and the intricacies of domestic and coalition politics, than they did to the preferences of the Commission president-elect. Thus in Ireland, Jenkins sought to combine forces with Fitzgerald in order to swing the choice away from Richard Burke, for whom the job had originally been earmarked, to Justin Keating. On 24 September, for instance, the president-elect told the Taoiseach, Liam Cosgrove, that 'the Irish Commissioner's portfolio would depend on his talents. Mr Keating's abilities would obviously qualify him for several of the portfolios.'[71]

[67] Council of Ministers Archives, Brussels (henceforward CMA), C/112/67, Procès verbal de la conférence des gouvernements, 5 June 1967.

[68] TP, folder on 'Rome', Colombo to Jenkins, 29 September 1976.

[69] John Campbell, *Roy Jenkins: A Well-Rounded Life* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2014), 478.

[70] TP, File 16, 'Meetings and Conversations, 1976–1977', record of a conversation between Mr Jenkins and Chancellor Schmidt, 15 November 1976.

[71] TP, Box 1, folder on 'Visit to Dublin on September 23, 1976', discussion between Mr Jenkins and the Taoiseach, 24 September 1976.

Unstated but obvious was the implication that if the Irish did not appoint someone with Keating's skills, they were unlikely to be able to claim a substantial role within the Jenkins Commission. And yet by late November it was Burke rather than Keating who had been appointed. Similarly in the Netherlands, Jenkins ended up with Henk Vredeling, despite having made it clear that he would have preferred several others to have been given the job.[72] Worst of all, even his main sponsor, Helmut Schmidt, failed signally to deliver the German Commissioners that Jenkins had hoped for. The junior party in the ruling coalition, the FDP, thus insisted that Guido Brunner's mandate be renewed, even though the incoming president had made clear his misgivings, while Schmidt's own party, the SPD, renominated Wilhelm Haferkamp in spite of Jenkins and the Chancellor having earlier agreed that he had not done well in his first term in Brussels.[73] In all four cases the outcome was doubly damaging: not only had Jenkins failed to secure the calibre of nominee he had aspired to, but he would also be obliged to work closely with men who knew full well that their president had sought to block their appointment but had failed to do so.[74] Rebuilding trust and authority after this uncomfortable start would be no easy task.

It was true of course that the disappointments with Ireland, the Netherlands, and above all Germany were counter-balanced to some extent at least by success elsewhere. The French decision to reappoint both Claude Cheysson and Ortoli was a welcome development, for instance, for all the potential awkwardness that might arise in a Commission which contained a former president as well as a current one. Jenkins had long seen both Frenchmen as amongst the strongest performers in the outgoing Commission and was hence pleased to be able to add them to his team.[75]

[72] TP, Box 1, folder on 'Netherlands. Visits to the Hague, 16–17 September 1976', various documents.

[73] TP, File 16, 'Meetings and Conversations, 1976–1977', record of a conversation between Mr Jenkins and Chancellor Schmidt, 15 November 1976; for Jenkins' and Schmidt's earlier agreement that neither of the German incumbents was very high quality, see ibid., Box 1, folder on 'Germany—Visits', note on Mr Jenkins' discussion with the Federal German Chancellor, 26 May 1976. See also Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 11–12.

[74] Burke's still smouldering resentment at his treatment was apparent in my interview with him. Interview with Richard Burke, 10 May 2012, available at http://archives.eui.eu/en/oral_history/INT116

[75] Both had featured in Jenkins' list of star performers in the current Commission during Jenkins conversation with Schmidt in May. TP, Box 1, folder on 'Germany—Visits', note on Mr Jenkins' discussion with the Federal German Chancellor, 26 May 1976.

The Danish Commissioner, Finn Olav Gundelach, was another to have gained a high reputation, so his reappointment was further source of pleasure.[76] The Italian government proved cooperative, responding to Jenkins' hesitations about the talented but difficult Giovanni Marcora, and instead appointing Lorenzo Natali and Antonio Giolitti—a pairing that compared rather favourably with many previous Italian Commissioners.[77] The Belgians, despite a last-minute wobble, also went ahead with the selection of Étienne Davignon, someone who would become one of the stars of both the Jenkins and Thorn Commissions.[78] And the British too played ball, heeding Jenkins' preference for the young and energetic Christopher Tugendhat rather than the original Conservative nominee, John Davis. But enough had gone wrong with Jenkins' attempts to influence the choice of those appointed to his Commission to act as a salutary reminder of how little leverage a Commission president enjoys over even a well-disposed national leader.

Also somewhat disappointing was the length of time it had taken for all 12 names to be agreed. Jenkins and his team had originally hoped to have sorted out the allocation of the Commission portfolios in time for them to be approved by The Hague European Council at the end of November 1976.[79] Yet as the date of the Council approached, several of the key appointments were still unknown, with the French, the Belgians, the Irish, and the Dutch all yet to finalise their choice. And in the absence of firm names, the delicate task of dividing up the portfolios could not begin in earnest, although Jenkins and Tickell, together with Noël and the British Commissioners' *cabinets* had already given a significant amount of thought to how the jobs might be reorganised and had tentatively begun to attach some individuals to some portfolios. No definitive arrangement could be reached, however, until all of the names were known.

[76] Ibid. Hannay also singled out Gundelach for particular praise. Interview with Hannay, 14 July 2011, available at http://archives.eui.eu/en/oral_history/INT172

[77] TP, Box 1, folder on 'Rome', multiple documents. For Italy's long-standing difficulty in persuading high-calibre politicians to accept Brussels posts, see Antonio Varsori, 'L'Italia a Bruxelles: i membri italiani della Commissione', in *L'Italia nella construzione europea: Un bilancio storico* (*1957–2007*), ed. Piero Craveri and Antonio Varsori (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2009).

[78] TP, Box 1, folder on 'Brussels visits', various documents.

[79] Ibid., folder on 'Portfolios of the Commissioners', Tickell handwritten minute on M. Jenkins to Tickell, 'Designation of the New Commission', 10 November 1976.

Which Commissioner for Which Job?

The whole timetable for allocating jobs was thus pushed back into December, with the planned informal get-together of the incoming Commission at Ditchley Park, a country house in Oxfordshire, assuming particular importance. The very idea of holding such a meeting was a procedural innovation. No previous Commission had convened in this fashion before taking up office, although the practice has been imitated by several of Jenkins' successors.[80] The hope had presumably been, however, for the gathering to occur at a time when all of those present knew what duties they would be fulfilling in the Commission and would hence be able collectively to reflect upon the institution's overall priorities and upon the best manner of working over the years ahead. Instead, policy debate had to be flanked with ongoing discussions about who did what job. This did not entirely undermine the meeting's purpose, any more than did the cold and misty weather in which the future Commissioners gathered. An unused passage in one the drafts for Jenkins' first speech to the European Parliament, observed, 'When before Christmas I invited my fellow Commissioners to a mist-shrouded house in the middle of England I wondered whether for some the sense of dark remoteness did not approach that which Macbeth's Scottish castle aroused in the operatic imagination of Giuseppe Verdi a century ago. But the conditions were I think better and the events certainly less sanguinary than in medieval Scotland.'[81] Certainly no blood was shed, despite an amusing flight of fancy in the *Financial Times* that suggested tongue-in-cheek that proceedings at Ditchley had opened with the apparent assassination of Roy Jenkins.[82] But the character of the meeting, and in particular the workload of the president-elect at Ditchley cannot but have been significantly affected by the continuing uncertainty about each Commissioner's future responsibilities.

Progress was made in the course of the Ditchley meeting towards resolving the biggest conundrum, namely what to do about the two most prestigious jobs in the Commission—external relations and economic and monetary affairs. Ortoli, as a former president, had to be

[80] The members of the first Delors Commission met, for instance, at the abbaye de Royaumont in December 1984. See Jacques Delors, *Mémoires* (Paris: Plon, 2004), 194.

[81] Emile Noël papers, Historical Archives of the European Union, Florence (henceforward ENP), EN-608, Phillips to Noël, 5 January 1977.

[82] *Financial Times*, 'Murder at Ditchley', 24 December 1976.

offered one of them and Jenkins strongly preferred the idea of giving him the economic and monetary job. In order to do so, however, this responsibility would not only have to be removed from the current incumbent, Haferkamp, but the question of how to balance so senior a French job with a commensurate German one would have to be confronted.[83] Matters were made still more complicated by the low opinion that Jenkins held of both of the Germans who had been renominated, and the fact that one of them, Brunner, who was a former diplomat, was very actively lobbying to secure the external affairs post for which he believed himself eminently qualified.[84] Somewhat bizarrely, Brunner's manoeuvring also seemed to involve spreading inaccurate rumours around Brussels about Jenkins having fallen out with the German foreign minister over the issue of the German Commissioners.[85] Unsurprisingly perhaps, Jenkins decided to offer the prized external relations post to Haferkamp at Ditchley, an offer that he was naturally enthusiastic about. This in turn cleared the way for three further jobs, with Gundelach offered agriculture (something that Jenkins had longed planned to do), Cheysson allowed to retain the development aid and association brief, and Davignon made responsible for an enlarged portfolio covering both industry and the internal market.

A significant amount still needed to be settled, however, which meant that a new round of discussions became necessary this time rather less removed from the media spotlight in Brussels in early January. Despite his best endeavours to do so, Jenkins was not therefore able to avoid the dreaded 'night of the long knives' where the distribution of jobs was finalised. A long and hard-fought Commission meeting to sort out all of the remaining posts was held over the night of 6/7 January 1977. As he noted in his diary, it was certainly not the longest or most brutal that the Commission had experienced—both the Rey and the Malfatti Commissions had had much

[83] The German government's expectation that it would be given one if not two key portfolios in the new Commission, despite defying Jenkins' preferences in terms of who it nominated, is very clear from Schmidt's papers. Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Bonn, Helmut Schmidt papers (henceforward HSP), File 7236, Zeller Brief, Betr. Besuch des designierten Präsidenten der Kommission der Europäischen Gemeinschaften, Roy Jenkins (1/2 November 1976).

[84] TP, File 16, 'Meetings and Conversations, 1976–1977', Tickell to Jenkins, 25 November 1976.

[85] Ibid., Tickell to Jenkins, 3 December 1976.

more contentious starts.[86] It would be eclipsed furthermore by the trials and tribulations suffered by his successor Gaston Thorn in early 1981.[87] In 1977 no national governments sought to intervene directly, in the fashion that Mrs Thatcher would do 4 years later. Indeed Brunner's resistance crumbled precisely because the German government made it clear that it would not make representations on his behalf. But it still took much longer than hoped, especially once the Irishman Richard Burke decided to dig in his heels and resist being offered a particularly lightweight portfolio, thereby postponing the agreement that had looked within reach at 10.30 p.m., and had certainly seemed close at hand at 2.30 a.m., to a much more exhausting 5.30 a.m. conclusion.[88] In the end only two Commissioners felt seriously aggrieved—Brunner and Burke. And the fact that a split vote had been avoided was an important symbolic success. The difficulties of managing 12 colleagues over whom Jenkins lacked the types of blandishment and sanction to which the head of a national government can resort had, however, been illustrated in the clearest possible fashion.

An important number of Jenkins' ideas about the redefinition of jobs had survived the bruising allocation process. Perhaps the most significant in terms of who would wield power in the 4 years ahead, was the way in which the traditionally separate responsibilities for industry and the internal market had been brought together, creating for Davignon a huge area of potential action and responsibility, especially at a time of economic crisis. One of the most dynamic members of the Jenkins Commission was thus given the scope and the space to demonstrate his abilities.[89] Crucial also was the greater importance attached to the task of overseeing the issue of EEC enlargement. This portfolio was given to Lorenzo Natali, one of the two Italian Commissioners, and although it was still combined with other responsibilities—Natali was also in charge of the EEC's embryonic environmental policy and would subsequently inherit relations with the European Parliament—it was now a job to which considerably more attention could be given than when it had been buried amidst the whole range of EC external relations. At a time when membership negotiations

[86] Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 661–8. A longer version of Jenkins' own account of the night of the long knives was shown to me by kind permission of Lady Jenkins and will soon be available amongst the Jenkins papers in the Bodleian Library Oxford. Few of the details omitted from the published version were of great significance, however.

[87] *Financial Times*, 8 January 1981.

[88] Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 666–8.

[89] Jenkins would describe him as 'the best member of my Commission', ibid., xvi.

with Greece were underway, and those with both Portugal and Spain were expected to begin in the near future, having a Commissioner able to devote more of their time to the issue was a significant and positive change. The bringing together under Antonio Giolitti of responsibility over both of the Community's main non-agricultural spending tools, the European Social Fund and the European Regional Development Fund, together with the decision to give Giolitti a *droit de regard* over the moneys disbursed by the Agricultural Guidance Fund, also constituted an innovative attempt to bring a greater degree of control to Community expenditure and to try to avoid a situation in which different European spending policies pursued separate, and at times even contradictory, objectives. And there was logic too behind the combination of the budget and the personnel and administration briefs, and their allocation to Christopher Tugendhat, since this would maximise the prospects of the administrative and staff reforms of the Commission so important to the incoming Jenkins team. The full implications of giving responsibility over the Community budget to a British Commissioner for a 4-year period in the course of which the UK's own budgetary contribution would develop into one of the most controversial and divisive topics on the EEC agenda were not, however, recognised at the time. Overall there was already enough innovation in the parcelling out of jobs within the new Commission to signal clearly the reformist intent of the British president.

Conclusions

So what can be learnt by revisiting the 6 months or so during which Jenkins and his entourage were able to prepare the 4-year presidency that lay ahead? The first largely positive conclusion would be that the additional time granted to Jenkins as compared to any of his predecessors did make it easier for him both to assemble a strong *cabinet* team to support his work in Brussels and to redress his inexperience in terms of the day-to-day operation of the Community system. By the time the new president found himself chairing a Commission meeting or attending a Ministerial Council, he was much better informed about how the system worked than would have been the case had he been deprived of the opportunity to prepare. Given the importance of starting his presidency well and establishing his authority from the outset this was of some significance. Second, the 6 months prior to arrival in Brussels also allowed Jenkins and his team, in close consultation with both the Secretariat General and the *cabinets* of the existing

British Commissioners, to draw up quite extensive plans for administrative reform. Not all of this would prove possible to implement—or at least not straight away. Nor were all of the changes made wholly successful. A number of Jenkins' experiments would be reversed or quietly forgotten by his successors, although other innovations did endure. In the light of the huge pent-up British desire to experiment with Commission reform, however, there were always going to be pressures on a British president to implement some degree of change. As a result, it was far better that such change was well thought through, and thoroughly debated with those like Noël or Audland, who had extensive experience of how the system functioned and of previous rounds of reform, than for an incoming president to dream up reform measures on the hoof during his early months in post. Half-baked or ill-conceived reform endeavours could have paralysed the early stages of a presidency. Again, therefore, the preparatory phase can be seen as highly beneficial.

The results of Jenkins' efforts to influence the identities of those nominated to serve in his Commission were rather more mixed. In certain cases—Italy perhaps, Britain probably, and France maybe—Jenkins' involvement helped tilt the balance away from candidates whom he disliked and towards those with whom he wanted to work. In others, especially Germany, he enjoyed much less success and arguably ended up in a worse position than he might have done had he not sought to intervene at all. The grudges borne by Brunner, Burke, or Haferkamp would not go on seriously to damage the presidency ahead, although Haferkamp at least would do much to confirm that Jenkins had been largely justified in the reservations he had expressed about his renomination. But the gains made were too slight fully to justify either the potential losses incurred or, more seriously, the huge amount of time wasted seeking to woo candidates who would ultimately decide against serving in Brussels or to persuade governments to take decisions that they would finally reject. Indeed perhaps the most negative consequence of Jenkins' determination to shape the personnel of his Commission was the way in which it largely distracted him from conducting what might have been a rather more fruitful dialogue with the member states about the policy priorities of his presidency. There was some discussion of what the new Commission might do of course, notably with governments like the Danish where the choice of Commissioner was never really in doubt.[90] But in many other instances

[90] TP, Box 1, folder on 'Denmark', various documents.

the question of *who* might serve in the Commission all but crowded out *what* Jenkins and those appointed to work with him might do. Nowhere was this more clear than in the first of two meetings with Giscard in the autumn, where the French President sought to broach the topic of what the Commission might do, only to see Jenkins steer conversation back to the vexed question of which Commissioners the French government would appoint.[91]

A similar fixation with the choice of Commissioners and the reform of the machine, rather than the selection of particular policy areas on which to focus emerges from Jenkins' preparatory paperwork more generally. Out and out policy papers are notable by their absence from that portion of the Tickell collection devoted to the preparatory period. The folder on 'Economic and Monetary Union' holds next to nothing; that on the 'reform of the Commission' by contrast is overflowing with material. This does not of course mean that Jenkins had no policy ideas when first he arrived in Brussels. As an experienced politician of long standing and someone who had been following the European integration process for two decades at least, he would certainly have had some notion of the goals and ambitions he wanted to pursue. He would also of course inherit the existing corpus of Commission policies and priorities, many of which he would outline to the European Parliament in early February 1977 as part of his presentation of the Commission's action programme for the year ahead.[92] And it is clear from his rhetoric, both in his speech to his fellow Commissioners at Ditchley and in his inaugural presentation to the European Parliament, that he was committed to presiding over an activist Commission that would seek to break out of the citadel to which the Ortoli administration had retreated during the worst of the crisis years.[93] But exactly where such sallies would lead does not appear to have been predetermined. Nor had the type of dialogue begun with the member states in order to establish what policy adventures might or might not be acceptable—a dialogue which would, by contrast, be held during the preparatory months by his most dynamic of successors, Jacques Delors.[94] Jenkins would thus arrive in Brussels with a good knowledge of

[91] TP, Box 1, folder on 'France', record of Mr Jenkins' talk with President Giscard d'Estaing, 28 October 1976.

[92] Jenkins' programme speech to the EP, 8 February 1977, available at http://aei.pitt.edu/10999/

[93] TP, Box 1, folder on 'Ditchley', handwritten and undated speaking notes.

[94] Delors, *Mémoires*, 182–92.

the terrain within which he would have to work, and with a reasonable rapport established, both with the majority of his fellow Commissioners and with the leaders of most of the member states. Importantly he had clearly demonstrated an ability to work with even the most powerful of these last in a fashion which was neither diffident nor subservient. He had also made on arrival a number of imaginative and innovative alterations to the institution over which would preside. And he had equipped himself with a highly qualified and dedicated support team. But where he would go—and what exactly he would do with his presidency—seemed still to be almost entirely open.

CHAPTER 4

Growing into the Role: The Battle to Secure G7 Representation

A new Commission president needs quickly to establish himself. This applies to his relations with his fellow Commissioners—especially when they include his predecessor. It applies more generally to his hold over the rest of the Commission. Within the wider Community system, it applies to his relations with the other EEC institutions, including the soon to be directly elected European Parliament. And above all it applies to his international interlocutors, whether in Community Europe or beyond. For the European Commission is a peculiar institution whose influence and weight depend to an enormous extent on its capacity to persuade, cajole, and negotiate with those who hold real power within the Community system, namely the member state governments. Also important for a president like Roy Jenkins who arrived in Brussels loudly proclaiming his commitment to internationalism broadly defined was the establishment of good relations with the leaders of Europe's principal trading partners, above all the United States. It is hence on Jenkins' early efforts to forge a strong rapport with each of these varied constituencies that this chapter will focus.

It will begin with a brief review of Jenkins' early interactions with his fellow Commissioners and with his attempt to carry out a degree of reform within the institution that he was to direct for the next 4 years. A second section will then examine his first encounters with the other institutions of the Community, from COREPER, the influential committee of permanent representatives, through to the Strasbourg Parliament. The third and

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largest section will then look at his efforts to establish himself in the eyes of his fellow European leaders, especially within that most privileged of European clubs, the European Council, and vis-à-vis his other main international partners. Particular attention will thus be paid to probably the hardest fought battle of Jenkins' first 6 months as Commission president, namely the struggle to procure a seat at the recently launched summits of the Western world's leading industrial powers, the G7. Jenkins' success in this endeavour would ultimately prove to be an important and enduring legacy of his presidency; it was a victory, nonetheless, which was won at some cost, both in terms of his personal relations with a key European leader and in his ability to shape the integration agenda from the very outset of his time in Brussels.

Getting to Grips with the Commission

The new president appears to have succeeded quickly in building a good working relationship with his various Commissioners. This could not be taken for granted. Compared to most national leaders a Commission president has very limited leverage over his direct colleagues, since he has no power to dismiss them and very little scope substantially to reallocate responsibilities amongst them. The traditional power of patronage upon which national prime ministers or presidents often rely is hence all but absent. Each Commissioner is highly aware, moreover, that their political future, whether their goal is reappointment for a further term in Brussels or a return to national politics, is more dependent on their reputation in their home country and their relations with their national government, than their rapport with either their fellow Commissioners or their president. Loyalty to a Commission president might well be regarded as a worrying symptom of having 'gone native' rather than being a virtue to be praised, especially were this loyalty to lead a Commissioner to adopt a stance at odds with the interests of the member state from which he came. The Commission, furthermore, is bound to be a highly diverse body. By the mid-1970s admittedly almost all Commissioners shared a background in party politics[1]—although there were still some, like Davignon, who had never held elected office. But in other respects

[1] Gundelach was the only clear exception, with a background in international organizations rather than party politics. Davignon and Brunner had served as diplomats but did have strong party affiliations, to the Christian Democrats and the Free Democrats respectively.

they were a broad coalition, comprising individuals from very different national political cultures, with contrasting political creeds and with highly variable levels of national and European experience. Five of them were hardened veterans of the Ortoli Commission, with a sixth, Vouël who had become the Luxembourg Commissioner in the latter half of 1976; whereas six others, like Jenkins himself, were new to the job and new to the Commission.[2] Forging consensus amongst so disparate a group would be no easy task.

The incoming president's ability to do so was partly a matter of personality. A former senior minister and an accomplished parliamentary performer, Jenkins had the strength of character, the experience, and the eloquence to chair Commission meetings in a skilful and effective manner. He tended to avoid direct confrontation.[3] Over time, moreover, he would come to rely, perhaps too heavily, on making sure before each Wednesday meeting that those whom he regarded as the key Commissioners—Ortoli, Davignon, and Gundelach—were in agreement with the most important decisions that needed to be taken.[4] But where necessary he was strong enough and adept enough to steer each Commission meeting in the direction he wanted to go. As Tugendhat recalled, 'my abiding memory [of Commission meetings] is of him presiding at our round table, wreathed in cigar smoke with Crispin [Tickell] behind him, gently guiding the debate and building on earlier conversations with colleagues until we reached the decision he wanted—or at least something not too far removed from it—without it being apparent quite how.'[5] Nor did he allow the other strong figures in his Commission to become too dominant: Jenkins would not suffer from the same diffidence in the face of his more assertive colleagues that would characterise

[2] The five experienced Commissioners were Ortoli, Cheysson, Haferkamp, Brunner, and Gundelach; the six novices, other than Jenkins, were Natali, Giolitti, Davignon, Vredeling, Tugendhat, and Burke.

[3] Christopher Tugendhat, 'The European Achievement', in *Roy Jenkins. A Retrospective*, ed. Andrew Adonis and Keith Thomas (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 208. This was confirmed by my interviews with Crispin Tickell (21 August 2010), Hayden Phillips (2 February 2011) http://archives.eui.eu/en/oral_history/INT235, and Tugendhat (17 August 2010) http://archives.eui.eu/en/oral_history/INT286

[4] Interview with Tugendhat. For Jenkins' own reference to his 'four horsemen' dinners at which he was joined by Ortoli, Davignon, and Gundelach, see Roy Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981* (London: Collins, 1989), 435.

[5] Tugendhat, 'The European Achievement', 209.

Gaston Thorn's presidency in the early 1980s.[6] The quality of his *cabinet* moreover and the support that every president enjoys from central portions of the Commission administration like the Secretariat General or the legal service helped ensure that he was always very well briefed and in command of each issue discussed. In a collegiate body like the Commission, where votes tend to be avoided wherever possible, and where most key decisions are taken collectively by the 13 members of the Commission, such expertise could be a significant advantage. Still more fundamentally, each of the Commissioners was highly conscious at the start of their 4-year term of office that they would need in due course to win support from the full Commission for the draft legislation and actions that they wanted to take in their field of responsibility. A serious breakdown of relations at the top of the Commission was hence in the interest of no one. The bruised egos left over from the distribution of portfolios and the minor grumbles at the revised rules of behaviour for Commissioners imposed by the new regime were hence pushed to one side and serious and constructive discussion could begin.

Rather more difficult than establishing a generally cooperative rapport with his fellow Commissioners, was the task that Jenkins faced in winning acceptance for the various administrative changes he arrived in Brussels hoping to make. Three changes proved particularly contentious. First of these was the dismissal of the Sean Ronan, the Irish Director General of DGX, the Information Directorate, a move that provoked a fierce response both from the Dublin government and from Burke, the Irish Commissioner.[7] At issue was not really Ronan himself, but the question of how to compensate the Irish for the loss of their only A1 grade post in the Commission.[8] Various ideas were discussed,

[6] Tugendhat who served in both Commissions draws a very strong contrast between the two in this respect. Significantly the two individuals by whom Thorn was most intimidated were Ortoli and Davignon. Interview with the author, http://archives.eui.eu/en/oral_history/INT286

[7] For details of the Irish lobbying, see TP, File 5, 'Float, January–May 1977', Tickell to Jenkins, 'Mr Ronan and the Irish Problem', 11 January 1977; ibid., Tickell 'Note for the Record: Mr Ronan and the Irish Problem', 11 January 1977; ibid., Tickell to Jenkins, 'Mr Burke', 14 January 1977; and ibid., Tickell to Jenkins, 'The Irish Position', 17 January 1977.

[8] Policy-making staff in the European Commission are designated as A grade staff, with their seniority being indicated by a number, from 1 to 7, with 1 being the most senior.

including finding an Irish appointee to fill the vacancy at the head of the Statistical Office—an offer Dublin turned down as inadequate—and identifying an Irishman who could take over as the head of DGXVI, the Regional Policy directorate. This option was ruled out, much to Irish annoyance, when Giolitti, the Commissioner responsible for Regional Policy, made clear his preference for promoting a Dutchman who had previously held a senior post elsewhere in the Commission to the top job, rather than choosing any of the external candidates identified by the Irish government.[9] In the end it would thus take a three-way conversation between Jenkins, Tickell, and Garret Fitzgerald, the Irish Foreign Minister, conducted, characteristically perhaps for Jenkins' style of leadership, at Brooks's club in London, to pinpoint a solution that all could live with, namely the appointment of Eamon Gallagher, previously of DGI, the External Relations directorate, to head the newly established DGXIV responsible for Fisheries.[10] One facet of the administrative alterations introduced by Jenkins was thus used to resolve the difficulties caused by another. But the incoming president and his team had been given a painful reminder of how delicate were issues of national balance within the Commission. This point was only further reinforced by the contemporaneous skirmish over the candidacy of Roy Denman, a senior British official, to replace a Dutchman as the head of DGI. Again the national provenance of each candidate seemed to matter as much, if not more, than their respective abilities, with member state governments and individual Commissioners not hesitating to get involved in a direct and vociferous lobbying campaign.[11] When Jenkins told Schmidt in mid-March 1977 that he found the Commission 'a good but somewhat ponderous organisation' and that he intended to raise at European Council level 'the need for less insistence on geographical and national balance' within it, he was reflecting the somewhat painful lessons of his initial months in charge and hoping, to little avail, to alter the manner in

[9] TP, File 5, 'Float, January–May 1977', Tickell to Jenkins, 'DGXVI', 27 January 1977, and Giolitti to Jenkins, 27 January 1977; for Burke's adverse reaction, ibid., Tickell to Jenkins, 'DGXVI', 27 January 1977.

[10] Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 41. For Tickell's follow-up discussions with Fitzgerald, see also TP, File 5, 'Float, January–May 1977', Tickell to Jenkins, 'The Irish Problem', 1 February 1977.

[11] TP, File 5, 'Float, January–May 1977', Tickell to Jenkins, 'British Candidates for the DGI Director General', 12 January 1977; ibid., Tickell to Jenkins, 'The German Position', 17 January 1977.

which member state governments approached staffing issues within the Commission.[12]

Even more problematic, certainly in the short term but also beyond, were the repercussions of Jenkins' attempts to modernise the Commission's information policy and its engagement with the press. The idea of overhauling the way in which the Commission communicated its actions, policies, and priorities was a long-standing British aim that had been discussed, off and on, since well before 1973. A report advocating the merger of DGX, the Information Policy directorate, and the separate Spokesman's Service, and placing both under the direct oversight of the Commission president had been endorsed enthusiastically by Jenkins and his team.[13] And one of Jenkins' first actions upon arrival in Brussels had been to have a somewhat delicate meeting with the long-standing Commission spokesman, the Italian Bino Olivi, informing him that his job was to be abolished and that there were no guarantees that he would be appointed to the combined post of Spokesman and Director General of DGX.[14] In the event the new post went to another Italian, Renato Ruggiero, who had previously held a number of high-profile positions within the Commission, with the Welshman, Aneurin Hughes, serving as Ruggiero's *consigliere* or right-hand man.[15]

Unfortunately the new arrangements did not work well. Ruggiero struggled to establish a rapport with the press, many of whom quickly seemed to grow nostalgic for his predecessor.[16] His very centralised approach to how relations with journalists should be handled also created

[12] TP, File 16, 'Meetings and Conversations, 1976–1977', 'Summary Record of a Conversation between President Jenkins and Chancellor Schmidt', 18 March 1977.

[13] See Chap. 3.

[14] TP, File 5, 'Float, January–May 1977', Tickell to Noël, 'Meeting between President Jenkins and M. Olivi', 7 January 1977; the meeting is referred to in the original text of the *European Diary* in the entry for 4 February, Jenkins' first day in Brussels, but was omitted from the published version.

[15] 'Consigliere' was the term used by Ruggiero to Hughes, an Italian speaker, to describe the job he wanted him to perform. Interview with Hughes, 5 October 2010, available at http://archives.eui.eu/en/oral_history/INT179

[16] TP, File 5, 'Float, January–May 1977', Tickell to Jenkins, 30 March 1977; for a press view, see the anonymous 'Market Place' column in *The Bulletin*, 22 April 1977. The self-styled 'news weekly of the capital of Europe' had a good ear for Commission gossip and delighted in poking fun at the reign of *le Roy Jean Quinze*—a play on the similarity between the French pronunciation of 'Jenkins' and the title of an imagined king John XV but also a dig at Jenkins' somewhat aloof manner and love of luxuries like fine wine and Cuban cigars.

difficulties with the other members of the spokesman's team, notably Jenkins' own spokesman, Roger Beetham.[17] Hughes meanwhile was left feeling that it was his responsibility to try and run DGX, given Ruggiero's almost total preoccupation with the spokesman side of the job.[18] This in turn created problems with the two existing Directors within DGX, each of whom formally outranked Hughes. And these untidy administrative arrangements were compounded with minor, but silly, early mistakes, such as the reported failure initially to provide journalists with anything other than an English version of Jenkins' inaugural speech to the European Parliament—a highly tactless blunder given the huge degree of sensitivity that inevitably surrounded linguistic politics within Community Brussels, and especially the balance between English and French.[19] Ruggiero would leave the Commission and return to the Italian foreign ministry within less than 12 months, and many of the structural changes envisaged by Jenkins were quietly undone or laid aside in the years ahead.[20] There were multiple reasons why the early months of the new Commission did not receive the press coverage that the incoming president would have wanted, but the ineffectiveness of the communications policy reform certainly did not help, and may well have made matters substantially worse.

Other elements of Jenkins' reform plans were implemented more smoothly, as were a number of significant staff changes. The incoming president was thus able to win support for the establishment of a forward planning unit, push ahead with the merger of the directorate generals dealing with industry and the internal market, and establish a new task force to handle the enlargement negotiations as well as a new directorate general to run the fledgling Common Fisheries Policy (CFP).[21] Christopher Audland became the sole deputy secretary general when the German official with whom he had previously shared these responsibilities moved sideways to take over the reins of DGIX, the Development Directorate. And a new position was created for David Marquand, designed to improve ties between the Commission and the European Parliament. It would hence

[17] TP, File 5, 'Float, January–May 1977', Tickell to Jenkins, 30 March 1977.

[18] Interview with Hughes, 5 October 2010, http://archives.eui.eu/en/oral_history/INT179

[19] *Le Matin de Paris*, 1 March 1977; *Le Monde*, 5 April 1977.

[20] TP, File 7, 'Float, 16 October 1977–28 February 1978', Tickell to Jenkins, 'Dr Ruggiero', 25 November 1977.

[21] For the marathon Commission meeting at which many of these were approved see ECHA, COM (77) PV 422, 2e partie, 16 March 1977.

be wrong to give the impression that the whole package of reforms envisaged by Jenkins was bitterly resisted or misfired. But enough teething problems were encountered to demonstrate to the president, if such a demonstration were needed, the difficulties of tinkering with an institution like the Commission and the ease with which national sensitivities could be inadvertently trampled upon. More basic still, all of this reform effort took a great deal of time and energy—time and energy that could not be devoted to more substantive issues. Jenkins' programme of Commission reform was one of the key items on the agenda of what would prove to be the longest Commission meeting of his presidency, that of 16 March 1977—an occasion that prompted a diary entry that began, simply and eloquently, 'A ghastly day.'[22] How much further Jenkins would wish to go in seeking to alter the manner in which the Commission operated thus remained open to question.

Beyond the Commission

One of the first duties awaiting Jenkins when he arrived in Brussels was to present himself and his Commission to the European Parliament. His speech doing so was well chosen. The metaphor of the Commission breaking out of the citadel into which it had been obliged to retreat during the worst years of the crisis, seemed to promise an activism that was bound to go down well with MEPs.[23] The promise to act not as a British president of the Commission but as a European one was also well judged, given the constant suspicions that have tended to surround Commissioners from the larger member states in particular, and the residue of mistrust left by the UK's awkward first few years as a Community member. The pledge to treat the European Parliament as if it was already a directly-elected body, despite the first European elections only being scheduled for 1978, proved exactly what the parliamentarians wanted to hear, as did Jenkins' assertion that the Commission and Parliament were fundamentally allied on most key issues: 'No doubt we shall have disputes, but we are on the same side.'[24] Better still, Jenkins' early actions as Commission president seemed to indicate that this was more than just empty rhetoric, with Marquand's

[22] Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 65.

[23] He had used the same image in his opening speech to Commissioners at Ditchley Park. TP, Box 1, folder on 'Ditchley', handwritten and undated speaking notes.

[24] Speech to EP on 11 January 1977. Full text available at http://aei.pitt.edu/10997/

appointment only the most prominent aspect of a systematic review of how the Commission managed its relations with Strasbourg.

All of these gestures in the direction of the European Parliament were undoubtedly sincerely meant. Ortoli's discomfort in his dealings with the Parliamentary Assembly was a characteristic that Jenkins' Brussels informers had been critical of, and the new president clearly arrived with the intention of doing rather better than his predecessor.[25] His reputation as a formidable performer in the House of Commons also created a sense of expectation and anticipation surrounding his Strasbourg debut. And like many who had cut their political teeth in the British system Jenkins was deeply committed to the idea of parliamentary accountability.[26] Actually translating these good intentions into a warm rapport with the Parliament proved harder than expected, however. Part of the problem was that Strasbourg was just not Westminster. As Jenkins noted in his diary in early March:

> The Parliament is not really a rewarding body to which to speak. There is of course the linguistic difficulty and the fact that the Chamber is often pretty empty … and these difficulties are compounded by the extraordinary proliferation of the photographic industry in Strasbourg, so that not only are you liable to have moving television cameras producing film that is hardly ever used, but you also have flashlight photographers who come and photograph you the whole time you are on your feet—and even when you are not.[27]

The type of oratorical triumphs that Jenkins had experienced on the floor of the Commons would prove hard to replicate in this new institutional setting. The location also proved frustrating, with repeated allusions in the *European Diary* not only to the invariably bumpy and uncomfortable flights in an *avion-taxi* between Brussels and Strasbourg, but also to the disappointingly poor accommodation in the Alsatian capital.[28] More fundamental, though, was the European parliamentarians' collective frustration

[25] David Hannay's judgement had been blunt: 'President Ortoli is no parliamentarian'. TP, Box 1, Folder 'Reform of the Commission', Hannay paper, 'The Best Use of the Commission President's Time', 14 September 1976.

[26] His commitment to greater parliamentary accountability within the EEC had been evident in some his earliest writings on the EEC. See for instance his February 1963 piece in *Encounter*, reprinted in Roy Jenkins, *Essays and Speeches* (London: Collins, 1967), 126.

[27] Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 63.

[28] For example, ibid., 174 and 218.

at their general lack of power. This tended to manifest itself in a somewhat reckless tugging by MEPs at the few levers that the Strasbourg Assembly actually possessed, such as votes of censure or the power to block or obstruct the Community budget, all of which harmed the Commission in the first instance, and not the main object of the parliamentarians' displeasure, namely the member states. The Commission in other words could at times be a largely innocent casualty of a power struggle between Strasbourg and the national governments which refused to give the Assembly the powers that its members believed they deserved. Establishing a really effective rapport with a malcontent parliament would not prove easy, however hard Jenkins tried.

The Council of Ministers provided a different challenge. Here the difficulty was certainly not a lack of power—within the Community system few decisions could be taken without ministerial approval. Instead what Jenkins found problematic, like many others before and since, was the undisciplined scale of what had originally been conceived of as a meeting of 'just' the foreign ministers. As he confessed at the end of his first year in Brussels, 'I find the most difficult gathering to be the large, inflated, sprawling Council of Foreign Affairs', a body which had lost most of its original intimacy and had also all but surrendered any pretence to any longer exercise oversight over the many other ministerial Councils, such as those of Agriculture, Trade, or Finance.[29] At an individual level, the Commission president worked well with most of the foreign ministers. There was a bit of tension with Anthony Crosland, formerly a close colleague and friend who in becoming British Foreign Secretary had inherited a job to which Jenkins himself had periodically aspired, although Jenkins was clearly both shocked and saddened by Crosland's sudden death in early 1977.[30] For rather different reasons the relationship with Crosland's successor, David Owen, was also ambivalent, since Owen had once been seen as a loyal follower of Jenkins in the House of Commons, and yet was now not only Foreign Secretary, but also a Foreign Secretary who espoused a strongly critical view of the European institutions which sat oddly with his professed pro-Europeanism.[31] And, as will be seen below, there were bouts of periodic disagreement over substantive issues with Louis de Guiringaud,

[29] Ibid., 194.

[30] Ibid., 47 and 49–50. For the background see Giles Radice, *Friends and Rivals: Crosland, Jenkins and Healey* (London: Abacus, 2003).

[31] Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 81.

the French Minister of Foreign Affairs. With most of the others, though, Jenkins was able to establish good working relations. Some, like Klaus von Dohnanyi, the German State Secretary who frequently deputised for Hans-Dietrich Genscher, the Foreign Minister, at meetings of the Council of Ministers, or Henri Simonet the Belgian Foreign Minister, became liked and respected allies. As a result, the Commission president seems to have positively enjoyed the informal foreign ministers' meetings which he attended, relishing the opportunity to discuss both Community affairs and more general political issues in an intimate setting far removed from Brussels. The formal Council meetings by contrast were limping affairs, hobbled by over-crowded agendas, over-populated meeting rooms, and the lack of the political will needed to forge unanimous agreement or to ensure the implementation of what had already been agreed.

Jenkins also struggled to feel at home in his regular meetings with COREPER, the vital committee of permanent representatives—i.e. member state ambassadors to the European Community—through which all Community decisions must pass en route to the Council of Ministers. Ortoli, his predecessor, was a natural technocrat and as such had relished his interaction with the permanent representatives, instituting regular meetings and lunches with them. Jenkins by contrast scaled back these encounters, scrapping many of the meetings and choosing only to attend the lunches. Even these he seldom enjoyed, a reaction which reflected his sense of himself as a politician and not a functionary.[32] Interaction with individual permanent representatives was a necessary and accepted part of his job, but he clearly did not regard it as either useful or desirable to establish a close rapport with COREPER as an entity.

It was at the level of the European Council, Europe's most senior club, that Jenkins felt himself most at home. Here too the contrast with Ortoli was very clear. The Frenchman, who was President of the Commission in 1974–5 when the European Council was proposed and regularised, never fully settled in this environment.[33] To some extent this was due to Ortoli's self-image as a technocrat, not a party politician; more specifically it may also have reflected the degree to which he was intimidated by

[32] Ibid., 187. In this respect he was very different from Delors, who despite his effectiveness when dealing with Europe's most senior leaders, also liked working closely with the permanent representatives.

[33] For a fairly generous assessment of Ortoli's interaction with the European Council see Laurence Badel and Eric Bussière, *François-Xavier Ortoli: L'Europe, quel numéro de téléphone?* (Paris: Descartes & Cie, 2011), 151–6.

Giscard, one of the dominant figures in the European Council. Jenkins, on the other hand, clearly relished the opportunity to debate Europe's future with those most able to affect its direction. He also greatly liked the restricted cast list of European Council meetings. As he noted in the immediate aftermath of the Rome Council of March 1977, a meeting that marked the twentieth anniversary of the Treaty of Rome but which was also the first such gathering that he attended:

> The European Council itself is in form a surprisingly satisfactory body, mainly because it is intimate. There were only twenty-five people in the room and we sat round a relatively small table, looking at the most beautiful cartoons on the walls and ceiling … This was a vast improvement on the huge gatherings which characterize the Council of Ministers, with up to three hundred people present in the huge room, talking from one end of the table to the other as though across an empty football pitch.[34]

Such a setting was also one in which Jenkins could have maximum influence. He had a good rapport with nearly all of Europe's leaders, with only his relationship with Giscard and Callaghan proving difficult from time to time. He was extremely well briefed on all of the topics that the European Council would cover, his preparations augmented by regular visits to the key European capitals on the eve of most summits. In particular he made a point of having always seen Helmut Schmidt, perhaps the single most important player in most Councils, prior to each top-level European meeting. He was intellectually confident enough to more than hold his own in wide-ranging discussion where aides and advisors were not always close at hand. The fact, moreover, that the subject matter of each European Council meeting corresponded closely with issues that he as Commission president would be dealing with on a daily basis, whereas for many of his interlocutors European policy was just one concern amongst many, also gave Jenkins what amounted to 'home advantage' in many of the discussions and debates. And he seems to have greatly enjoyed the meals and the ceremonial that had become part of the European Council routine.[35] Jenkins thus became the first Commission president to demonstrate the extent to which European Council membership can be a key facet of a successful presidency and an element

[34] Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 74.
[35] See, for example, ibid., 75–6.

that both raises the president to a level rather above his ostensible peers around the Commission table *and* allows him to play a major role in influencing the tone and course of discussions about Europe amongst the continent's principal leaders.

This was not something that could be taken for granted. There were many in and around the Commission who were uncomfortable with the emergence of the European Council, fearing that it might usurp the Commission's own leadership role within the integration process. The sensitivity of this issue had for instance become clear in the internal Commission discussions generated in early 1977 by the letter that Giscard circulated to all his fellow Council members suggesting a number of ways in which the institution might be strengthened in the light of its first 2 years of operation.[36] The French President's letter made no reference, Emile Noël noted with concern, to the Commission's role in preparing European Council meetings and helping to set the agenda—despite the fact that the Community system was meant to give the Commission the exclusive right to initiate European policy.[37] Some guardians of *communautaire* orthodoxy were persistently tempted to take such misgivings to their logical conclusion, and denounce the gatherings of the Heads of State and Government of the Nine as incompatible with the manner in which a true Community ought to function. This line of thinking would become very apparent under Jenkins' successor, Gaston Thorn. But Jenkins himself had no such qualms. The European Council existed and was a reality that needed not just to be acknowledged but used a vehicle for the Commission's own ambitions and enthusiasms. The manner in which it operated made it a good environment in which to press Commission policy priorities and to present the Commission's view point to Europe's political leaders. It thus made sense for the Commission president to derive the maximum possible advantage from his participation in this forum and to experiment with different ways of communicating the Commission's position. In April 1978 for instance Jenkins addressed a confidential memorandum to all his fellow members of the Council on the eve of the Copenhagen summit, setting out the context in which they met, and underlining his view of the most crucial challenges ahead.[38] A high

[36] ENP, EN-1932, Giscard d'Estaing to Jenkins, 21 January 1977.

[37] Ibid., Noël to Jenkins, 'Lettre du Président du République Français', 1 February 1977.

[38] TP, File 15, 'European Councils', 'Memorandum for the European Council, Copenhagen 7/8 April, 1978', 3 March 1978.

level of engagement with Europe's most senior decision-making entity would become a notable characteristic of Jenkins' 4-year term and a factor that differentiated it strongly from both the Ortoli and Thorn presidencies while also foreshadowing key aspects of Delors' manner of operation.

International Engagement

Outside of Europe, Jenkins started with one very considerable advantage over most other Commission presidents—he was remarkably well connected with a large portion of the US political elite. The extent of these links was nicely captured by the exchange between Jenkins and President Carter on the occasion of his 18 April 1977 visit to the Oval Office:

> He said, 'I expect you know this room well. Have you been here often before?' I said, 'Yes, I think I have seen four of your predecessors here.' He very quickly said, 'That means you start with Kennedy, does it?' So I said, 'Yes, though I also met both Truman and Eisenhower, though neither when they were in office and therefore not in this room.' I then added, conversationally, 'But, to my great regret, I never set eyes upon Roosevelt. Did you, Mr President, by chance see him when you were a boy?'
>
> 'See him,' said Carter incredulously. 'I have never seen *any* Democratic President. I *never* saw Kennedy. I *never* saw Lyndon Johnson [astonishing]. I *saw* Nixon, and I both saw and talked to Ford of course, and that's all. You see I am very new to this scene of Washington politics.'[39]

Nor was it just presidents, past and present, that Jenkins had met and got to know. Instead, the various social engagements while on US trips recorded in the diary, and the roll call of those with whom Jenkins would dine in the course of his 4-year term in Brussels, emphasise how well embedded he was within the East Coast political milieu.[40] Only Monnet himself, amongst his predecessors at the head of a European institution, would have been able to match or surpass this level of familiarity with the movers and shakers of political America.[41] In establishing good links with

[39] Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 83.

[40] See, for example, ibid., 86.

[41] François Duchêne, *Jean Monnet: The First Statesman of Interdependence* (New York: Norton, 1994); Clifford P. Hackett, *Monnet and the Americans: The Father of a United Europe and His U.S. Supporters* (Washington, DC: Jean Monnet Council, 1995).

the Carter administration, Jenkins would thus begin with a substantial head start.

Such ties have always been important to the European Commission. Ever since the days of the newly established High Authority in the early 1950s, strong connections with Washington and with the US establishment have been a source of strength and reassurance for those in charge of supranational Europe, especially in the face of the ambivalence if not hostility displayed by some of Western Europe's own governing class towards the Community structures.[42] American readiness to deal with the European institutions as serious interlocutors furthermore, even when they scarcely had the power or the legitimacy to 'speak for Europe', was a vital aid to the High Authority's and then European Commission's quest for legitimacy and international standing.[43] In 1953, the United States had been the first country to appoint a heavyweight ambassador as envoy to the European institutions, throughout the 1950s and 1960s it had treated representatives of the institutions with a degree of seriousness and respect that they had seldom been accorded elsewhere, and it had made an effort to go on interacting with the European Commission at even the darkest hours of the tussle with de Gaulle. Indeed one of the many aspects of the European institution's behaviour that had been denounced by the French President had been the delusions of grandeur that he perceived in its interaction with the United States. The fact that President Hallstein had been accommodated at Blair House, an honour normally reserved for Heads of State and Government, was a specific grievance for instance. In sum, the United States had sometimes seemed to believe in 'Europe' even when European countries themselves were not certain that they did, and the European Commission derived great satisfaction and reassurance from this US support. As a result, there had been much discomfort and consternation in Brussels at the apparent downgrading of Washington's esteem for European representatives that seemed to characterize the early years of the Nixon administration. The US President's failure to make time to meet Jean Rey when he first visited the US capital as Commission president caused great dismay for example.[44] To be sure, matters had improved somewhat

[42] Geir Lundestad, *'Empire' by Integration: The United States and European Integration, 1945–1997* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

[43] Jacob Krumrey, 'Staging Europe: The Symbolic Politics of European Integration during the 1950s and 1960s' (PhD dissertation, European University Institute, 2013).

[44] ECHA, COM(69) PV 83, 2e partie, 24–25 June 1969.

since, thanks in no small part to determined efforts by Sir Christopher Soames, as the Commissioner responsible for External Relations in the Ortoli Commission.[45] But the possibility of having a Commission president who had such good US ties that he would be able to restore some of the ease of US–European Community relations that had been the norm in the earlier decades of the integration process was a mouth-watering prospect for many around Brussels.

The other key bilateral relationship, in trade terms at least, would be that with Japan. Politically, the ties between Brussels and Tokyo were much less developed and much less intense than those between Brussels and Washington. But commercially they mattered more and more, especially given the relative success of the Japanese economy in riding out the turbulence of the 1970s economic downturn. That Japan also ran a substantial trade surplus with the EC only added to the importance of fostering dialogue with the East Asian economy. Here too, Jenkins took office with cards in hand, since he had first met Takeo Fukuda, the Japanese Prime Minister, in the late 1960s when they had both been ministers of finance.[46] More importantly, both men seemed to respond well to each other, Jenkins expressing admiration for Fukuda's interventions on a number of occasions, and the Japanese leader reacting favourably to Jenkins' own approach, especially in the course of his first official visit to Tokyo in October 1977.[47] To the extent that personal ties matter in international economic diplomacy, the new Commission president was hence well placed as far as both of the Community's main trading partners were concerned.

As important, however, as establishing strong bilateral ties with key counterparts whether in the United States or Japan, was the question of winning the right to attend the recently launched world economic summits. This was not an issue of Jenkins' own making. On the contrary, the advent of multilateral summitry in the mid-1970s automatically generated a level of tension between those countries included in the get-together of the Western world's most important leaders and those left on the sidelines.[48] The Italians had

[45] Interview with David Hannay, 14 July 2011, available at http://archives.eui.eu/en/oral_history/INT172

[46] Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 96.

[47] Ibid., 98–9 and 156–7.

[48] Robert D. Putnam and Nicholas Bayne, *Hanging Together: The Seven-Power Summits* (London: Heinemann for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1984); Johannes von Karczewski, *'Weltwirtschaft ist unser Schicksal': Helmut Schmidt und die Schaffung der Weltwirtschaftsgipfel* (Bonn: Dietz, 2008); Emmanuel Mourlon-Druol and Federico

mounted an energetic and successful campaign to be included, having originally been left off the list of those that Giscard d'Estaing intended to invite.[49] There had been complaints after the very first summit, held between the leaders of the United States, Japan, France, Germany, Britain, and Italy (the G6), at the Château de Rambouillet in November 1975 from those like the Dutch or the Australians who had not been invited to attend.[50] And these protests had only redoubled in frequency in the run-up to the second summit in Puerto Rico in 1976, partly because another of the countries initially excluded, Canada, had now been added to the guest list (creating the G7), but more importantly because with the holding of a second top-level meeting so soon after the first, it was no longer possible to dismiss global summitry as a momentary aberration from the usual rules of international dialogue within the West. Instead it looked much more like the beginning of a new institution.

The case for European Community representation went beyond the simple annoyance of the smaller Western economies at being excluded from the new top table of international economic discussions, real though this was. It also centred on the substantial overlap between the likely subject matter of G6 or G7 level discussions, and areas of Community competence.[51] When trade was debated for instance, it was legitimate to ask how free Britain, France, Germany, or Italy were to discuss matters at global level, given that under the Treaty of Rome all member states had bound themselves to implement a common commercial policy, and had delegated much of the task for overseeing this policy, and for negotiating it with non-European Community partners, to the European Commission. Similarly at a time when serious efforts were being made to coordinate the stance of European countries on questions of energy supply, use, and conservation, how compatible would this aspiration prove to be were several of the larger member states simultaneously discussing the same questions with another group of partners at a global rather than regional level? More fundamentally

Romero, *International Summitry and Global Governance: The Rise of the G7 and the European Council, 1974–1991* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014).

[49] Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor (FPL), NSA Memcons, Box 14, memorandum of conversation between Ford, Kissinger, Moro, and Rumor, 1 August 1975, and Box 15, memorandum of conversation between Ford and Rumor, 23 September 1975.

[50] Putnam and Bayne, *Hanging Together*, 59–61.

[51] Giuliano Garavini, 'The Battle for the Participation of the Community in the G7 (1975–1977)', *Journal of European Integration History* 12, no. 1 (2006): 141–58; Putnam and Bayne, *Hanging Together*, 61–5.

still, the start of a system where the larger Community member states were holding private meetings with the United States, Canada, and Japan, at a time when the Nine were already struggling to maintain their fragile unity, could increase divisions within the EEC and might even threaten its very existence.[52] In such circumstances, finding a formula which would make global level encounters less potentially damaging to the Community had become an urgent concern.

The Commission's anxieties about the implications of summitry had first been expressed, albeit discreetly, in the run-up to the Rambouillet summit. Wilhelm Haferkamp, then in charge of the economic and monetary affairs portfolio, had been tasked by the Commission to approach Emilio Colombo, the Italian minister of finance, with the suggestion that the Italian presidency convene, prior to the global summit, a meeting of the EC Finance Ministers Council. This would allow the Nine to coordinate their stance on many of the key issues due to be discussed at Rambouillet before the summit itself. This request had fallen on deaf ears, however.[53]

The Commission subsequently watched with interest as the three Benelux states made another determined push in the weeks preceding the Puerto Rico summit. First the Dutch in particular had made their dissatisfaction with the existing arrangements clear at the COREPER meeting to which the Germans had first announced the plan to hold a second top-level summit.[54] The issue had next been discussed at an informal meeting of the nine foreign ministers at Senningen in Luxembourg in early June. And the 'collaborators' of the ministers—i.e. senior diplomats from each of the member states—had then seemingly struck an informal deal about Community participation on 16 June. This had envisaged a combination of preliminary consultation and coordination of the Nine's position before each summit, plus the presence at the summit itself of both the President of the Council, who might or might not be one of the four European leaders automatically invited, and the President of the European Commission.[55] This apparent deal had quickly unravelled, however, largely because the

[52] This certainly was the line taken by several of the Benelux ministers both in 1976 and again in 1977.

[53] ENP, EN-1916, Noël note, 'Le "Deuxième Rambouillet". Aspects institutionelles', 2 June 1976.

[54] ENP, EN-1916, Meyer to Ortoli, date illegible, but clearly early June 1976.

[55] ENP, EN-1916, Noël to Ortoli, 'Conseil Européen. Organisation de réunions du type "Rambouillet—Porto Rico"', 6 July 1976.

French disowned it, but also because the 'excluded' countries were divided as to exactly what they wanted, the Danes for instance pushing for a rather elaborate arrangement where the Community would be represented by a single delegation composed of representatives from all nine member states, and would speak only from pre-established positions—a requirement which would almost certainly have killed the G7 format entirely.[56] No European Community delegation had attended the Puerto Rico summit and the Brussels European Council in July which had returned to the issue had adopted a somewhat bland formula which did little more than stress the importance of respecting 'Community procedures and obligations … whatever the circumstances'.[57] The issue had not been settled during Ortoli's mandate as Commission president.

It would thus fall to Jenkins to continue the battle, especially following the announcement, shortly after he had arrived in Brussels, that a further summit was to be held, this time in London in May 1977. In taking up the fight, Jenkins had two additional motives. First, success in this struggle would add significantly to his authority as president, not least given the continued presence within his Commission of his predecessor Ortoli who had not succeeded in securing an invitation to the G7 top table. It was true of course that finance ministers also gathered at G7 meetings, meaning that Ortoli, as the Commissioner responsible for economic and monetary affairs, was also likely to be invited were Commission participation agreed. But G7 summits were very hierarchical affairs, with the delegation heads dining apart from other members of their governments, dominating discussion even when other ministers were present, and attracting the vast majority of media attention. The 'family photos' that would become a regular ritual at each G7 encounter invariably depicted just the delegation heads, for instance, and not any of their subordinates.[58] Were Jenkins to secure a place amongst them, his standing vis-à-vis his predecessor and all of the other members of his Commission would undoubtedly be enhanced. Second, in pushing for admission, Jenkins would also demonstrate his solicitude for the smaller member states who felt most strongly about this issue. This was of some importance, not simply because Jenkins

[56] Ibid.

[57] http://www.european-council.europa.eu/media/849707/bruxelles_july_1976__eng_.pdf

[58] For an example see http://blogs.state.gov/stories/2011/04/07/proceedings-foreign-economic-policy-1973-1976-conference-available-online

was himself from one of the big four member states, and might as such be regarded as someone prone to overlook the interests of the Benelux states, the Irish, or the Danes, but also because his appointment had so clearly been championed by Giscard and Schmidt, two of the big state leaders. Here, conveniently early in his presidency, was a cause that the new president could use to demonstrate that he was not merely the creature of the big four, but instead someone who could do battle for the Community's smaller members as well.[59]

The Battle for a Community Seat

The opposition to a Commission seat at the G7 table did not come from the non-European members of the global gathering. There is some evidence to suggest that members of the Ford administration had earlier harboured misgivings about too many additional Europeans invading what had been planned as an intimate get-together of Western leaders. Helmut Sonnenfeldt, Counselor at the US State Department, for instance told the Luxembourg ambassador to the United States who had been instructed to lobby for European Community representation that his personal view was that an EC presence would damage the intimacy and effectiveness of the Puerto Rico encounter.[60] But under the Carter administration all such qualms appear to have vanished. The President himself assured Jenkins that he not only wished to see the Commission president invited, but that he had also directly pressed Callaghan, as host of the planned London summit, to ensure that this happened on the occasion of the British Prime Minister's visit to Washington in March 1977.[61] Carter's position, moreover, was referred to repeatedly by those Europeans most eager to see Jenkins included.[62] And US helpfulness continued lower down the government hierarchy, with various senior American officials

[59] Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 20–1.

[60] FPL, NSA Country Files, Box 9, memorandum of a conversation between Sonnenfeldt and Ambassador Meisch, 4 June 1976.

[61] TP, Box 3, Folder 'Visit to the US, 17–21 April 1977', record of a meeting between the President of the United States and the President of the Commission at the White House, Washington, 18 April 1977; British files confirm that Carter had indeed expressed his support for Jenkins' participation in the London meeting: UKNA, FCO 82/759, record of a discussion between the Prime Minister and the President of the United States in the Cabinet Room of the White House on Thursday 10 March 1977 at 11.30 a.m.

[62] UKNA, PREM 16 1254, Fergusson to Wright, 24 March 1977.

supplying the Commission with copies of many of the preparatory documents for the London meeting which the Commission had been denied by the European governments involved.[63] Similarly neither the Japanese nor the Canadians seem to have had any particular difficulty in accepting Jenkins' presence.

Instead, the Commission's problems lay much closer to home. Ringleader of those opposed to any expansion of the G7 circle was the man generally credited with inventing the new forum, Giscard d'Estaing. There were at least two, rather different, but equally strong reasons behind the French President's adamant opposition to Jenkins being invited. The first was Giscard's desire to preserve to the greatest extent possible the informal 'fire-side chat' aspect of the G7 meetings, by resisting all attempts to expand the circle of those invited.[64] As such, refusing to countenance Jenkins' presence was wholly consistent with the French President's initial reluctance to invite the Italians and his unsuccessful opposition to the American desire for Canadian participation. It was also in line with his dislike of the creeping 'bureaucratisation' of the summitry process with ever greater preparation and paperwork, a trend which he would repeatedly deplore, but would in the end prove powerless to resist. Giscard's idea of the summit remained one in which a handful of powerful leaders would come together regularly, as undisturbed as possible by either governmental preparation or media interest, in order to share their views of the major economic and political issues of the day. Commission participation would constitute a regrettable step away from this model. Second, inviting Jenkins would also clash with the Gaullist attitudes that still underpinned much of the French President's approach to European policy. Fundamental to such views was the clear distinction drawn between sovereign states and international entities. The G7 was a meeting of the leaders of the former. Jenkins by contrast represented the latter. As such he had no claim to attend. This second strand of French opposition thus sprang from the same roots as the ongoing attempts by French representatives to confine to a minimum the Commission's role within European Political Cooperation (EPC), the structures set up in the early 1970s in an effort to coordinate the foreign policy stance of first the Six and then the Nine. Once more the EPC was seen in Paris as a forum of state representatives, and there was hence no question of the Commission being regarded as a fully-fledged member,

[63] Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 89.
[64] Putnam and Bayne, *Hanging Together*, 44.

even if its total exclusion from a mechanism intended to enable Europe to speak with one voice was never a realistic proposition.[65]

These French views met with a degree of sympathy in Britain and Germany, but little elsewhere. There were many within the British government—including Callaghan and David Owen—who shared Giscard's misgivings about too much Commission power, without necessarily accepting the full logic of the Gaullist position. Schmidt too had a track record as a strong critic of the European Commission. This may well explain why he and the Prime Minister appeared to agree with one another, when they spoke on the phone in early March, that it would be best were Jenkins not invited and that Callaghan as Council President would suffice to represent the Community.[66] Of still greater importance for the German Chancellor, moreover, was the desire to avoid any major confrontation with Giscard. Close cooperation between the French and German leaders would be a hallmark of the mid to late 1970s and while Giscard and Schmidt disagreed quite often, each was keen to minimise the gap between them, and to prevent their divergent views on any specific issue from harming their wider partnership.[67] Neither London nor Bonn hence looked likely to fight hard on Jenkins' behalf, although as will be seen Schmidt would ultimately play a crucial part in resolving this row. Italy meanwhile was more overtly supportive, but having only just managed to procure invitations for themselves to the G7 meetings, the Italians were ill-placed to wage an aggressive campaign for European Community representation. The main responsibility for pushing for Jenkins to be invited to the forthcoming Downing Street summit would thus be left to the 'excluded' smaller countries, especially the Benelux states, and to the Commission itself. Their chances of success were increased by the fact that the smaller states were no longer so divided amongst themselves and had instead converged on a Belgian-inspired formula which emphasised prior coordination of the Nine's position, the expectation that no member state would make commitments incompatible with their Community obligations, and the representation of the Community itself by both the

[65] Aurélie Elisa Gfeller, *Building a European Identity: France, the United States, and the Oil Shock, 1973–1974* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012).

[66] UKNA, PREM 16 1253, extract of a teleconference between the Prime Minister and Chancellor Schmidt, 9 March 1977.

[67] Michèle Weinachter, *Valéry Giscard d'Estaing et l'Allemagne: Le double rêve inachevé* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2004); Hélène Miard-Delacroix, *Partenaires de Choix?: Le Chancelier Helmut Schmidt et la France, 1974–1982* (Berne: Peter Lang, 1993).

President of the Council and the Commission President.[68] Given that in the first half of 1977 the former position was held by Callaghan, who would be at the summit anyway, this meant that the focus of debate could centre on whether or not Jenkins would attend.

After an initial skirmish when Jenkins visited Giscard in late February, the first serious passage of arms on the issue in 1977 occurred at a restricted session of the General Affairs Council in early March.[69] Owen in the chair raised the question of Community representation, de Guiringaud outlined French opposition, before promptly leaving the room, leaving the unfortunate French permanent representative to defend this stance looking, in Jenkins' vivid formula, 'like an apprehensive goat tethered to his post'.[70] The Belgians, Dutch, Italians, Danes, Irish, and Luxembourgers, not to mention Jenkins himself, then all proceeded to attack the French stance. Seeking to bring the debate to an end, Owen suggested somewhat contentiously that in the absence of consensus he should inform the press that the Commission would *not* be represented at the summit, a line that Jenkins in particular rejected strongly. It was hence decided that the matter would be returned to at the European Council meeting in Rome later that month.[71] In the meantime, the Dutch upped the ante by threatening to withhold any future loans to countries like Britain, if such countries continued to attend the G7 without adequate Community representation.[72] This position was then relayed to the IMF whose director was seeking international approval for a new loan facility designed to address precisely the sort of balance of payments crisis that the British had encountered the previous year.[73] In parallel, the Belgians continued their efforts to knit together an

[68] ENP, EN-1931, Van Elselande to Jenkins, 1 March 1977. This letter also made clear that the Belgians had convened a meeting of the smaller states precisely in order to arrive at a more unified position on this issue.

[69] TP, File 16, 'Meetings and Conversations, 1976–1977', discussion between Mr Jenkins and President Giscard d'Estaing at the Elysée on Monday, 28 February 1977; see also Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 56–7.

[70] Ibid., 62.

[71] ENP, EN-1931, 'Note de Dossier', '438ème session du Conseil "Affaires Générales"—8 mars 1977—Sommet économique', 9 March 1977; see also in the same file, M. Jenkins, Note for the Record, 'Community attendance at the Western summit', 10 March 1977; for Jenkins' own account, see Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 61–3.

[72] For the Dutch threats see Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 65.

[73] TP, File 16, 'Meetings and Conversations, 1976–1977', 'Discussion between Mr Jenkins and the Prime Minister of the Netherlands at the Hague on Monday 21 March 1977', 23 March 1977.

effective common line amongst the excluded states. On 18 March representatives of the three Benelux countries, plus Ireland and Denmark, convened in Brussels at Belgium's request and succeeded in agreeing upon a joint statement on the issue that was then submitted to the Council presidency.[74] In substantive terms the five-country demarche advanced little from the known position of the 'excluded', but the mere fact that it was issued at all was an indication of their strength of feeling on the issue. The stage was thus set for a major internal Community row about the issue at the Rome summit—an occasion that was ostensibly intended to mark the twentieth anniversary of the signature of the Treaty of Rome.

The likelihood of a clash was only increased by the letter which Giscard sent Jenkins, and copied to all of his fellow leaders, on the eve of the summit itself.[75] This reiterated the French position in forceful fashion, seemingly leaving little room for compromise. The key passage of the letter stressed that the reason that Jenkins should not be invited to the G7 stemmed logically from the nature of the meeting itself: 'Voici une Conférence qui réunit exclusivement des Chefs d'Etat et de Gouvernement, en l'absence de toute institution, pour un échange de vue libre et informel, qui ne saurait conduire à des décisions dans des matières communautaires. Rien ne la distingue des contacts que les Etats entretiennent entre eux, de façon bilatérale ou multilatérale, et qui forment la trame même des relations internationales.'[76, 77] It therefore followed that the Commission had no more right or need to involve itself in this new forum, than it did in day-to-day bilateral meetings. Giscard furthermore was clearly anxious to check that the Commission President had received the letter before he had left for Rome, seeking Jenkins out as the summit began and asking whether he had seen it. More worryingly still, he concluded this exchange with the somewhat ominous observation that 'I never believe in arguing about

[74] ENP, EN-1931, Stefani to Noël, 'Position des délégations des Etats membres sur la representation de la Communauté au sommet économique de Londres', 18 March 1977.

[75] The British, who were due to chair the Rome meeting, were very pessimistic about the chances of agreement on this issue and feared deadlock. UKNA, PREM 16 1254, Fergusson to Wright, 24 March 1977.

[76] Here we have a conference that brings together exclusively the heads of state and government, in the absence of any institution, for a free and informal exchange of views which will not lead to any decision on Community affairs. Nothing differentiates it from the contacts that states have amongst themselves, bilaterally or multilaterally, and which constitute the very fabric of international relations.

[77] ECHA, BDT 39-1986, Dossier 114, Giscard d'Estaing to Jenkins, undated (but known from other sources to be dated 23 March 1977).

matters which are unimportant, but when I see something as a matter of principle, then I never bend.'[78]

Some deft pre-summit diplomacy by Schmidt had already done much to defuse the row, however. Conscious that if left unchecked the dispute might totally derail the Rome summit, the Chancellor had spoken on the phone with Giscard on 24 March, suggesting a compromise solution which would involve Jenkins' participation in some, but not all, of the sessions of the London meeting.[79] At the meeting itself, the French President had thus been in a position to advance the idea of partial Commission participation as his own.[80] Such French flexibility did not entirely remove the heat from the occasion. On the contrary it is clear that several of the smaller states advanced their views in a rather intemperate manner, Callaghan claiming in retrospect that he and Irish Prime Minister Liam Cosgrove were the only people present not to have lost their temper in what he described as a 'long and ridiculous argument'.[81] But Giscard had given enough ground for Jenkins to be able to accept the new French stance, especially once it became clear that the somewhat vague formula about the Commission president being invited to take part in those sessions of the Downing Street summit at which items that fell within Community competence were to be discussed, was likely to involve a significant portion of the total conference and would not entail Jenkins having to wait in the corridor outside the meeting room while other issues were being talked about. As the Friday evening dinner came to an end, the Commission president was thus able to head back to his hotel reasonably satisfied with the outcome.[82]

The battle was not yet entirely won. In the weeks that followed the French gave signs of trying to claw back some of the ground lost by encouraging the British to interpret the Rome agreement in the most restrictive fashion possible.[83] They also sought to obstruct Commission

[78] Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 74.

[79] Karczewski, *Weltwirtschaft ist unser Schicksal*, 304. Fuller details of Germany's mediating efforts are set out in TP, File 5, 'Float, January–May 1977', Tickell to Jenkins, 26 March 1977.

[80] UKNA, PREM 16, 1254, note of discussion during the European Council dinner for Heads of Government and the President of the Commission at Palazzo Barberini on Friday 25 March 1977.

[81] Ibid. The heated nature of the discussion is confirmed by Jenkins' own account: Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 76.

[82] Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 76–7.

[83] Ibid., 80–1.

participation in the preparatory meetings of officials designed to lay the groundwork for the leaders' meetings. As a result Jenkins had to write directly to Callaghan to protest, arguing forcefully that any attempt to hinder Commission involvement in the preliminary diplomacy would be against the spirit of the deal struck in Rome.[84] And even when Tickell was invited to participate in the preparatory encounter amongst the so-called 'sherpas'—i.e. the senior officials who met to discuss the agenda, the organisation, and the content of the future summit—held in Washington in late April, the French representative felt obliged to announce that were the Commission to take an active part in discussions about any subject other than trade or North–South relations he had instructions to walk out of the meeting.[85] All too typically though when Tickell sought to heed this warning and leave the room as the discussions turned to balance of payments matters, his departure 'somewhat amused the meeting and greatly embarrassed M. Clappier'—a further indication of how uncomfortable virtually all French representatives were with a position that was very clearly dictated by the *Elysée*.[86] Tickell did not therefore feel it necessary to absent himself in any subsequent portion of the debate. David Owen meanwhile was given a distinctly rough ride by his colleagues from the smaller member states when he sought to outline the practical arrangements devised by the British to implement the agreement struck at Rome. For the five non-participating EC states, as for Jenkins, the plan of splitting the conference in two, and inviting the Commission only for the second of the 2 days, made little sense and represented an unnecessarily narrow interpretation of the Rome accord. As Gaston Thorn, the Luxembourg Foreign Minister, put it scathingly, 'he did not believe in a Community which operated only on Sunday.'[87]

The petty frustrations continued at the summit itself. Giscard boycotted the opening dinner, in protest at Jenkins' attendance.[88] But rather than disregarding this rather petulant gesture, the British government then compounded the snub by seating the Commission president with the finance ministers at dinner, rather than with the principals themselves, a move that Jenkins described as 'a gratuitous piece of insulting nonsense by

[84] TP, File 5, 'Float, January–May 1977', Jenkins to Callaghan, 14 April 1977.
[85] TP, File 5, 'Float, January–May 1977', Tickell to Jenkins, 28 April 1977.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Ibid., summary note of restricted session of the Foreign Affairs Council: Brussels, 3 May 1977.
[88] Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 92.

Callaghan' in the unpublished version of his diary.[89] The next day Jenkins was forced to kick his heels while the seven leaders met without him, an experience that is likely to have been only slightly eased by the fact that he was able to wait in his London house rather than being confined to a hotel.[90] And at the final press conference on the Sunday, after a day in which he had been able to play a full part in proceedings, it had been agreed that he would remain silent while all of the other delegation heads spoke, and hence sat at the only place at the table without a microphone—an indignity the press made much of the following day.[91] The actual experience of the Downing Street summit was therefore highly mixed, as perhaps it was always likely to have been.[92] Looking back at the episode with slightly more detachment in his memoirs, Jenkins noted dryly, 'Extracting an invitation by stubborn complaint, is rarely a recipe for enjoying the party.'[93]

In the medium term, however, the success of Jenkins' efforts to break into the G7 club was a significant achievement. For a start, once present at the top table of international economic discussions, the Commission president was able to prove his personal worth and demonstrate how much he had to contribute. As Tickell put it, 'He [Jenkins] had the respect of all the other people, therefore they wanted him to be present because he had something useful to say.'[94] This meant that it was particularly important that the Commission had secured this right at a time when it had a leader of the calibre and quality clearly to belong at this level of international diplomacy. The Commission president's right to attend has never since been challenged. Second, once they had got their foot in the door both Jenkins, and Tickell amongst the sherpas, were able to break down the remaining discrimination with which they were faced. At both the Bonn summit in 1978 and that in Tokyo in 1979, the Commission president would be able to attend all of the sessions and missed only one of

[89] JP, East Hendred (now at the Bodleian Oxford), entry for 6 May 1977. The published version retains the comment, but tones it down. Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 96.

[90] Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 96–8.

[91] Ibid., 98–100. For the Commission record of the meeting, see TP, Box 3, Folder 'Personal notes on Downing Street Summit, 6–8 May 1977', Summary Record of the Proceedings at the Downing Street Summit, 8 May 1977. Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 100.

[92] Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 100.

[93] Roy Jenkins, *A Life at the Centre* (London: Macmillan, 1991), 460.

[94] Interview with Sir Crispin Tickell, 21 August 2010.

the meals.[95] By that held in Venice in 1980 Jenkins' participation was complete. Likewise his personal representative was able to play a full part in the preparatory discussions, without needing to fear French walkouts or boycotts. The fact that climate change—an unfashionable topic in the late 1970s but a subject upon which Tickell had become a prominent expert—featured on the agenda for the Venice summit is for instance a fairly clear indication that the Commission sherpa was now sufficiently well established within the preparatory group to persuade his counterparts to direct their leaders' attention towards an issue that was unlikely otherwise to have been discussed at so exalted a level.[96] The Commission's right to attend and participate fully had, in other words, been entirely accepted and was secure enough to survive a subsequent period when neither the Commission president nor his *chef de cabinet* were good enough to contribute to the extent that Jenkins and Tickell had done.

Third, Jenkins had used this early opportunity to demonstrate to the smaller states that he took their concerns seriously and would not be merely the ally of the French, Germans, or British. Moreover, the Commission presence at the summit table did lessen the dangers that G7 cooperation would cut across pre-existing European efforts to unite. Jenkins, for instance, was not afraid of speaking up when some of his fellow European leaders appeared to act at a global level in a fashion that contradicted what they had promised to do at a regional one: in Tokyo in June 1979 for instance he took Giscard to task for disregarding European agreements on oil import targets, earning Carter's displeasure in the process.[97] And the Commission was also helpful in ensuring that those states not invited to the summit meetings remained *au courant* of what was being discussed. Tickell regularly briefed the permanent representatives about what had happened at each sherpas' meeting for instance.[98] Finally, Jenkins' own personal authority would be boosted by his regular attendance at G7 summits. The transformation did not happen at once, it must be

[95] According to one Commission official, Jenkins reacted to his enforced absence from the Tokyo dinner by taking the rest of the Commission delegation to an expensive restaurant where he astounded them, and embarrassed the restaurant staff, by recognising, on tasting the claret, that they had been brought the right chateau but the wrong year. Interview with Christopher Audland, 8 August 2010, http://archives.eui.eu/en/oral_history/INT100

[96] TP, File 26, 'Economic Summit, Venice, 22–23 June 1980'.

[97] Jimmy Carter, *White House Diary* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2010), 336–7.

[98] See, for example, TP, File 26, 'Economic Summit, Venice, 22–23 June 1980', handwritten Tickell notes.

acknowledged. On the contrary, one of the perverse characteristics of the London summit was that comment in the immediate aftermath centred on what the Commission president had *not* been allowed to do, rather than dwelling on the more important fact that he was there at all. But viewed with the benefit of hindsight there is little doubt that Jenkins' ability to play a growing role at G7 level helped increase his standing in the eyes of his Commission colleagues. Furthermore, Jenkins and Tickell together would make good use of the timetable and requirements of both summits and preparatory meetings, to extract information from and to determine the work patterns of, senior portions of the Commission bureaucracy. The Tickell files on the summits testify not simply to the growing sophistication of the preparatory and follow-up meetings themselves, but also to the ever greater extent that the flow of paperwork associated with these meetings became a stimulus to reflection and action at a Commission level.[99] Where once the charmed circle of those privy to G7 related discussions was restricted essentially to Jenkins, his *cabinet*, Noël, and a handful of other senior officials, by the end of the Jenkins' presidency the G7 effect had penetrated much deeper into the Commission *services* and had an impact on the work patterns of dozens of Commission officials. To the extent that this obliged the Commission to take global considerations into account, even as it sought to plan Europe's regional development, this should almost certainly be regarded as a positive development.

Such advances had, however, come at some cost. Two particular negative factors stand out. The first was the damage that the battle over summit participation did to Jenkins' relationship with Giscard, one of the most powerful figures within the Community during the mid to late 1970s and someone who had been an important backer of Jenkins' appointment. The rapport had never been an easy one: Giscard was too prickly a figure, and too conscious of the need to preserve the full dignity of his office and to respect the Gaullist foreign policy tradition, easily to strike up a close partnership with the leader of a supranational European Commission.[100] And as the EMS episode that will be discussed in the next chapter would show, Jenkins did not wholly forfeit his capacity to work with the leader of France through the activism which he had shown over the question of G7

[99] TP, cf. File 21 on the early process, with Files 25, 26, and 27 all of which concerned the Venice summit.

[100] Tickell confirms that he had seemed a difficult figure, long before becoming president. Interview with Tickell, 21 August 2010.

representation. But damage had undoubtedly been done, thereby depriving the Commission president of a potentially highly powerful sponsor and ally, and also complicating his relationship with Schmidt, given the German Chancellor's deep-rooted disinclination to tangle with 'his friend Giscard'. Demonstrating his value to the weaker states of the European Community, in other words, almost certainly carried a cost as far as Jenkins' links with the stronger were concerned. Second, and more worrying still, was the huge amount of time and effort that had had to be devoted to the 'battle of the summit' and could not therefore be spent working towards other Commission priorities. The question of G7 representation, after all, was not really an issue of Jenkins' own choosing; instead it was a fight that he had inherited and had had to pursue through to its successful conclusion. In the process the delays grew in his selection of his own policy priorities. As noted in the previous chapter, Jenkins had arguably erred in choosing to spend so much of his preparatory months seeking, largely in vain, to influence the personnel of his Commission rather than using the phase prior to assuming office to map out the policy proposals he wanted to make once president. The summit issue only served to delay this process even further. By the end of the Commission president's first 6 months in Brussels it had therefore become extremely urgent, for Jenkins' own morale, but also for the overall prospects of his presidency, that he rapidly identify one or more central policy priorities which he wanted to make his own, and which he could use to achieve his aspirations of revitalising the integration process. It is thus to this quest for 'a big idea' and the identification of monetary integration as the policy priority to pursue that the next chapter must turn.

CHAPTER 5

Finding a Sense of Direction: Jenkins and the Launch of the European Monetary System

By the mid-summer of 1977 Roy Jenkins' own morale, and that of his team in Brussels, had reached an extremely low point. His early achievements—notably that of winning the right to attend G7 summits—had yet fully to bear fruit. In the very short term the petty humiliations to which the Commission president had been subjected at the Downing Street summit in June all but concealed the long-term potential of this victory. The battle furthermore had been won at some cost to his relations with one of his key backers and allies: Valéry Giscard d'Estaing. How seriously the strained relationship with the French President would affect Jenkins' own presidency was unclear. Relations with the press meanwhile were poor, adversely affected by the botched attempt by the incoming Jenkins team to reform the Commission's information policy. Inevitably this was a source of concern for an ambitious and savvy politician like Jenkins, keen to engage with the public effectively rather than struggle to communicate via a seemingly hostile Brussels press corps. And most fundamentally of all, Jenkins felt that he had still to impose his own priorities on the institution that he led. As a minister Jenkins had always sought to follow the advice of Herbert Asquith—the subject of one of his most successful biographies—in prioritising a small number of goals and focusing the majority of his energy and effort on attaining them.[1] So far at least he had not been able

[1] John Campbell, *Roy Jenkins: A Well-Rounded Life* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2014).

N.P. Ludlow, *Roy Jenkins and the European Commission Presidency, 1976–1980,* DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-51530-8_5

to replicate this approach in Brussels, obliged rather to fight battles chosen by others. This was certainly true of the struggle to attain G7 representation which he had inherited from the Ortoli Commission, but it was also largely true of his efforts to reform the structure and functioning of the European Commission, since much of this agenda for change had been passed on to the incoming president by the previous wave of Britons dealing with and serving within the higher echelons of the Commission. It was thus high time for Jenkins to begin to put his own stamp on his presidency.

Jenkins' memoirs pinpoint a weekend in July 1977 as the nadir of the Commission president's spirits. On Saturday 16 July Jenkins and his wife had a picnic in the Forêt des Soignes just outside Brussels in the course of which he was afflicted by a huge wave of self-doubt as to whether he had been wise to take on this job at all—a line of thought that earned him a stiff talking to from Jennifer Jenkins. This account is borne out by the longer and unpublished version of the *European Diary* although omitted from the published version.[2] The trigger for this moment of pessimism and gloom was an article in *The Economist* which noted the relatively meagre successes of Jenkins' first 6 months in the job and dwelt at some length on the increasingly problematic rapport between Roy Jenkins and his erstwhile backers, Giscard and Schmidt.[3] But this particular piece—which was not as Jenkins himself conceded especially malicious—was symptomatic of the generally disappointing relationship that had developed between the Commission president and the Brussels press corps, especially those from British newspapers. For all his eloquence and experience in handling journalists and the press, Jenkins had not succeeded in winning over the majority of Brussels correspondents to his side. On the contrary, Renato Ruggiero's shortcomings as a spokesman, and the turf-war that had developed between Ruggiero and Roger Beetham, the president's own press secretary, had contributed to a pained stand-off between Jenkins and many Brussels-based journalists—a state of affairs that would only gradually improve after Ruggiero's resignation in October.[4] Also problematic in this regard was the Commission president's reluctance to use his still rusty French when dealing with journalists—a hesitation that irritated the

[2] East Hendred papers, unedited version of the diary, entry for 16 July. The published version leaves out the day entirely.

[3] 'Down but not out in Brussels', *The Economist*, 16 July 1977.

[4] Tickell Papers (TO), All Souls College, Oxford, File 7, 'Float, October 1977 to March 1978', Tickell to Jenkins, 'Dr Ruggiero', 25 November 1977.

still-largely Francophone press corps and frustrated Beetham.[5] Even more fundamentally though, the uncertainties in Jenkins' communication strategy reflected the equally great uncertainty over where Jenkins and his team wanted the Commission to go. The deficiency of the message as it came across in the press was in other words less attributable to either the shortcomings of the Commission press team or the ill-will of biased journalists, than it was to the absence of a clear set of policy priorities and targets for the Jenkins Commission. The first crucial step in improving the manner in which the Commission was discussed in the press would thus be the identification of a clear set of political goals.

Wholly typically, Jenkins' response to this moment of self-doubt was to counter-attack, to identify some key policy targets, and to launch an energetic drive to attain them. Two particular goals became central: enlargement and monetary union. Neither was particularly new or original. A new wave of enlargement had been on the cards ever since the collapse of the colonels' regime in Greece, the Carnation Revolution in Portugal, and the death of General Franco in Spain. Greece had applied for membership in 1975; both Portugal and Spain would do so in the course of 1977. The goal of monetary union meanwhile had first been proclaimed as a major Community objective in 1970 with the adoption of the Werner Plan. Jenkins' efforts towards each were thus able to build upon a great deal of work that had been done before. But each was also afflicted by so serious a sense of drift that major doubts persisted as to whether either could come about in the foreseeable future.

The start of negotiations with Greece had thus been painfully slow, and bedevilled by a strong feeling in Brussels as much as in the various member state capitals, that whereas it was impossible to reject membership applications from Greece in the first instance and Portugal and Spain thereafter, neither the Community nor the applicants were at all ready to accept the costs and the challenges involved. In 1975 the Commission had sought to highlight this difficulty by using the opinion it was required to draw up on the prospect of Greek membership to suggest that Greece ought to serve a lengthy probationary period before being able to participate fully in the EEC—a suggestion that had been disowned by all of the member states. But the basic problem persisted, despite the fact that Greece had been allowed to begin full membership negotiations. And within the

[5] Beetham's interview with the British Diplomatic Oral History Programme, available at https://www.chu.cam.ac.uk/media/uploads/files/Beetham.pdf

Community institutions and across the member states serious doubts continued to linger as to whether enlargement to 10, 11, or 12 was remotely feasible in the short to medium term.

In a similar fashion economic and monetary union had become a goal often proclaimed but no longer really believed in by many. The ambitious goal of the Werner Plan—full economic and monetary union by 1980—had quickly become unrealistic in the face of the turmoil that afflicted the world monetary system in the early 1970s. The monetary Snake, a system designed to limit the fluctuations of European currencies against one another as they moved towards full EMU, had shrunk to little more than a Deutsche Mark zone linking the German currency to those of several smaller Benelux or Scandinavian states, since it had proved impossible for sterling, the French franc, or the Italian lira to remain within the prescribed exchange rate fluctuation bands. And a 1975 report on progress towards monetary union had been forced to acknowledge that in the preceding 5 years Europe had moved further away from currency stability rather than advancing towards it. The periodic reaffirmations by European leaders of their commitment to the goal of EMU had thus acquired a somewhat ritualistic character, with few really convinced that movement towards the establishment of a zone of monetary stability within the EEC was at all likely in the foreseeable future. Jenkins himself described the notion of EMU of having fallen into 'fashionable discredit'.[6] A strong new push by the European Commission towards either of these goals would hence be an important development, albeit one far from guaranteed to succeed.

The two objectives were also closely interconnected. Jenkins was very aware that the addition of three new member states to the Community, each of which was significantly poorer and less economically developed than the EEC norm, could, if carried out in isolation, slow the integration process severely. Community institutions already creaking with 9 members might seize up entirely with 12; EEC policies originally designed for six would prove still harder to implement with twice that number; and a Community budget that struggled to cover the needs of the existing EEC would be wholly inadequate to cope with the requirements of a larger and more diverse entity. Some of those more sceptical about the European

[6] The phrase was used when reporting to the foreign ministers of the Nine about the special Commission meeting at La Roche-en-Ardenne, discussed below. Emile Noël papers (EN), EN-130, Speaking note for President, Meeting of Commissioners at La Roche-en-Ardenne 17/18 September 1977.

integration process might regard this as an argument for enlargement. The letter written by James Callaghan to a senior member of the Labour Party National Executive Committee (NEC) in October 1977 suggested that enlargement was an important goal precisely for this reason.[7] Yet others, more keen to preserve what had been achieved within the EEC and to keep open the prospects of further advance, argued that the only sensible option was to go slow on enlargement, delaying Greek and still more Iberian membership until such a time as the EEC was better able to cope. But Jenkins was convinced that enlargement should go ahead—to do otherwise would be to betray the promises that had been made to the democratic leaders of all three southern applicants and to endanger their still fragile democracies—but needed to be flanked by a strong push to increase the integration of the existing member states. Widening, to use the terminology first deployed by President Pompidou in late 1969, had to be accompanied by deepening, in order to avoid the EEC degenerating into a looser and more shapeless entity, devoid of the common policies or high ambitions of its early years. As the Commission president phrased it in his meeting with Raymond Barre, the French Prime Minister, in November 1977, enlargement would require that the Community be given 'a stronger bone structure. This could be provided by Monetary Union.'[8] And such strengthening was as much in the interests of the applicant countries as in those of the current Nine: Jenkins relayed to Callaghan and several others the comment of the Portuguese Prime Minister, Mario Soares, that had he been interested in belonging to a loose and amorphous entity there would have been no need for Portugal to aspire to leave EFTA and to join the EEC.[9] An ambitious policy aim, like a renewed aspiration to establish EMU, would fulfil precisely this purpose, demonstrating to existing member states and applicants alike that a larger Community could be as ambitious and as dynamic as that of six member states had been.

These two policy aims would go on to dominate Jenkins' activities in the latter half of 1977 and much of 1978. A strong awareness of their interconnectedness would endure throughout. But for the purposes of

[7] Roy Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981* (London: Collins, 1989), 151–2.

[8] TP, File 16, 'Meetings and Conversations, 1976–1977', record of a conversation between the President of the European Commission and the French Prime Minister at the Hôtel Matignon, Paris, 19 November 1977.

[9] UKNA, PREM 16 1627, record of a call by the President of the European Commission, Mr Roy Jenkins, on the Prime Minister at Number 10 Downing Street, London, on Friday, 25 November 1977 at 10.00.

clarity this study will look at them successively rather than simultaneously. The rest of this chapter will hence concentrate on the pursuit of EMU and Jenkins' role in the launch of the European Monetary System (EMS), whereas enlargement will be focused upon primarily in the next chapter.

The Choice of Monetary Union as a Policy Priority

In many respects Roy Jenkins was extremely well suited to blaze a trail in the direction of monetary union. He was unusually well educated in economics for a politician of this era, with economics having constituted about a third of his Oxford degree. His early reputation as an MP had been as an expert on economic issues.[10] He had, as Chap. 2 recalled, won plaudits and international acclaim for his efforts as Chancellor of the Exchequer to rebuild the strength of sterling after the traumatic devaluation of 1967. This had involved complex negotiations with Britain's international partners as well as an ability to restrain the spending instincts of his fellow ministers within Britain. Furthermore in the final stages of his spell as Chancellor, Jenkins had shown a high level of willingness to contemplate Britain's participation in Europe's quest for monetary union. In February 1970 he had met Giscard, then the French minister of finance, in Paris and assured him that were Britain to join the EEC it 'did not want to reserve the monetary field from the Community and we were prepared to move far in this field'—even, it was implied, as far as a common currency.[11] And in the early 1970s, now no longer in office, he had continued to speak on monetary themes, albeit more often focusing on global monetary arrangements rather than purely European plans.[12] He had also been approached about the post of IMF managing director in 1973, although he had turned the offer down.[13] His qualifications both academic and in terms of experience were thus impeccable.

Despite this, there is very little to suggest that Jenkins arrived in Brussels intent upon acting in the monetary field. There is no evidence of particular interest in this subject in the fairly extensive preparatory paperwork preserved in the Tickell collection. Monetary affairs were briefly alluded

[10] Campbell, *Roy Jenkins: A Well-Rounded Life*.

[11] Stephen Wall, *The Official History of Britain and the European Community*, vol. 2: *From Rejection to Referendum, 1963–1975* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), 348.

[12] *The Guardian*, 17 March and 27 May 1973.

[13] *The Guardian*, 21 May 1973.

to in the president-elect's conversations with Barre, and with the Danish and Irish governments. But in no case was the subject given particular prominence in discussions that ranged over a wide number of areas, nor did Jenkins drop any hint that he contemplated becoming active in this field. Nor was it mentioned as a policy goal in any of the early speeches given by the Commission president. And perhaps most telling of all, the fact that Jenkins was prepared to hand the portfolio for monetary affairs to Francis Ortoli, the former president and his single most potentially powerful rival within the Commission, strongly indicates that Jenkins had not singled out monetary integration as a field for possible action by early 1977. No politician as canny as Jenkins would have deliberately placed so powerful a rival in a position to thwart or at very least obstruct his own ambitions, had he foreseen that he would make the relaunch of monetary integration a personal crusade.

Once Jenkins realised in mid-1977, however, that he needed to identify one or more policy areas upon which to concentrate, choosing monetary union as one of these presented a number of important advantages. For a start a monetary initiative would be both radical *and* fully legitimate. It was a field of action that had been on the Community agenda for several years; it was hence entirely logical for the Commission, as the Community's executive organ, to be putting forward ideas for its attainment. But it was also a policy area in need of a big push, given the drift and lassitude that had beset European monetary ambitions over the last few years. A strong Commission initiative could thus make a real difference.

Second, any Commission effort to revitalise the monetary integration debate would be likely to receive a strong level of backing from a number of member states. Most of the smaller member states had long been enthusiastic about the idea of tighter monetary integration within the EEC, since their size gave them next to no protection against the impact of currency fluctuations. The majority were already part of the Snake, furthermore, and would hence gain from seeing this monetary arrangement expanded to include other major trading partners as well as Germany. But there was also a good chance that several of the larger European member states would react positively. Schmidt and Giscard were known to have discussed the subject recently, and both were also major critics of what they deemed to be a neglectful and careless approach to monetary affairs by the Carter administration. A revived European monetary zone would offer a degree of protection from the uncontrolled fluctuations of the US dollar. The Italians were also long-standing advocates of Community action in

this field. And there was even a chance, albeit a slim one, that the British, who had fared very poorly in the monetary instability of the early 1970s, might be open to a scheme which lessened their vulnerability to a new round of exchange rate volatility. A Commission initiative might thus win the level of backing from the member states needed to succeed.[14]

Third, and most important, a successful push towards greater monetary integration had the potential to make a huge difference not just to the Commission and its own morale, but also to the wider European economy. After six somewhat frustrating months in his current job, Jenkins was acutely conscious of how often Commission hopes of greater integration were thwarted by member states too preoccupied with their own individual economic woes to contemplate effective collective action. Greater monetary stability, however, might help to reverse Western Europe's disappointing economic performance. It would certainly reduce the disruption to existing Community policies like the CAP caused by intra-European exchange rate volatility. And it would also oblige member states radically to rethink their level of commitment, political and financial, to the European integration process. As such it would conclusively dispel any notion that the Community was stagnating and no longer able to advance.

Finally an initiative in the monetary field was something that the Commission in general and Jenkins in particular were well qualified to supply. As argued above, Jenkins himself had a good grasp of economic and financial affairs and could hence be an effective and persuasive advocate of a new move forward towards EMU. His would also be a fresh voice within a debate that had been in danger of stagnating. Within his *cabinet* he was able to draw upon the expertise of Michael Emerson, an economist who had recently served as the assistant to the MacDougall Committee. This last had brought together an array of senior experts to assess the level of fiscal transfers between member states that a full or a partial economic union might entail.[15] Ortoli and DGII, the Directorate General responsible for economic and financial affairs, also had long track

[14] An annex to the Jenkins/Emerson paper prepared for the La Roche en Ardenne meeting reviewed the known positions of the member states and predicted that only the British—and the German Bundesbank—were likely to be strongly hostile. European Commission Archives (ECA), SEC (77) 3125/2, 16 September 1977.

[15] European Commission, *Report of the Study Group on the Role of Public Finance in European Integration*, vol. 1 (Brussels: European Commission, 1977). When I interviewed Emerson he placed great emphasis on the formative importance of this experience in terms of his own views of EMU. Interview with Michael Emerson, 10 July 2013.

records of involvement in the debate about EMU and a high level of expertise. Cooperation between Jenkins and Ortoli and their respective entourages would not always be easy. But in combination they were able to bring a significant amount of relevant expert knowledge to bear upon a revitalisation of the monetary integration process. In choosing to act in the monetary field, Jenkins was thus selecting a policy area where he would be well supported and backed up from within his own organisation.

Blazing a Trail: The Launch of Jenkins' Monetary Initiative

The first documented hint that the Commission president was considering action in the monetary field came with his 22 July meeting with Callaghan. Monetary issues had not been on the original agenda for this encounter—the centrepiece of Jenkins' official visit to Britain.[16] Instead the plan was to focus on a series of European issues in which the UK had particular interest, notably a dispute over the exact means by which the British contribution to the EC budget was calculated, and the competition between Britain and Germany over the location of the experimental Joint European Taurus (JET) project into nuclear fusion. But it would appear from the British preparatory paperwork that a few days prior to Jenkins' visit, he let it be known that he would also like to talk about two extra subjects: the direct elections to the European Parliament planned for 1978 and EMU.[17] Additional briefs were hence prepared for Callaghan on each. In the event, the actual exchange on monetary integration was fairly brief and lacking in substance. Two of the most distinctive features of Jenkins' subsequent approach—a high-profile public speech on the issue and the direct approach to Europe's leaders by means of the European Council—were also notable by their absence, reference being made simply to 'a [Commission] paper to Finance Ministers'. But that the subject had been raised at all was important, as was Jenkins' allusion to 'a phased programme over a period of ten years towards monetary union'.[18]

[16] In the course of his first nine months as Commission president, Jenkins made 'official visits' to all nine member states, usually meeting the head of state, the head of government, and often representatives of other leading political parties. He thus met the Queen and Margaret Thatcher during this July visit as well as Callaghan.

[17] UKNA, PREM 16 1627, Fergusson to Cartledge, 20 July 1977.

[18] Ibid., note of a meeting between the Prime Minister and the Rt Hon Roy Jenkins, President of the EEC Commission, at Number 10 Downing Street, London, on 21 July at 19.30.

A rather more substantive discussion of the issue took place a week or so later during the annual gathering of Jenkins' *cabinet* at the president's country house at East Hendred in Oxfordshire. The meeting began with a telling review of the Commission's current position from Jenkins, which both confirmed his sense of disappointment at his first 6 months and underlined the need for a strong counter-attack:

> the first seven months in office had not been wholly satisfactory, though he felt that the achievements should not be minimised … But he thought that he had underestimated the complexities of Commission organisation and had not therefore fully worked out a 'style of operation'. He said that the British Presidency of the Council had not helped (although its effects should not be exaggerated), and that although this situation would now be a little easier, most of the major difficulties would still remain, because not one of the four major powers was really prepared consistently to support the Community. What support there was came in varying degrees from Italy, and the five small countries. Certainly it was unlikely that the British would go into a very pro-Europe gear for the moment. Furthermore, no European statesman was prepared to 'stick his neck out' over Europe. The role of the President as simply an intermediary between governments was unsatisfactory, the Commission as a whole needed to set out a new and more 'decisive policy'.[19]

Two main candidates for such a 'decisive policy' were then discussed, EMU and CAP reform. The centrality of enlargement was also noted, however, Michael Jenkins suggesting that the prospect of Greek, Portuguese, and Spanish membership be used as 'the "peg" on which to hang agricultural reform and monetary union'. The importance of winning support for any initiative within the Commission was underlined; although the president would not necessarily have to win over all of his colleagues, it was vital that he won that of the majority as well as the backing of whichever Commissioner was directly responsible for the particular policy area. Emerson was asked to prepare a paper on EMU and Jenkins summed up by reiterating his determination 'to "strike out" from purely intergovernmental cooperation on certain issues such as monetary union, enlargement and agriculture'. A planned speech in Bonn in December might well prove an opportunity to do so.[20]

[19] TP, File 16, 'Records of Meetings and Conversations, September 1976 to 1977', record of a meeting at East Hendred, 2 August 1977.

[20] Ibid.

The next step was to win the support of his Commission colleagues for the idea of a bold initiative. This would not necessarily easy: discussions at East Hendred suggest that at least three Commissioners had been identified by Jenkins and his entourage as potentially hostile, with greatest anxiety surrounding the views of Ortoli within whose portfolio monetary affairs fell.[21] Strong opposition from Jenkins' predecessor to his ideas for monetary union would be an embarrassment at best and could be far worse. It was therefore vital to devise a strategy in order to prevent a clash from occurring. Central to doing so was a procedural innovation: a special meeting of the Commission held away from Brussels in early September and devoted to just a handful of important topics of which EMU would be one. It was at this meeting that the president would have to finesse the Ortoli problem.

In order to do so, Jenkins needed his predecessor to feel that he still had a major stake in the debate about EMU. A simple power grab in which Jenkins took over full responsibility for voicing the Commission's views and ideas on monetary affairs would have been bitterly resented and would probably have broken irrevocably the relationship between the new and old presidents. It might also have led to a situation in which one part of the Commission undertook a campaign of guerrilla warfare designed to undermine the key policy priority of another. And it would certainly have deprived Jenkins of any hope of backing and support from the established experts on monetary integration working within DGII. Instead, Ortoli had to be given space to pursue his gradualist approach to economic and monetary union, while his successor would outline his significantly more radical vision.

As a result, two very different papers on EMU were prepared for the special Commission meeting at La Roche-en-Ardenne held on 16, 17, and 18 September 1977. The first, presented by Ortoli and almost certainly drafted by a combination of his *cabinet* and senior officials within DGII, envisaged advance towards monetary union as part of a broad range of measures designed to transform the way in which economic power was exercised within the EEC. The range of strictly monetary measures referred to—the maintenance and broadening of the Snake through the inclusion of other currencies, the development of the European unit of account, and the transformation of the European Monetary Cooperation Fund (EMCF) into a true currency stabilisation fund—were flanked with multiple other proposals stretching well beyond monetary cooperation.

[21] Ibid.

The suggested 5-year programme thus also included steps to reinforce budgetary coordination amongst EC member states, the completion of the internal market by 1982 (i.e. anticipating by a full decade the target later associated with the Delors Commission), a push to restore the health of the European economy, comprising both measures to boost investment levels and elements of a full industrial policy, and an effort to coordinate and increase aid to the developing world.[22]

The second paper, presented by the president, and described as having been drafted by the president's *cabinet* (which in practice meant that it was largely the work of Michael Emerson), adopted an entirely different approach, focusing solely on monetary issues and rehearsing at some length the basic case for a single currency. As such, the potential benefits reviewed included the control of inflation, beneficial effects on growth, and a much greater degree of collective European control over economic policy, thereby ending the ineffectiveness of individual member state policies that had been such a feature of the crisis years. The costs and risks involved were also spelled out, with no attempt made to hide either the far-reaching political implications of such a step, or the need for substantial fiscal flows to lessen the adverse effects of EMU on the poorer regions of the Community. On these last, Emerson was thus summarising the conclusions of the MacDougall Report. Finally, the Jenkins/Emerson paper contained a forceful denunciation of 'our present embarrassing reliance on rather outdated, gradualistic doctrines, which are not taken seriously by the press and are maintained by member states as a cover for their lack of political will, and as intellectual imprisonment of the Commission'—in other words an attack on precisely the type of approach espoused by the Ortoli paper which this Jenkins/Emerson text was ostensibly meant to 'complement'. What was needed, rather, was 'to restimulate the debate on the economics, politics and institutional implications of monetary union' and 'talk in terms of a bigger and politically more attractive proposition—which monetary union can be put to be'.[23]

Somewhat surprisingly perhaps, the assembled Commission does not seem to have been too put out by these two, contrasting, preparatory papers. The claim in the official minutes that the ensuing discussion 'permet de constater une grande convergence de points de vue et notamment de larges

[22] Emile Noël papers, EN-130, SEC (77) 3125, 'Eléments de réflexion sur l'union économique et monétaire', 15 September 1977.

[23] ECHA, SEC (77) 3125/2, 'The Prospect of Monetary Union', 16 September 1977.

possibilités de synthèse des idées de M. Ortoli et de M. le Président Jenkins'[24] should undoubtedly be taken with more than a pinch of salt, Emile Noël, the note-taker on such occasions, being renowned for his ability to perceive unity where others saw only discord.[25] But Jenkins' own account does suggest that after a somewhat sticky start during which Ortoli had been 'in a slightly worried, defensive mood', the majority of Commissioners were able to rally to the idea of making monetary union a policy priority, with only Haferkamp and Burke objecting.[26] Certainly, the minutes record agreement that a 'communication' on the subject would be prepared for presentation to the European Council meeting planned for December.[27] Jenkins had thus received the green light he needed to proceed.

The strange double act between Jenkins and Ortoli would continue for most of the remainder of 1977, each working on their own approach to monetary union with relatively little dialogue between them. There was clearly a degree of tension between those working with Jenkins and those assisting the former president.[28] Some of the rivalry also leaked out to the press, resulting in several stories about key divisions in the heart of the Commission.[29] And in November there was a tense stand-off between the two camps about the nature of the proposals that were to be presented, by Ortoli, to the Economic and Finance Council. On the 13th, when Jenkins flew back from Portugal where he had been discussing enlargement with Mario Soares and other Portuguese leaders he was met at the airport by Michael Emerson who was 'locked in a great dispute with Ortoli's *cabinet* about the draft of our paper'. A meeting between Jenkins and Ortoli the next day failed to break the impasse. Another hurried conference was therefore held at Zaventem (Brussels' main airport) early in the morning of 15 November between Jenkins and his entourage as the president waited for his flight on how far to press their disagreement with Ortoli at the Commission meeting to be held in Luxembourg the next day. The president and his team decided that conciliation was a better approach

[24] Highlights a significance convergence and great scope for synthesis between the points of view of M. Ortoli and President Jenkins.

[25] ECHA, COM (77) PV 442, 2e partie (séance du 18 septembre 1977). Emerson referred laughingly to this particular phrase when I interviewed him. Interview with Michael Emerson, 10 July 2013.

[26] Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 143.

[27] ECA, COM (77) PV 442, 2e partie (séance du 18 septembre 1977).

[28] Interview with Michael Emerson, 10 July 2013.

[29] See, for example, *The Guardian*, 20 October 1977.

than confrontation, and allowed Ortoli to win Commission support for a paper that was much more cautious than a Jenkins draft would have been. The great row anticipated at the 16 November Commission meeting failed to materialise. Again, though, journalists were able to pick up enough leaked information about the disagreement to produce a further wave of stories about internal disputes between Jenkins and Ortoli, this time with the added piquancy that the former rather than the current president appeared to have prevailed.[30]

Viewed with hindsight, though, the *pas de deux* between Ortoli and Jenkins may actually have proved quite effective. The Commissioner for Economics and Finance was thus able to keep the debate about EMU alive amongst European finance ministers—the level at which the majority of discussions about monetary integration had traditionally been held. The November paper mentioned above was hence just the latest in a long series of Commission and member state papers about aspects of EMU to feature on the agenda of ECOFIN—the Council of Ministers of Economics and Finance. And at this level Ortoli's instinctive caution was probably well suited to his audience. Many of the ministers of finance shared the Commission vice-president's mistrust of over-hasty or audacious advance, and would have reacted badly had they been presented with Jenkins' bolder ideas. The Commission president reportedly ended his inconclusive meeting in November with Ortoli by saying, '"The trouble is, Francis, that you and I have very different approaches. You are instinctively more cautious than I am and you don't believe that you can change people's minds by shocking them. I do slightly." I didn't add "You believe in boring them rather than shocking them", but this was rather in my mind about his style and about his method of presentation.'[31] The dull but careful approach was nonetheless appropriate for those with whom Ortoli needed to interact most closely.[32]

The Commission president's task meanwhile was to stimulate debate and thought about EMU amongst those who had hitherto spent rather less time on the subject. This included the general public—or at the very least that elite-level public likely to engage with European affairs, hence high-profile public speeches on EMU such as those delivered in Florence

[30] See *The Guardian*, 18 November 1977, and *The Economist*, 26 November 1977.

[31] JP, East Hendred, unedited version of the European Diary, entry for Monday, 14 November 1977.

[32] That this was fairly typical of Ortoli's approach is confirmed by Laurent Warlouzet, 'François-Xavier Ortoli (1973–1977): "drifting with the Tide"', in *An Impossible Job? The Presidents of the European Commission, 1958–2014*, ed. Jan Van der Harst and Gerrit Voerman (London: John Harper, 2015).

and Bonn in October and December 1977 respectively. It included senior figures in the worlds of business and finance. Jenkins' diaries refer to a number of meetings with business leaders in which he sought to proselytise about monetary union. Most importantly, however, it also included Jenkins' fellow members of the European Council, since it was at this level that renewed commitment to and belief in the goal of EMU would have to be shown were any important advance to be made. And at all of these levels, Jenkins' eloquence and vivid turn of phrase, not to mention his language about aiming high whatever the risks involved, was always likely to make more of an impact than Ortoli's flatter and risk-adverse approach. Although certainly not intentional, the contrasting styles of the two chief Commission spokesmen on monetary affairs may hence have been a strength rather than the weakness that the press assumed it to be.

The Jean Monnet lecture that Roy Jenkins delivered in Florence on 27 October 1977 illustrates this point well.[33] It did not set out a blueprint for, or roadmap to, monetary union. At the level of technical debate about how a European monetary union might work, or what steps would be needed in order to get there, it had relatively little to offer, despite a few useful thoughts about the level of public spending that might have to be involved, derived primarily from the MacDougall Report. Instead it sought to set out once more the case for monetary union, linking its potential benefits directly to the economic problems that beset Western Europe in the later 1970s. Ending exchange rate fluctuation within the EEC might thus encourage investment, lessen inflationary pressures, and allow better targeted and more effective policies to combat the scourge of unemployment. With Mediterranean enlargement in view, it would also make clear that Europe's leaders preferred 'a strengthening of the sinews of the Community' rather than a 'tacit acceptance of a loose Customs Union, far removed from the hopes of its founders'. EMU would hence be a policy advance directly relevant to the most pressing problems of the day.[34] This in itself was an important political message. As one Commission official commented subsequently, 'If monetary union is not presented in terms of current problems, politicians and public opinion will consider the subject as an obscure theological dispute, of interest to scholars but not to ordinary sinners.'[35]

[33] The full text of the lecture is available at http://aei.pitt.edu/4404/

[34] Jenkins, Jean Monnet lecture, Florence, 27 October 1977.

[35] Emmanuel Mourlon-Druol, *A Europe Made of Money: The Emergence of the European Monetary System* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012), 160.

Second, the Florence speech reiterated that rejection of gradualism alone that had been so strong a feature of the Jenkins/Emerson paper presented at La Roche-en-Ardenne. Having briefly recalled the failure of the Werner Plan in the face of the monetary instability of the early 1970s, Jenkins underlined how in its wake:

> The concept of gradualism … has come to supplant more ambitious schemes. Some people seem to believe that we can back our way into monetary union; others that better coordination is all that is required. I am afraid that neither view is right. The last few years have seen a retreat rather than an advance. In any event, the idea of an antithesis between gradual evolution and dramatic advance is misconceived. Evolution is a process which once begun goes both gradually and in jumps. There is room for *tomorrow's* act of better coordination and for *today's* discussion of a more ambitious plan *for the day after tomorrow*. The process has to be seen as one.[36]

If EMU was to be achieved, unlocking all the potential benefits discussed in the Florence lecture, it would entail a level of audacity and courage that had temporarily been lost from the European discussion of the subject. Summing up his speech the Commission president turned to another of his characteristic metaphors:

> Let us think of a long-jumper. He starts with a rapid succession of steps, lengthens his stride, increases his momentum, and then makes his leap.
>
> The creation of monetary union would be a leap of this kind. Measures to improve the Customs Union and the free circulation of goods, services and persons are important steps. We look for bigger strides in working out external policies, establishing more democratic and hence accountable institutions, elaborating more coherent industrial and regional policies, and giving our financial instruments the means to keep the whole movement on a balanced course. We have to look before we leap, and know when we are to land. But leap we eventually must.[37]

Speeches such as that delivered in Florence and designed to stimulate the enthusiasm of informed public opinion as well as to capture the attention of other policy-makers were an important part of building up the public case for a major leap forward.

[36] Jenkins, Jean Monnet lecture, Florence, 27 October 1977.
[37] Ibid.

Still more vital was to win the backing of Europe's key decision-makers, namely the members of the European Council. Here too Jenkins' contribution was important and innovatory, especially in his determination to make monetary integration a central topic of debate at this most senior level of European deliberation. Prior to 1977 EMU had been a rather marginal topic of discussion within the European Council, despite the known interest in the subject of several individual European heads of government—Schmidt and Giscard amongst them. It had, though, been agreed at the Rome summit in March 1977 that the end of year gathering of Europe's leaders would hold a discussion of monetary union. Jenkins' intervention helped give direction and content to what might otherwise have been a rather routine and perfunctory affair. This was all the more so because the Commission president followed up his Florence speech with a succession of bilateral meetings with Europe's leaders in which he urged them to take seriously his ideas and to ensure that the planned debate on monetary union was positive and substantive. The very next day he thus met Giulio Andreotti, the Italian Prime Minister, and agreed on the importance of the next Council meeting taking up the topic of EMU 'realistically'.[38] On 10 November, Jenkins was in Bonn for a lunch with Schmidt, when he again sought to impress his host with the potential advantages of monetary union. With the German Chancellor appearing somewhat evasive on the subject, Jenkins reassured Schmidt that he was not seeking instant endorsement of his Florence ideas but he hoped that 'he would give them a fair run' at the next European Council meeting, with 'no pouring of cold water or stamping on them'. This extracted a slightly grudging admission that 'He [Schmidt] was not against looking again at monetary union provided it was presented in reasonable as well as imaginative terms.'[39] Nine days later there was a rather closer meeting of minds on the subject in Jenkins' encounter with Barre, now the French Prime Minister, but also someone who as a European Commissioner in the late 1960s had been closely associated with earlier attempts at monetary integration. Both men agreed on the importance of EMU, the link between this and enlargement, and on the need for the forthcoming European Council to provide

[38] TP, File 16, 'Meetings and Conversations, September 1976 to 1977', meeting of President Jenkins with Prime Minister Andreotti, 28 October 1977, in Rome.

[39] Ibid., summary record of a conversation between the President of the European Commission and the Federal Chancellor over lunch in the Chancellor's Office, Bonn, 10 November 1977.

'a favourable wind' behind the Commission's ideas on monetary union.[40] A similar phrase about being given 'a fair wind' behind the policy at the summit meeting cropped up a week later when Jenkins and Callaghan met in London. Once again the Commission president sought energetically to underline the potential merits of EMU and the way in which it would give the Community the stronger bones and sinews to cope with the additional weight that Greece, Spain, and Portugal would bring. Callaghan was non-committal but open, promising that 'his line at the European Council would be: Show me.'[41]

This bilateral lobbying was followed up at the European Council meeting itself with a strong Jenkins statement setting out his case on EMU.[42] He began with a review of the economic situation in Western Europe that, while noting a few positive signs, concluded that there was little prospect of the strong surge in economic growth necessary to resolve the unacceptably high level of unemployment. This was all the more so since demographic trends meant that the number of young people coming onto the labour market for the first time during the years immediately ahead would reach an unprecedented high. 'Therefore in my view there is no conventional way out. If we are going to change unemployment trends decisively, we need a major new stimulus of a historic dimension.' Two additional factors were then referred to: the prospect of enlargement, where he developed still further the metaphor of stronger bones and sinews used in some of his bilateral conversations, and the weakness of the dollar as the only real international medium of exchange. Here he noted that 'We are almost certainly the only group in the world capable of providing not a complete substitute but an alternative.'[43]

All of this led to the conclusion that: 'I see no medium term way forward except by giving a new, non-utopian but more urgent and contemporary impulse to the old idea of economic and monetary union, particularly its monetary aspect.' Such an objective, he emphasised, would only be attained were it designed in a way that appealed to both the economically weak and the economically strong. It would involve, furthermore, an acceptance of much stronger common disciplines, although those need

[40] Ibid., record of a conversation between the President of the European Commission and the French Prime Minister at the Hôtel Matignon, Paris, 19 November 1977.

[41] Ibid., record of a conversation between the President of the European Commission and the British Prime Minister, Number 10 Downing Street, London, 25 November 1977. The British minutes of the same talk are in UKNA, PREM 16 1627.

[42] The statement is available electronically at http://aei.pitt.edu/11005/

[43] Jenkins statement to the Brussels Council, 5 December 1977.

be no stronger than the disciplines that economic failure imposed on individual states in current circumstances. And it would also need a strong deliberate effort to get there: 'We will not get monetary union by just proclaiming it and believing that separate currencies can be told not to diverge, nor by an inevitability of gradualism in which everything happens painlessly, effortlessly, without any major act of political will.' At the same time, the prerequisites for prior convergence could not be set impossibly high. Levels of output need not be the same in Copenhagen and Lisbon.[44]

In terms of timing Jenkins stated that 'I do not foresee such a union as something for tomorrow, or even the day after tomorrow. But if we are to set ourselves an objective, it should be one within practical reach, not something over the horizon but at least on the horizon.' Future economic and financial policy choices should therefore be made in a fashion that led, eventually, to EMU. In the short term, though, the Commission president reiterated that he needed no firm commitments, just 'a fair wind'. This would allow and encourage the necessary 'debate and analysis' about the EMU objective to begin.[45]

So what did all this advocacy achieve? Immediate reactions at the Brussels Council were mixed, with Andreotti and several of the small country leaders enthusiastic about Jenkins' ideas, Giscard supportive, and Schmidt and Callaghan cautious but not wholly dismissive.[46] The Commission president's own assessment recorded in his diary was of 'a fair but not tremendously enthusiastic wind … behind our monetary union proposals'.[47] Further effort would hence be needed to ensure that momentum was maintained. The Commission president continued his campaign of bilateral lobbying on the subject of EMU throughout all of his meetings with key European leaders in the final months of 1977 and early 1978, as well as taking his public campaign for monetary union to the German capital so as to outline why advance in this area could be in the interest of Europe's strongest economy as well as in that of its smaller neighbours.[48]

[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid.

[46] A rather messy British record of discussions at this Council is available in UKNA, PREM 16/1640. A shorter French version is in Archives Nationales, AG/5(3)/912, subfolder: 'Conseilleur diplomatique. Conseil européen de Bruxelles (5–6 décembre 1977)'.

[47] Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 183.

[48] See TP, File 17, 'Meetings and Conversations 1978 to March 1979', records of the meetings with Jørgensen (17 February 1978), with Giscard (21 February 1978), and with Lynch (23 February 1978). The text of the Bonn speech is available at http://aei.pitt.edu/10986/

Ultimately, however, Jenkins needed someone else to pick up the baton and continue the race that he had begun. After all, the Commission president had not launched a clear plan for EMU on which negotiations could now begin. Instead he had sought to remake the case for monetary union and encourage a renewed debate on the subject. He therefore needed others to push this debate forward, and ideally flank stirring rhetoric about the potential merits of monetary union with concrete schemes for advance. Also important would be a show of support from the larger member states and Germany in particular. Reactions to Jenkins' ideas at the Brussels summit had confirmed the enthusiasm for monetary integration of many of the smaller states, plus that of the Italians and maybe also the French, but unless and until Germany too signalled a willingness to advance, the prospects of reaching meaningful agreement would be slight.

Schmidt's decision in early 1978 to take up the cause of monetary integration thus fundamentally transformed the situation. Flatteringly Jenkins was one of the first to be told, with the German Chancellor springing the unexpected news on the Commission president in the course of a tête-à-tête in late February at a stage when only a handful of people within the German government and nobody at all outside had been informed of his decision.[49] Jenkins was understandably elated, typically heading to a Bonn hotel for a celebratory drink before driving back to Brussels.[50] But while the German move vastly improved the chances of progress towards monetary integration and hence justified Jenkins' jubilant reaction, it also signalled the end of Jenkins' lead role in the process. From late February onwards the Commission president lost control of the quest to limit exchange volatility within the EEC that he himself had helped to relaunch. Instead he found himself a privileged bystander in a Community negotiation driven forward by Schmidt and Giscard, and within which the most substantive discussions were conducted in secret trilateral meetings between French, German, and British representatives.[51]

Was there a link between Jenkins' trail-blazing and Schmidt's decision to launch his own monetary integration initiative? A firm causal connection is almost certainly impossible to prove. Schmidt had a long-standing

[49] TP, File 17, 'Meetings and Conversations 1978 to March 1979', record of a conversation between the President of the European Commission and the Federal Chancellor, Bonn, Tuesday, 28 February 1978

[50] Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 225–226.

[51] The two fullest studies of the negotiations that would lead to the EMS are Peter Ludlow, *The Making of the European Monetary System: A Case Study of the Politics of the European Community* (London: Butterworths, 1982); and Mourlon-Druol, *A Europe Made of Money.*

interest in monetary matters and was entirely capable of making his own mind up about the desirability of seeking to control exchange rate fluctuations within the Community. Recent research has also highlighted the existence of discussions between Schmidt and Giscard about currency matters stretching back well into the mid-1970s.[52] And there were plenty of reasons for the German Chancellor to decide that early 1978 was a good moment to launch a monetary initiative, not least his huge dissatisfaction with US monetary policy.[53] That Germany would hold the presidency of both the Community itself and the G7 in the latter half of 1978 and would hence hold a decisive influence on the agenda and timetable of both bodies only strengthened the case for immediate action. At the same time, however, Jenkins' role in raising the issue at European Council level would at very least have been useful to the Chancellor. For a start, the Brussels summit discussions in December had highlighted the extent to which there was a strong constituency of support amongst the member states for a revival of monetary discussions. The 'fair wind' that Jenkins had received would be likely to fill Schmidt's sails also, thereby making it easier for the Chancellor to embark on a course that he knew would encounter strong domestic opposition, not least from the Bundesbank. Furthermore, there were good tactical reasons for the German Chancellor to take centre stage only after someone else had initiated discussions about monetary union. The Federal Republic of the 1970s retained a degree of reluctance about acting as a European or global leader—Jenkins had been treated to a Schmidt disquisition on the subject a few months earlier[54]—and much preferred to act in cooperation with others. Giscard would be the obvious partner, both in view of the close personal ties between the French President and the German Chancellor, and because of the largely accepted role of the so-called 'Franco-German tandem' at the heart of the integration process.[55] Nevertheless, even bilateral action by Germany and France could at times arouse resentment and irritation amongst the smaller

[52] Jürgen Elvert, 'Die Europapolitik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland in der Zeit der Kanzlerschaft Helmut Schmidts (1974–1982)', in *Quelles architectures pour quelle Europe?*, ed. Sylvain Schirmann (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2011), 205–27.

[53] Klaus Wiegrefe, *Das Zerwürfnis: Helmut Schmidt, Jimmy Carter und die Krise der Deutsch-Amerikanische Beziehungen* (Berlin: Propyläen, 2005).

[54] TP, File 16, 'Meetings and Conversations, September 1976 to 1977', summary record of a conversation between the President of the European Commission and the Federal Chancellor over lunch in the Chancellor's Office, Bonn, 10 November 1977.

[55] Haig Simonian, *The Privileged Partnership: Franco-German Relations in the European Community, 1969–1984* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985).

member states. In such circumstances, being able to portray their actions as the obvious follow-up to an initiative launched by a Commission president who had already shown himself sensitive to the needs and feelings of the smaller states would have obvious presentational advantages for the German and French leaders. Schmidt, in other words, could have acted without Jenkins and might well have done so even had the Commission president remained silent about monetary integration; but doing so after Jenkins had so prominently called for a renewed push towards EMU made the task ahead somewhat easier and less likely to engender a strong adverse reaction from some of the smaller European member states.

The German historian Jürgen Elvert has recently gone further and claimed, in correspondence with me if not yet in print, that Jenkins' whole role had been foreordained by Schmidt and Giscard, who were eager to act, but wanted someone else to launch the debate before they would intervene.[56] The Commission president's role was thus limited to playing a part that had been scripted for him by the two most powerful leaders in the European Community. There is nothing, however, in the evidence I have seen to support such a contention. The scrupulously kept records of Jenkins' encounters with Schmidt and Giscard between 1976 and 1978 offer no hint of a pre-cooked deal on a monetary initiative. Nor do Jenkins' diary or the memoirs of all three of the key protagonists. Acting merely as the puppet of two more powerful masters would also be substantially out of line with Jenkins' temperament and character throughout his long career. His fortunes in British politics had suffered after all because he had been too determined to pursue his own line, rather than fall in with a more expedient course urged upon him by others.[57] There is hence little to suggest the level of collusion that Elvert claims, particularly as the undoubted presentational advantages of Germany and France acting after the Commission rather than before would have mattered in the short term only, and would hence not have necessitated a whole-scale falsification of documents and records only likely to be read in public years after the European Monetary System had been successfully launched. It hence seems much more plausible to maintain that serious thought about monetary integration was underway in Bonn, in Paris, and in the Commission, but that the actions of the last at least were independently driven rather than being carried out at the behest of others.

[56] Email exchange with Jürgen Elvert, 16 February 2014.
[57] See Chap. 2.

Jenkins and the EMS

The Commission president continued to be actively involved in the monetary discussions throughout the remainder of 1978, as did Ortoli. Both were present at the three European Council meetings dominated by discussions of what would become the European Monetary System, at Copenhagen in March, in Bremen in June, and in Brussels in December. Prior to each Jenkins engaged in his energetic round of bilateral diplomacy, meeting virtually all of the European leaders in the course of the year, and trying especially hard to talk to the German Chancellor before each European summit. On the eve of the Copenhagen summit, Jenkins also addressed a letter to each of his fellow European Council members setting out his view of the priorities ahead, including, it almost goes without saying, monetary union.[58] And both Ortoli and Jenkins attended the Bonn G7 summit in July when the Americans, Japanese, and Canadians had an opportunity to register their views of Europe's revived monetary ambitions.[59] Voluminous paperwork about monetary union is hence a prominent component of both the files of the Commission president and those of his vice-president right up until the end of the year.[60]

The quality of their involvement changed decisively after March, however. Jenkins in particular continued to express strong views on the subject to all of those he talked to, including Schmidt and Giscard. Both the French and German leaders, moreover, made a habit of using him to interpret the very ambivalent signals emerging from London about Britain's desire to participate in any European monetary scheme and as a tactical sounding board about the best tactics to adopt towards London.[61] Callaghan also sought to use the Commission president both as an interpreter of what Giscard and Schmidt were up to, and as vent for his frustrations with what he viewed as an inadequate level of consultation by the French and Germans.[62] Immediately after Schmidt and Giscard

[58] TP, File 15, 'European Councils', 'Memorandum for the European Council, Copenhagen 7/8 April, 1978', 3 April 1978.

[59] Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 292–294.

[60] TP, File 19, 'EMU/EMS', multiple documents.

[61] See TP, File 17, 'Meetings and Conversations 1978 to March 1979', record of a [phone] conversation between the President of the European Commission and the Federal Chancellor, Brussels, 20 April 1978; ibid., record of a call by the President of the European Commission on the President of the French Republic, Paris, Thursday, 22 June 1978.

[62] Ibid., record of a call by the President of the European Commission on the British Prime Minister, Number 10 Downing Street, London, 3 July 1978.

had outlined their intentions to act decisively in the monetary field at the Copenhagen summit, the Commission president was invited back to Callaghan's residence so as to confirm that the Prime Minister had correctly understood what his German and French counterparts were suggesting and to discuss the implications with Callaghan and his advisors.[63] At the following summit, moreover, Jenkins appears to have played a valuable role in preventing the British leader's frustrations from boiling over, intervening in the discussion with a peculiar piece of English doggerel that bemused most of the others present, but sufficiently amused Callaghan, to lessen the immediate tension.[64] There also was a limited amount of contact between Jenkins and still more Tickell, and Horst Schulmann, Schmidt's key advisor during the EMS negotiations and the German member of the secret trilateral and then bilateral discussions held between April and June 1978.[65] But fundamentally the initiative had shifted elsewhere, and neither Jenkins nor Ortoli was able to play anything more than a limited supporting role. The Commission's total exclusion from the Schulmann–Clappier–Couzens discussions was particularly significant in this regard.[66] Also revealing was Jenkins' willingness to allow Michael Emerson, his key aide on monetary issues, to leave his *cabinet* in early 1978 and take up a post in DGII. Emerson was not totally cut off from the EMS story thereafter, with many documents still being blind copied to him from the president's office, and he went on being consulted periodically. He was replaced furthermore by another *cabinet* member well qualified to assist the president on monetary issues: Michel Vanden Abeele. But the fact that Jenkins was prepared to see Emerson scale down his involvement with the EMS talks and assume new tasks tells its own story.

Another indication of how secondary the Commission and Jenkins more particularly had become in the latter stages of the formation of the EMS was the gap between the monetary arrangement that eventually emerged and the Commission president's original vision. It is true of course that Jenkins had not set out a precise blueprint for the type of monetary integration he wanted to see. As a result, any advance in that direction could, to some extent at least, be seen as progress towards the

[63] Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 247–8.

[64] Ibid., 288.

[65] TP, File 8, 'Float, March–August 1978', Tickell to Jenkins, 23 May 1978.

[66] Ludlow, *The Making of the European Monetary System*; Mourlon-Druol, *A Europe Made of Money*.

goal that he had elucidated. The positive attitude he would display both at the time and subsequently to the EMS would suggest that he was able to view what had actually been built in much this manner. But the gap between his rhetoric about monetary union and the EMS as it eventually emerged was still fairly striking. The latter after all was an arrangement for limiting the fluctuation of European currencies against one another that was much closer in its manner of operation to the more geographically limited Snake that had already existed in 1977 than to the single currency area about which the Commission president had appeared to speak. And the gap was even clearer with regard to the costs of the scheme, which was the aspect of Jenkins' early ideas that had been most clearly spelled out. For neither the level of member state currency reserves committed to the EMS, nor still more the size of the 'counterpart funds' designed to ease the participation of weaker economies such as Italy and Ireland, in any way resembled the type of large-scale public spending that the Commission president had described. The EMS negotiations thus inaugurated a trend towards a low-budget vision of EMU that would be reprised later in the 1980s and early 1990s when the Maastricht Treaty was negotiated, and which departed sharply from the picture of a monetary union with strong fiscal expenditure designed to alleviate the position of those less competitive parts of the European economy that Jenkins had painted. The long-term implications of this choice are in many ways with us still.

All of this helps explain the tendency in some of the more recent scholarship to downplay Jenkins' role in the wider EMS plot. Mourlon-Druol for instance uses the cautious nature of the November 1977 Commission paper to ECOFIN to assert that well before the December Brussels Council, Jenkins' hopes of a major qualitative leap forward 'had already virtually faded away'.[67] But such a conclusion is almost certainly grounded in too literalistic a reading of what Jenkins was trying to do. For if the boldness of his rhetoric is seen as a tactical means of inspiring the European Council to act, rather than a precise to-do list setting out the exact steps that needed to be taken, the audacity of language went on playing a useful role at least until the end of 1977 if not beyond. After all, would a low-key presentation of Ortoli's much more cautious ideas have had anything like the same effect, especially if delivered in Ortoli's dry and unexciting manner? In a context where the Commission president's principal power is to cajole and inspire, a degree of visionary oratorical flair was much more

[67] Mourlon-Druol, *A Europe Made of Money*, 160.

likely to obtain a beneficial result than a humdrum presentation of a much more realistic range of targets. This is all the more true given Jenkins accurate realisation that if decisive action was going to come from anywhere, it had to come from the European Council and Europe's most senior leaders, rather than from the finance ministers and Central Bank governors who had dominated much of the earlier discussion about monetary integration and who were Ortoli's preferred interlocutors. Both Jenkins' use of language and choice of venue were prescient in other words.

Also vital was the impact of the EMS episode on the trajectory of the Jenkins presidency. After the doldrums of mid-1977 the Commission in general and its president in particular needed a major success. In this context the precise level of causal linkage between what Jenkins had said and done, and what was eventually agreed amongst the Nine member states in late 1978, mattered relatively little. What was important by contrast was the fact that the Commission president had chosen a policy area in which to urge progress, and had been rewarded by seeing significant progress made. If the duty of the Commission is to point the way forward, and to voice its views about the priorities that the Community should address, Jenkins had certainly fulfilled this role. Furthermore, en route to this success, Jenkins had been able to underline the range of skills that had made him such an exciting choice for the Commission presidency but which had been slightly over-shadowed by his uninspiring first few months in Brussels. He had thus shown political judgement in deciding that monetary integration was the priority to choose rather than one of the other possibilities available. His oratorical skills had been much in evidence, whether in selling the monetary integration idea by means of public speeches or in his interventions at European Council level. His handling of the potentially awkward clash with Ortoli had highlighted his managerial capacities. And he had once more shown the value of the close personal rapport he had been able to build with all of the key leaders of 1970s Europe, and Helmut Schmidt most of all. If one looks back to *The Economist* article in July 1977 which had precipitated Jenkins' spasm of self-doubt, and which had dwelt upon the soured relationships with the French and German leaders in particular, the turn-around had been quite remarkable.

The monetary system that came into being in 1979 was most definitely not Jenkins' project. Its parentage, like most international and European realisations, was multiple, and it had evolved considerably in the course of the 9 months of negotiations which had led to its birth. But it was a

realisation to which Jenkins had made an important and valuable contribution. Given furthermore the crucial importance of the EMS to the course of the integration process over the subsequent decade and a half, and the even greater centrality that monetary integration more generally has assumed in both Europe's successes and its difficulties more recently, Jenkins' part in reviving the Community's quest to become a zone of monetary stability in a turbulent global monetary system undoubtedly deserves to be seen as a central aspect of his presidency.

CHAPTER 6

Reaching Out Beyond the Community: Enlargement and International Representation

Any Commission president spends a great deal of time travelling. Much of this is within the European Community. Each year Roy Jenkins had to make multiple trips to Strasbourg, to address the European Parliament, to answer questions posed by MEPs, to dine with each of the major party groups, and to chair those Commission meetings that took place in the Alsatian capital in 'parliamentary' weeks. Similarly two of the three European Councils each year were held outside of Brussels, hosted by whichever member state held the rotating presidency of the European Community. The same applied to the twice yearly informal meetings of foreign ministers, which Jenkins also attended regularly. In addition to these major set-pieces, Jenkins had to visit each member state and each capital city regularly enough to make the government in question feel that he was in touch with their priorities and concerns, while also making particularly certain to consult even more closely with the key players, especially the French and German leaders. Throughout his presidency, for instance, Jenkins tried hard to ensure that he met face to face with Helmut Schmidt prior to each European Council meeting. And Jenkins also chose to return frequently to England, partly for personal and social reasons, but also for political motives that will be discussed at much greater length in Chap. 8.

Brussels' central location within Western Europe and its good transport links meant, of course, that much of this travel could be accomplished quickly and efficiently. Jenkins' trips to The Hague, to Luxembourg,

N.P. Ludlow, *Roy Jenkins and the European Commission Presidency, 1976–1980*, DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-51530-8_6

to Bonn, or to Paris often did not require an overnight stay—although in the case of the French capital, Jenkins at times chose to combine a working visit with an opportunity to stay with Sir Nicko Henderson, the British Ambassador to France and a friend of long standing. Flying visits to other countries like Italy or the UK were also feasible. In May 1978, for instance, Jenkins attended the funeral in Rome of Aldo Moro, the former Italian Prime Minister assassinated by the Red Brigades, leaving Brussels that morning and returning there for dinner.[1] Any attempt to quantify Jenkins' travel patterns by recording how many nights he spent in each particular country thus under-records travel within the EC, since this was often compatible with spending the night in rue de Praetère, his house in Brussels, or in England whether at his London house or in East Hendred in Oxfordshire.

Rather more time consuming by contrast was the travel outside the European Community carried out by the Commission president. The point of such trips was also much less immediately apparent than journeys designed to keep Jenkins in touch with the needs and priorities of the Nine member states. This chapter will thus take a closer look at Jenkins' itineraries beyond the EC, exploring the patterns and purposes of this travel, and attempting to establish what Jenkins was able to achieve through his dialogue with non-member states. In the interests of analytical clarity, Jenkins' travels will be sub-divided into three main categories. The first, minor in terms of total time spent abroad but major in terms of policy impact, were the visits to the three southern European countries, Greece, Spain, and Portugal, who were edging towards full membership of the EEC. A closer look at Jenkins' trips to Athens, Madrid, and Lisbon can thus serve as a lens through which to view the whole issue of Community enlargement and to highlight how vital—but also how frustrating—a cause the expansion of the Community became to the Commission president. The second category, already touched upon in Chap. 4, investigates Jenkins' relations with the Community's major trading partners, especially the United States and Japan, and its immediate neighbours. A third section will then look at the longer haul trips to China, to Greenland, or to multiple African countries, designed to promote Europe's collective interests, especially commercial, and to underline that the European Community in general and the European Commission in particular were international players of note. Overall the chapter will seek to demonstrate the importance for

[1] Roy Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981* (London: Collins, 1989), 238.

Jenkins personally, but also for the European Commission and indeed the EEC more broadly, of confirming and extending the Community's international role. Global travel was clearly a duty that Jenkins enjoyed, but it was not just a personal foible or extravagance, but instead an integral part of the job of the Commission president.

Recognising the Imperative to Enlarge

How to respond to the desire to join the European Community shown by newly democratic Greece, Spain, and Portugal was one of the main challenges confronting the Jenkins Commission. The transition process in all three countries predated Jenkins' arrival in Brussels.[2] Indeed by January 1977 negotiations had already begun with the Greeks and applications were expected in the near future from both Iberian countries.[3] But the prospect of Community enlargement gave rise to serious anxieties in the majority of Western European capitals and most certainly in Brussels. The addition of new states to the European Community has never been a straightforward process. It had been the source of major controversy and internal division during the 1960s[4]; it has remained a contested issue well into the twenty-first century. But the 1970s were a particularly difficult moment for the Nine to welcome three more countries into the Community fold. With the EC itself hard hit by the economic crisis and with the institutional system struggling to cope with nine rather than six member states, adding three more members before the system had fully come to terms with the 1973 expansion might push the Community towards breaking point. And the fact that all three of the potential new

[2] Mario Del Pero, Victor Gavin, Fernando Guirao, and Antonio Varsori, *Democrazie: l'Europa meridionale e la fine delle dittature* (Florence: Le Monnier, 2010).

[3] For a detailed and archivally based study of the Greek application, see Eirini Karamouzi, *Greece, the EEC and the Cold War, 1974–79* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); the Iberian case is less well studied but see Matthieu Trouvé, *L'Espagne et l'Europe: De la dictature de Franco à l'Union Européenne*, Euroclio. Etudes et Documents (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2008); Raimundo Bassols, *España en Europa: historia de la adhesión a la CE 1957–85* (Madrid: Política Exterior, 1995); Vanessa Núñez Peña, 'Entre la Reforma y la Ampliación (1976–1986): Las Negociaciones Hispano-Comunitarias en Tiempos de Transición y Approfondissement' (PhD dissertation, Universidad Complutense, 2013).

[4] N. Piers Ludlow, *Dealing with Britain: The Six and the First UK Application to the EEC* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); N. Piers Ludlow, *The European Community and the Crises of the 1960s: Negotiating the Gaullist Challenge* (London: Routledge, 2006), 125ff.

member states were much poorer than the Community average and were likely to require considerable financial assistance before being able fully to cope with the challenge of EEC membership only made matters worse. The economic profile of Spain in particular also threatened to add to the pre-existing stresses on two of the Community's most problematic policies, the CFP and the CAP. The Spanish had one of the largest fishing fleets in Europe; admitting Spanish vessels to UK and Irish waters was only likely to aggravate the 1973 entrants' dislike of the core principle of the fishing policy, namely, equal access for all Community vessels to most territorial waters. The produce of Spanish farmers meanwhile would be in direct competition with the output of southern French and Italian farms—commodities like wine, olive oil, and citrus fruits that were already in surplus and which were at the heart of a long-running Italian campaign to improve the Community's treatment of Mediterranean agriculture. Again Spanish entry would deepen an existing difficulty. Throwing open the doors of the EEC to Greece, Spain, and Portugal was hence not an easy step to take.

Equally clearly, however, the southern applicants could not just be ignored. All three were fragile new democracies, in need of outside assistance to consolidate their political reform. All three were clearly European and as such could scarcely be excluded from a process like European integration which explicitly regarded itself as unifying all of Europe. In all three that portion of the political elite most committed to stable multi-party democracy had staked its reputation on being able to end the isolation from the Western European mainstream that the countries had been forced to endure during the years of undemocratic rule. Furthermore, to the extent that outside political parties and political actors had been able to exercise any influence during the delicate transition periods in Portugal and Spain in particular it had been done in part by making pledges about future European alignment and assistance that would now have to be honoured. Western Europe's leaders were also well aware that southern enlargement had an important strategic and Cold War dimension. In both Greece and Spain, membership of the European Communities might consolidate the countries' Western alignment at a time when the support which the Americans had given the Colonels' regime in Athens and Franco's regime in Spain made the US connection in general and NATO membership in particular deeply unpopular. The Western alignment of countries that formed part of NATO's vulnerable 'southern flank' urgently needed to be safeguarded. If the European Community could

not easily say 'yes' to rapid southern enlargement, it was also aware that it was all but impossible to say 'no'.

The Commission's original response to this dilemma had been publicly to welcome Greece when in 1975 it became the first of the southern countries to apply, but to suggest a very slow implementation of enlargement. The official 'opinion' (*avis*) that it issued in January 1976 proposed for instance a lengthy pre-accession phase for the would-be member state, shielding the vulnerable Greek economy from the full impact of Community competition for several years, but also giving time for the existing member states and the Community institutions to prepare for the arrival of a tenth partner. This idea had been furiously denounced by the Greek government, however, and, in the wake of some determined lobbying by the government of Konstantin Karamanlis, disowned by the member states. The negotiations that officially opened in July 1976 were thus normal membership talks, with no pre-accession phase foreseen.[5] But the underlying problems that had prompted the Commission to suggest a cautious approach had not gone away. Indeed with the timetable for a Portuguese and Spanish approach shortening rapidly, and thus the prospect of enlargement to Twelve rather than simply to Ten, the need to approach the membership applications carefully and with due reflection had in many ways grown rather than diminished.

Jenkins was very quick to perceive the political imperative to enlarge. The previous Commission had been deeply ambivalent towards both Greece and the Iberian applicants, its habitual caution towards any development that might further complicate the integration process greatly reinforced by the legacy of the 1976 debacle over the Commission *avis*. Christopher Soames, the Commissioner responsible for external affairs, had tried to be imaginative and bold in confronting the very real difficulties that rapid enlargement might pose, but the Commission had received no support from the member states in doing so. The Ortoli Commission was wary of sticking its neck out for a second time over so sensitive a subject. Moreover, the row over the proposed pre-accession phase had left a residue of mistrust between the Athens government and the Commission. This was particularly unfortunate since close cooperation between the Commission and the civil service of any country negotiating to join the Community

[5] Karamouzi, *Greece, the EEC and the Cold War, 1974–79*, pp. 45–49.

is all but essential, if the negotiations are to have any chance of success.[6] And it was all the more problematic in the Greek case, as the first of the southern applicants struggled to produce the detailed documentation and statistical information that the Commission needed to begin to assess how ready Greece might be for EEC membership. Such a situation called for a particularly close level of cooperation and dialogue, not a rapport riven by mutual incomprehension and suspicion. Spain and Portugal too needed a great deal of guidance about how the Community worked, advice that could much more easily and credibly be delivered by a Commission that was evidently committed to enlargement than by an institution which still appeared to have cold feet about the whole process. A major overhaul of the Commission attitude was therefore overdue.

Under Jenkins' leadership, the Commission's altered approach was visible at three levels. The first concerned the institution's own internal organisation and engagement. As explained in Chap. 3, one of the incoming president's institutional innovations made even before he arrived in Brussels was to shift responsibility for enlargement away from the overburdened Commissioner for external affairs and to make it instead a major part of a different Commissioner's load. Lorenzo Natali, the Italian Christian Democrat politician who inherited the portfolio from 1977 onwards (and would retain it until the end of 1984) was thus able to regard enlargement as his key dossier in a way that Soames, the previous Commissioner responsible, had never been able to do. At a stroke this improved the level of oversight and direction that the Commissioner would be able to exercise over the officials handling the membership negotiation. Soon afterwards Jenkins ensured that at official level too those members of staff entrusted with the progress of the enlargement process were sufficiently relieved of their other duties as to be able to focus on the Greek (and subsequently Spanish and Portuguese) talks. In June 1977 the Commission undertook to lessen the competing burdens placed upon Roland de Kergolay, the *fonctionnaire* responsible for the enlargement task force, a decision that it reiterated with still greater force in September of the same year.[7] Jenkins and his *cabinet* also had to work hard to resolve

[6] A fact acknowledged by the leader of the British negotiations in 1970–2: Con O'Neill, *Britain's Entry into the European Community: Report by Sir Con O'Neill on the Negotiations of 1970–1972*, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) Publications (London: Whitehall History Publishing in association with Frank Cass, 2000), 305–10.

[7] ECHA, COM (77) PV 433, 2ème partie, 8 June 1977; and COM (77) PV 444, 2ème partie, 28 September 1977.

a turf battle that broke out in the early autumn of 1977 between Natali and Wilhelm Haferkamp, Commissioner for External Relations and hence the man primarily responsible for DGI, the Directorate General from which de Kergolay and most other senior members of the enlargement task force were drawn.[8] The outcome, although slightly messy, essentially confirmed Natali's prime responsibility for questions relating to the three prospective member states.

Such organisational steps were flanked with an attempt to identify and begin work on the most difficult issues that enlargement would raise. In June 1977 it was decided to establish a working group to be chaired by Emile Noël, the Secretary-General, to examine the institutional implications of Greek, Spanish, and Portuguese membership.[9] Enlargement could not be allowed to cause a descent into institutional paralysis in Brussels; it was therefore essential to consider well ahead of time the implications of incorporating three new member states into an institutional system that was already criticised as slow and cumbersome. Similarly Natali was encouraged to involve himself in the work that Agricultural Commissioner, Finn Olav Gundelach, had already begun on how to reform the treatment of 'Mediterranean' agricultural produce by the CAP. Nobody wanted to reproduce for southern Europe the costly surpluses that afflicted cereal or milk production in the northern half of the EEC, but equally it was important that neither the existing southern farmers, nor their competitors within Greece, Spain, or Portugal felt less well supported than the agricultural producers of the north.[10] A preliminary Commission report on the issue was promised for October 1977.

Most importantly of all, steps were taken to ensure that the Commission as a whole was fully committed to the task of pressing ahead with enlargement. Neither Natali nor de Kergolay would be able to accomplish much were they to find themselves confronted by indifference or hostility elsewhere in the institution. That same specially convened meeting of the Commission at La Roche-en-Ardenne in September 1977, which had proved so crucial to the launch of Jenkins' ideas for monetary union, was therefore also used to stage an extensive discussion of the implications

[8] TP, File 6, 'Float, June–October 1977', Tickell to Phillips, 'Organisation of work on enlargement', 6 October 1977; File 7, 'Float, October 1977 to February 1978', Tickell to Jenkins, 18 October 1977.

[9] ECHA, COM(77), PV 434, 2ème partie, 15 July 1977.

[10] ECHA, COM (77) PV 444, 2ème partie, 28 September 1977.

of enlargement.[11] Indeed, the need for a comprehensive debate about enlargement was the main example that the president used when seeking Commission approval in July for the idea of an 'away-day' meeting. Significantly, discussions at La Roche were able to range widely over the multiple implications of the enlargement process, rather than having to focus just on isolated aspects as was more often the case in normal Commission discussions of the subject. Also vital was the way in which the occasion allowed Jenkins to underline how personally committed he was to the issue: as they left La Roche-en-Ardenne, none of those who had been present could harbour any doubts as to the priority which their president attached to the issue. And to reinforce this message and to ensure that Natali's efforts to press ahead with the Greek negotiations were not obstructed by individual Commissioners proving recalcitrant about those aspects of enlargement that impinged upon their own policy responsibilities, Jenkins also decided to hold a regular meeting every other Friday to which all of the Commissioners and officials likely to be affected by the enlargement negotiations were invited and which the president would chair.[12] These meetings began in October 1977. Their creation reflected Jenkins' belief that the previous level of coordination between the many Commissioners and officials who would be in some way involved in preparations for enlargement had been unsatisfactory.[13]

The extent to which such coordination was needed and the importance of Jenkins' personal steer on the Commission's decision-making on enlargement was dramatically underlined in October 1977 when a Commission meeting chaired by Haferkamp while the president was in Japan, failed to produce the strong report on the Mediterranean aspects of enlargement that Jenkins had hoped to submit to the Council, and instead left Natali depressed and isolated after having been outvoted 12–1. Even the studiously consensual Commission minutes fail to mask entirely the level of disagreement evident at this meeting, or the anger that underlay Natali's dissenting statement.[14] Jenkins' diary was rather more candid, referring to

[11] ECHA, COM (77) PV 442, 23ème partie, 17–18 September 1977; see also Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 142–3.

[12] The decision to convene this group was taken in late September—see COM (77) PV 444, 2ème partie, 28 September 1977; for a report on the outcomes of these discussions, see COM (77) PV 447, 2ème partie, 11 October 1977.

[13] East Hendred papers, unpublished manuscript of the diary, entry for 2 December 1977.

[14] ECHA, COM (77) PV 446, 2ème partie, 11–12 October 1977.

'a great cock-up'.[15] COREPER, to which the disjointed and unfinished report and covering letter had been sent, indicated a high level of member state displeasure.[16] Fortunately, however, Jenkins' return from Japan meant that he was able to supplement the inadequate written materials with a strong oral statement emphasising the Commission's willingness to be radical and far-reaching in its approach to enlargement, and unafraid to address uncomfortable realities such as the likely need of substantial monetary transfers in favour of southern Europe. He ended with a strong *cri de coeur* that epitomised his highly political approach:

> Let me end with what I believe is a simple statement of fact. Enlargement means that if the Community does not go forwards, it will go backwards; and if it cannot cope with enlargement, it will stultify its ability to cope with much else. Enlargement is a gathering in of European civilization. It will give the Community its proper European dimension.[17]

The effect was immediate, with Council members who had arrived in Luxembourg expecting to rebuke the Commission for failing to deliver the promised launch pad for debate, instead expressing their appreciation of a 'constructive, clear contribution'.[18] As Jenkins noted elatedly in his diary, 'It was a very difficult corner, happily turned.'[19]

This mid-October 1977 rescue act introduces well the second level at which Jenkins made his mark in terms of the enlargement debate, namely the manner in which the Commission presented its case to the member states. None of the statements that the Commission made to the Council of Ministers or the European Council, nor any of the various more formal reports drawn up by the Jenkins Commission denied the innumerable technical and economic difficulties that Greek, Spanish, or Portuguese membership would entail. Highlighting—and finding solutions to—such technical difficulties was after all a core part of the Commission's job. Nor did Jenkins and his fellow Commissioners shy away from the awkward fact that while there might be much logic in handling all three southern European applications at once, the Greeks were too far ahead with their

[15] Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 160.
[16] Ibid.
[17] TP, File 7, 'Float, October 1977 to February 1978', statement by Mr Jenkins at the Council of 18 October 1977.
[18] Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 161.
[19] Ibid.

own talks, and too determined not to be delayed by the later-starting Iberian membership bids, for anything other than a two-stage southern enlargement to be realistic. But technical competence and pragmatism were always accompanied by a very strong sense of the overall importance of the goal being sought, and a clear realisation that the Community needed to begin at once to think through the implications of an expansion to 12 members, rather than focusing solely on Greece in the short term and confronting the question of Portuguese and Spanish membership only at a later stage. The memorandum that Jenkins circulated to his nine fellow members of the European Council on the eve of the Copenhagen summit in April 1978, for instance, insisted that 'If we are to make a success of enlargement we must think well in advance and indeed from here forward in terms of 12 not of 9.'[20] Likewise the so-called 'Fresco', the Commission report on enlargement submitted to the Council of Ministers in mid-April 1978, tried to begin the process of thinking through the consequences of Greek, Spanish, and Portuguese membership in terms of the Community's budget, its policies, its institutional operation, and its place in the world. The Fresco's concluding paragraphs forcefully restated the view that the Community could only respond to the imperative to enlarge by moving forward rather than backward:

> It must be stressed again that it is vital to give a positive reply to countries inspired by the desire both to consolidate democracy and to become part not of a static Europe but of a forward-moving Europe, all the more so since the alternative to reinforcement would not be stagnation but decline and dilution, in which the applicants, just as much as the present members, would have everything to lose and nothing to gain.
>
> This being so, the three countries must be associated in further progress towards the completion of European union, and first of all towards economic and monetary union the attainment of which, though apparently rendered more difficult, constitutes more than ever the essential step towards that final objective.[21]

[20] TP, File 15, 'European Councils', Jenkins' 'Memorandum for the European Council, Copenhagen April 7/8 1978', 3 April 1978.

[21] COM (78) 120 final, General Considerations on the Problems of Enlargement. Communication sent by the Commission to the Council on 20 April 1978. *Bulletin of the European Communities*, Supplement 1/78, available at http://aei.pitt.edu/958/

The Commission's message to Europe's leaders—but also to its wider public—was hence that enlargement should not be seen as a negative development, liable to add still further to the woes of the Community, but instead as a spur to greater European unity. And, as stressed in the preceding chapter, the linkage drawn between the Community's geographical expansion and Jenkins' boldest policy innovation, namely monetary integration, was emphasised with particular force.

The third level at which Jenkins and the new Commission made a difference was in the direct dialogue with the applicants. To some extent, of course, the simple transfer of responsibilities from one Commission to another in January 1977 helped restore better relations with Greece. Neither Soames, the Commissioner most associated with the January 1976 *avis*, nor his *chef de cabinet* David Hannay, who had largely drafted the passages that had so angered Athens, were any longer in Brussels; both Jenkins and Natali could hence make an effort to start afresh.[22] But it is also true that Jenkins understood the need to establish a strong personal rapport with the leaders of the three applicant countries. So in November 1977 he held talks with Mario Soares, the Portuguese Prime Minister, in Lisbon, a capital he would return to in 1980.[23] In the course of 1978 he twice met Karamanlis, the second meeting part of a 3-day visit to Athens.[24] The Commission president would return to the Greek capital in May 1979 for the ceremony to mark the signature of the Greek accession treaty.[25] In 1978 he visited Madrid, holding talks with Adolfo Suarez, the Prime Minister, as well as with several other ministers involved with the membership bid, notably Leopoldo Calvo Sotelo who would lead the negotiating team.[26] Once again this would be the first of two stays, the second in October 1980 and featuring further meetings with both Suarez and Calvo Sotelo.[27] And in between these set-piece visits there were several Brussels-based meetings with key members of the negotiating teams assembled by the three southern European applicants.[28]

[22] Interview with David Hannay, 14 July 2011, available at http://archives.eui.eu/en/oral_history/INT172

[23] Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 170–3 and 576–9.

[24] Ibid., 212 and 316–20.

[25] Ibid., 452–3.

[26] Ibid., 255–8.

[27] Ibid., 633–5.

[28] Interestingly the frequency of such meetings is rather understated in *The European Diary* with a large number that were mentioned in the original text omitted from the published

The key purpose of such encounters was to underline the extent to which the Commission was aware of the political stakes involved in the enlargement process and to communicate its commitment to a successful outcome. Detailed exchanges about the type of nitty-gritty economic or technical controversy that tend to make up a vast portion of membership negotiations did occasionally occur at the Commission president's level. Jenkins and Anastasis Papaligouras, the chief Greek negotiator, dwelt briefly on the Community's treatment of peaches and Samos wine in their July 1977 meeting for example.[29] Likewise the Commission president and Karamanlis held quite a lengthy discussion in September 1978 of the fraught issue of how long a transitional period for agriculture the Greek negotiators should seek.[30] But on the whole issues of this sort were best left to the officials and ministers handling the negotiations on a day-to-day basis. Jenkins' role by contrast was to rise above the minutiae and to emphasise the overall importance of Greek, Spanish, or Portuguese membership. Here he could play skilfully on his own memories as a pro-European member of the Wilson governments of the mid-1960s that had spent so long kicking their heels in the antechamber of the EEC. Thanks to such experience he could relate to the frustrations felt by the Greeks, the Spanish, or the Portuguese better than most other Western European politicians. To Suarez, for instance, he commented:

> The British had had to wait more than 10 years to join the Community and this was in large measure the reason for the continued sourness of some parts of public opinion in Britain about the Community. He would not wish to see the Spaniards in the same situation in the 1970s.[31]

version. Examples include a meeting with the Portuguese Foreign Minister on 2 July 1980 and the first post-*Giscardazo* conversation with Calvo Sotelo on 7 July 1980. JP, Box 379.

[29] TP, File 16, 'Records of Meetings and Conversations, September 1976 to 1977', call of the Greek Minister for Co-ordination on the President of the European Commission, Berlaymont, 25 July 1977.

[30] TP, File 17, 'Records of Meetings and Conversations, 1978 to March 1979', meeting between the President of the European Commission and the Prime Minister of Greece, Athens, 28 September 1978.

[31] Ibid., visit of the Greek Prime Minister to the European Commission, Brussels, 27 January 1978 and record of meeting between the President of the European Commission and the Spanish President of the Government, Palacio de la Moncloa, Madrid, 27 April 1978.

Also valuable was his ability gently but firmly to quash any delusions on the part of the applicants about how quickly negotiations might advance, and to help them arrive at more realistic assessments of the likely length of the whole process of joining the Community. Jenkins' January 1978 estimate of the duration of the Greek negotiations was spot on, for example, suggesting that the back of the talks could be broken before the end of 1978, the remaining issues mopped up early in the next year, and a treaty of accession signed in mid-1979, although the timetable he foresaw for Spain and Portugal, with entry predicted in 1983, would be severely derailed by the unexpected hardening of the French negotiating position in 1980.[32]

This three-level effort to clarify and improve the Commission's approach to enlargement quickly bore fruit. The latter stages of the Greek negotiations, for example, were characterised by an intensive and trusting dialogue between Athens and the Commission which stood in stark contrast to the mutual suspicions of 1976.[33] Needless to say such cooperation alone did not suffice to overcome the remaining difficulties in the membership negotiations. Commission support and guidance is a highly valuable asset for any country negotiating to join the European Community/Union, but the ultimate success of a membership bid depends more on the reactions and views of the member states than it does on the stance of the Commission. The most complete study to date of the Greek negotiations therefore gives much of the credit for the acceleration of the pace of progress to the German Council presidency of the latter half of 1978.[34] But Karamouzi also notes the important role played by the Commission in the final and most constructive stages of the Greek membership process. The 1981 entry of Greece into the Community can thus be identified as an achievement towards which the Jenkins Commission contributed substantially.

The limits of Commission power were underlined by the fate of the Spanish and Portuguese applications, however. With the Iberian applicants, unlike Greece, the negotiations got off to a smooth, if gradual, start. Jenkins and Natali quickly established good relations with their counterparts in Lisbon and in Madrid. And as explained above the Commission was assiduous from 1978 onwards in encouraging the Community to think through

[32] Ibid., visit of the Greek Prime Minister to the European Commission, Brussels, 27 January 1978; for the over-optimistic timetable on Iberian membership, see Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 539.

[33] Karamouzi, *Greece, the EEC and the Cold War, 1974–79*, 167–8.

[34] Ibid., 187–8.

the implications of enlargement to 12 rather than just concentrating on the more imminent arrival of the Greeks. But Commission goodwill counted for little in June 1980 when Giscard made a speech to French farmers in which he noted brutally that the EEC had not yet come to terms with the last enlargement—i.e. that of 1973—and it was hence too soon to proceed with another round of Community expansion. Spain was not mentioned by name, but everybody knew what he was alluding to. The French President's intervention, dubbed the *giscardazo* by the Spanish press, placed a serious road-block in the way of the two Iberian countries rapidly following Greece into the EEC. Jenkins could try to be reassuring. A month after Giscard's *coup de théâtre* the Commission president assured Calvo Sotelo that the Commission in no way shared the French President's pessimistic analysis of the situation.[35] Natali and the other Commission negotiators would keep up a dialogue with Madrid and Lisbon and a pattern of regular visits to each capital, designed to ensure that not all momentum towards Iberian membership was lost. In September 1980 Jenkins' after-dinner speech about Spain's place in Europe and the importance of enlargement reportedly brought tears to the eyes of Raimundo Bassols, the Spanish ambassador to the Community.[36] This effort to be positive towards the candidates would continue under the Thorn Commission as much as it did under the final stages of Jenkins' mandate. And both Jenkins and his successor would visit the two candidate states during the years that followed, reassuring them that the Iberian candidatures were still under active consideration in Brussels. But in the absence of a green light from France to resume advance there was little that the Commission could do. A breakthrough in the Spanish and Portuguese membership negotiations would thus have to await the 1984 decision by a new French President, François Mitterrand, to lift French objections and the southern enlargement of the Community was hence not completed until 1986, long after Jenkins had left Brussels.

In the interim, thought about how a 12-country Community would operate would continue. The Jenkins Commission could undoubtedly claim to have practised what it preached in terms of basing its calculations and predictions on a Community including Spain and Portugal as well as Greece from about 1978 onwards. The expectation of greater numbers,

[35] TP, File 18, 'Records of Meetings and Conversations, April 1979 to December 1980', note of a meeting between the President of the European Commission and the Spanish Minister for relations with the Community, 16 July 1980.

[36] Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 634–5.

but also of greater inequality in the level of economic development attained by the Community's member states, thus fed through into all of the Commission's reflections about future policy. Particularly affected were the approach to institutional reform and the debate about the CAP, both of which will be looked at in Chap. 7. Also wrapped up in the same thought process was monetary integration, a relaunch of which, as argued in the last chapter, Jenkins saw as necessary in part at least to demonstrate that the Community could deepen as well as widen. And the single most important set of consequences of enlargement was foreseen in the budgetary sector, where internal Commission discussions throughout the late 1970s demonstrate a very clear awareness that the expansion of the EEC to include three new southern states would have to be accompanied by a step-change in the volume of redistributive budgetary flows from the richer member states towards the poorer. The eruption of the row over the British budgetary contribution which will lie at the heart of Chap. 8 would thus occur in a context where the Commission already believed that the existing budgetary framework was inadequate and would have to be dramatically revised. Naturally enough, however, it was far easier for the Commission to identify the need for more money than to convince the member states to substantially increase their contributions accordingly. The member state representatives listened with attention and apparent sympathy when Jenkins told them, as early as October 1977, that the southern enlargement would be very different from that of 1973 since it involved three countries each of which was significantly poorer than the Community. 'Put in the bluntest terms we need not only policies but funds. Enlargement—and its implications—will cost us all a lot of money, and it is well that we should recognise that at the outset.'[37] But when it came to actually providing the extra resources that the president mentioned and revisiting the whole Community budget in order to accommodate the additional costs, much of that attention and sympathy seemed rapidly to ebb away.

Overall the issue of enlargement demonstrates a great deal about both the strengths and inherent limitations of the Commission presidency. Jenkins' vantage point at the heart of the Community encouraged him to think systematically about the implications of enlarging the EEC in a way that few other European leaders of the day could do. As a result, Jenkins rapidly grasped not just the basic imperative to enlarge, but also the need

[37] TP, File 7, 'Float, October 1977 to February 1978', statement by Mr Jenkins at the Council of 18 October 1977.

to think afresh about important aspects of the Community's operation in order to ready the Nine for the arrival of three much poorer new member states. Those in the European Commission responsible for the enlargement dossier, and especially those like Jenkins and Natali with an overview of the whole process, were highly conscious from 1977 onwards that incorporating the Greeks, Spaniards, and Portuguese into the Community would entail not just a major reorientation of the Community's flagship policy, the CAP, and a streamlining of the EEC's institutional system, but also a radical increase in the size of the Community's budget and a much greater readiness to embrace the notion of fiscal redistribution amongst member states. As such they were anticipating from the mid-1970s onwards a programme of Community reform that would extend through the whole of the 1980s and well into the 1990s—and indeed as far as the issue of fiscal redistribution is concerned still lies at the heart of EU debate in the second decade of the twenty-first century. But while the job encouraged Jenkins to think and plan in such a long-term fashion, it gave him little scope quickly to deliver on such reflections. Instead Commission attempts to think through the medium- and long-term implications of the southern enlargement collided head on with the short-term political priorities and considerations of the member state leaders who alone possessed the real power to transform the Community in this way. The inevitable outcome was a yawning—and deeply frustrating—gap between Jenkins' vision of what enlargement should entail and the much more limited realities of what the member states were ready and able to agree to. It would hence only be in the late 1980s that the budgetary reforms foreseen by Jenkins would be carried out; only from 1986 onwards that the overhaul of the institutional system would begin; and only from the early 1990s that the root and branch modification of the Common Agricultural Policy would get underway. The Commission president could indicate the necessary direction of travel, but he was all but powerless to oblige the member states to take it.

G7 Partners and the EC's 'Near Abroad'

Prospective member states apart, the most vital of Jenkins' responsibilities outside of the Community itself centred on the relationships he could build with those leading the EC's major trading partners, especially the United States and Japan. Such ties mattered for more than just the volume of trade at stake—considerable though this was. They derived considerable

additional importance from the way in which dialogue and consultation with both Washington and Tokyo—and Ottawa too to some extent—had become a crucial way for the European Community to prepare for and navigate the dense network of multilateral negotiations that characterised the mid-1970s. First and foremost amongst these was the ongoing Tokyo Round of negotiations within the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the key global forum in which the rules of international trade were determined, and, at a time of global economic downturn, a vital stage on which to seek to resist any rise of protectionism. If previous GATT rounds were anything to go by, the Community, the United States, and the Japanese were likely to be the biggest global protagonists in the Tokyo Round.[38] But discussions with the Americans and Japanese also afforded opportunities for the Commission president to exchange ideas and reflections on the G7, on the so-called North–South dialogue between the industrialised countries of Europe, North America, and Japan and an increasingly vocal 'Global South', and on steps towards controlling global energy consumption. In Washington Jenkins would even have cause to discuss the follow-up talks linked to the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). Good bilateral links with Europe's main partners were in other words a vital stepping stone towards effective multilateral diplomacy, as well as a worthwhile objective in their own right.

With so much at stake it was fortunate that Jenkins was so quickly able to build a strong rapport with Jimmy Carter. Helped perhaps by the fact that the two men took office at almost the same time, the Commission president settled into a fruitful pattern of regular meetings, normally in Washington, but also including a Carter trip to Brussels in January 1977 that constituted the first US presidential visit to the European Commission. Jenkins and Carter also saw each other at the annual G7 gatherings. And in between meetings there was a regular flow of constructive and friendly letters. As such it is reasonable to claim that bilateral links between the Commission and the US government reached a high point under Jenkins that not only banished from memory the strains of the early 1970s, but also surpassed the earlier flowering of links during the presidency of Walter

[38] Most analysts concur that the Kennedy Round, in the mid-1960s, was dominated by the United States and the EC. See Thomas W. Zeiler, *American Trade and Power in the 1960s* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992); Lucia Coppolaro, *The Making of a World Trading Power: The European Economic Community (EEC) in the GATT Kennedy Round Negotiations (1963–67)* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013).

Hallstein in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Nor was it just a strictly personal relationship between Carter and Jenkins. Instead, the Commission president interacted with a range of key figures in the administration, including Cyrus Vance, the Secretary of State, Warren Christopher (his temporary replacement), Michael Blumenthal, the Secretary of the Treasury, and Robert Strauss, the US Trade Representative, as well as holding discussions with the leaders of several important Congressional committees.

The substance of the discussions ranged widely. Trade issues loomed large, needless to say, especially as the multilateral trade negotiations reached their climax in late 1978 and 1979. The successful conclusion of the Tokyo Round sent an important message that the leading Western powers remained committed to commercial openness even at a time of economic gloom. As Jenkins put it, with slight hyperbole, in his January 1980 meeting with Carter, 'it was a near miracle that we had steered the fragile MTN [Multilateral Trade Negotiations] craft safely into harbour after many difficult moments and several sudden squalls.'[39] European–American coordination on questions such as how best to approach the North–South dialogue was also constructive, despite the ultimately disappointing results of the UN-sponsored process. A further valuable strand of discussion involved the Commission president updating the Americans on the state of the European integration process and ensuring that policy innovations such as the launch of the EMS, enlargement, the renegotiation of the Lomé Agreement, or the move towards the direct elections of the European Parliament were understood and regarded sympathetically in Washington. Making certain that the EMS in particular was not opposed was essential, but not necessarily entirely straightforward given the role in its birth played by European (and especially German) dissatisfaction with the management of the US dollar. There was hence real pleasure in Jenkins' report to the Commission following his December 1978 visit to the American capital: 'from the President downwards we received warm support for what had been achieved—even those who had had most doubts in the past, seemed ready to wish us well and all success.'[40] Conversations about the state of the integration process with Carter also

[39] TP, File 18, 'Records of Meetings and Conversations, April 1979 to December 1980', call by the President of the European Commission on the President of the United States, White House, Washington, 22 January 1980.

[40] TP, File 9, 'Float, September 1978 to January 1979', Speaking Note, 'Your Visit to the US', undated but clearly prepared for the Commission meeting of 20 December 1978.

gave the Commission president an opportunity to set out his plans and aspirations in a synthetic fashion, seldom replicated in more detailed exchanges with his European counterparts. During Carter's January 1978 visit to the Berlaymont, for example, Jenkins described some of the challenges that Greek, Spanish, and Portuguese membership would entail before summing up optimistically, 'Enlargement provided an opportunity to snatch progress out of the problems involved.'[41]

Alongside such predictable topics, the Jenkins–Carter conversations also included a surprising number of forays into the type of geopolitical and strategic issues traditionally reserved for conversations between the US President and the leaders of the main European member states. In December 1978, for instance, Carter briefed Jenkins on the talks underway between the superpowers about limiting arms sales in the Third World and enjoined him to help prevent European suppliers filling the resulting gap.[42] The same conversation also included references to EC relations with China, with COMECON, and with Yugoslavia, before ending with a brief update from the US President about the state of peace talks in the Middle East.[43] In similar fashion the January 1980 meeting involved exchanges about Afghanistan, Iran, and Turkey.[44] To some extent this widening of the agenda probably reflected a degree of US haziness about what did and did not fall within Community competence. On the subject of arms sales, for instance, Jenkins had to explain to Carter that this was not something on which he had any power to act.[45] Another factor may have been the way in which Carter appeared to regard Jenkins as an agreeable and trustworthy interlocutor to whom he could mention whatever was at the forefront of his mind, without any danger of such confidences being immediately leaked to the press. This, for instance, is likely to explain the references to the Middle Eastern peace process. But more

[41] TP, File 17, 'Records of Meetings and Conversations, 1978 to March 1979', note of a discussion between the President of the United States and the President of the European Commission during the official visit of President Carter on 6 January 1978.

[42] Ibid., Tickell to Jenkins, 'Your conversation with President Carter', 19 December 1978.

[43] Ibid., record of a conversation between [the President of the United States and] the President of the European Commission: Cabinet Office, White House, Washington, 14 December 1978.

[44] TP, File 18, 'Records of Meetings and Conversations, April 1979 to December 1980', call by the President of the European Commission on the President of the United States, White House, Washington, 22 January 1980.

[45] TP, File 17, 'Records of Meetings and Conversations, 1978 to March 1979', Tickell to Jenkins, 'Your conversation with President Carter', 19 December 1978.

fundamentally many of these exchanges illustrate the extent to which the enlarged European Community had already become a factor in some of the most delicate geopolitical challenges of the day—the EC role in the Eastern Mediterranean has already been written about,[46] but much the same applied by the late 1970s to Yugoslavia as it prepared for the death of Marshall Tito—and the centrality of economic policy instruments to the latter stages of the Cold War. If the Western response to crises such as the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was to take the form of economic sanctions rather than a military *réplique*, international discussions would have to include the European Commission as well as the leaders of the principal Western allies.

Jenkins also made a substantial effort to reinforce bilateral ties between the European Commission and Japan. As noted in Chap. 4, the incoming Commission president benefited from a head-start on this issue since he already knew and had a good rapport with Fukuda, the Japanese Prime Minister. It was nevertheless a gesture of some significance by Jenkins to make Tokyo the second extra-European destination of his presidency in October 1977, preceded only by Washington—something he pointed out to Fukuda. And revealingly the Commission president continued: 'He agreed that there should be closer relations between Japan and Europe. Both had been closer to the United States than to each other. We now had to add the third line of the triangle.'[47] An equilateral triangle, if this is what Jenkins had in mind, proved somewhat out of reach. The intensity of exchanges never grew to rival those with the United States, nor was it feasible to build a political rapport that matched the increasingly close economic cooperation, despite the evident desire on both sides to do so.[48] Trade patterns and in particular the stubbornly high trade imbalance between the Japanese and the Community remained the principal focus of conversations. But the more intensive pattern of mutual visits and dialogue did indicate a set of ties that had grown immeasurably since the 1960s, reflecting both Japan's ever greater economic importance and the

[46] Eirini Karamouzi, 'Telling the Whole Story: America, the EEC and Greece, 1974–1976', in *Europe in the International Arena during the 1970s*, ed. Antonio Varsori and Guia Migani (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2011), 355–74.

[47] TP, File 16, 'Records of Meetings and Conversations, September 1976 to 1977', record of a call of the President of the European Commission on the Japanese Prime Minister, Prime Minister's Official Residence, Tokyo, 12 October 1977.

[48] TP, File 10, 'Float, February 1979 to June 1979', Tickell to Jenkins, 'Relations with Japan', 24 May 1979.

Commission's growing foreign policy aspirations. Fukuda's return visit to Brussels in July 1978 was the first by a Japanese prime minister, while Jenkins travelled to Japan again in June 1979, largely to attend the Tokyo G7 summit but he also used the occasion for a bilateral meeting with Fukuda's successor, Masayoshi Ohira. A study group was also established in the wake of Jenkins' first trip to Japan designed to bring together officials and business people from both Europe and Japan to explore ways of intensifying the trade links and bringing under control the Japanese trade surplus with the EC.

Trips designed to cement links with Europe's G7 partners—which also included a 5-day visit to Canada in March 1978—were flanked with journeys intended to smooth relations with those European neighbours that either could not or would not join the European Community itself. Jenkins thus visited Switzerland in 1978, Austria in 1979, and Yugoslavia, Norway, and Sweden in 1980.[49] The voyage to Belgrade was of particular importance, since the whole international position of Yugoslavia appeared vulnerable. Josip Broz Tito, the country's leader since the Second World War, was on his deathbed and the non-aligned movement of which Tito had been a pioneer was in what would prove to be terminal decline.[50] The new accord between Yugoslavia and the Community initialled in Brussels a few days before Jenkins visited the country was intended as a valuable prop for a troubled regime.[51] It stopped short of establishing a close political relationship, akin to the association agreements that Greece and Turkey had signed, since this was recognised by both parties as incompatible with Yugoslavia's non-aligned position. But it did include a series of trade concessions designed to give Yugoslav exporters improved prospects within the Community's markets, foresaw European Investment Bank loans being made available to projects in Yugoslavia, and provided for the opening of a Community representation office in Belgrade.[52] More fundamental, though, than any of the individual clauses or provisions was the symbolic value of an accord signed at so delicate a moment in Yugoslavia's development. And such symbolism also explains why it

[49] Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 336–8, 506–8, 573–5, 614–16, 646–7.

[50] For a detailed discussion of the context see Benedetto Zaccaria, 'For the Sake of Yugoslavia: The EEC's Yugoslav Policy in Cold War Europe, 1968–1980' (PhD, dissertation, IMT Institute for Advanced Studies, 2014), 149–201.

[51] TP, File 12, 'Float, February to July 1980', Speaking Note: 'Your Visit to Yugoslavia', 5 March 1980.

[52] Zaccaria, 'For the Sake of Yugoslavia', 194–9.

was so important for Jenkins himself to visit the country and to mark the conclusion of the deal, despite the fact that it had been Haferkamp and the staff of DGI who had carried out all of the detailed negotiation. The 3 days in Belgrade were in other words designed to give a presidential seal of approval—and the maximum possible publicity in Yugoslavia and beyond—to a highly political commercial agreement.

From Greenland's Icy Mountains to Afric's Golden Sand[53]

During the 4 years of his presidency, Jenkins also undertook a lot of travel that extended beyond the relatively obvious destinations discussed so far. He thus began 1978 with a visit to Sudan and Egypt; in 1979 he found time to travel to several countries in West Africa, China, Egypt again, and Greenland; and in 1980 he organised a trip to India and had been planning a tour of Latin America also but ultimately chose to cancel it. Given that none of these destinations were yet major trading partners of the EEC, nor, with the partial exception of China, countries with which important bilateral deals needed to be negotiated or signed, it is worth asking once more what the purpose of such voyages was. After all, Jenkins' timetable was already fairly gruelling. Furthermore, the eruption in the course of early 1979 of a major row in the European press and with the European Parliament about the extravagant expenses—including travel costs—of European Commissioners made it all the more imperative to be seen to be taking on only those trips (and hence costs) that were easy to justify.[54] The trigger for this controversy were indeed the large sums that Haferkamp had spent while in China, thereby making all travel suspect and travel to exotic destinations like the People's Republic even more so.[55] And yet despite this, Jenkins' globe-trotting regime continued.

The easiest destinations to justify were probably those in Africa. The institutionalised links between the European Community and many of the countries of Africa stretched back to 1957 and the inclusion of provisions for what were still at the time French and Belgian colonies in Part IV of

[53] Jenkins used this verbal allusion to a nineteenth-century hymn to caption photos of his travels reproduced in the *European Diary*. See photographs between pages 438 and 439.

[54] Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 373–4.

[55] For the start of the storm, see *The Economist*, 27 January 1979.

the Treaty of Rome.[56] Over time these ties had evolved substantially, not least because of decolonization, but the relationship remained an important one comprising preferential trade arrangements, substantial flows of European development aid, and a complex machinery for dialogue between the EEC and its African associates.[57] The geographical scope of these arrangements had also grown significantly, largely because many of Britain's former colonies had been offered ACP (Africa, Caribbean, and Pacific) status when the United Kingdom became a member state in 1973. It was therefore important for Jenkins to demonstrate an active interest in a policy area where the Community was already highly engaged. And with the Lomé Agreement which governed relations between the ACP countries and the EEC being renegotiated, an indication that the president was following the discussions and was intent on developing a good rapport with many of the African leaders, was of obvious political value.

Underlining that he had an interest in the Community's activities in Africa also made sense for Jenkins in terms of internal Commission politics. The responsibility for the Community's development policies, and especially its ties to Africa, had always been deeply shaped by French priorities. It had been the French who had first suggested including their colonial empire (and that of Belgium) within the Community's remit.[58] The Commissioner responsible for Development had always been a Frenchman ever since the post was first created in 1958.[59] And the internal evolution of both DGIX, the portion of the Commission responsible for development policy, and of the network of representative offices that the Commission maintained in Africa, had been deeply shaped by a series of formidable French *fonctionnaires* many of whom had led a previous existence as colonial administrators.[60] Claude Cheysson, the current holder of the Development portfolio, was renowned furthermore for a particularly independent streak and for a tendency to spend much more time in 'his'

[56] Marie-Thérèse Bitsch and Gérard Bossuat (eds.), *L'Europe unie et l'Afrique: de l'idée d'Eurafrique à la Convention de Lomé I* (Brussels: Bruylant, 2005).

[57] Guia Migani, *La France et l'Afrique sub-saharienne, 1957–1963: histoire d'une décolonisation entre idéaux eurafricains et politique de puissance* (Bruxelles: Peter Lang, 2008).

[58] René Girault, 'La France entre l'Europe et l'Afrique', in *Il Rilancio dell'Europa e i trattati di Roma*, by Enrico Serra (Brussels: Bruylant, 1989), 351–78.

[59] Robert Lemaignen held the post from 1958 to 62; Henri Rochereau from 1962 to 70; Jean-François Deniau from 1970 to 73; and then Cheysson from 1973 onwards.

[60] Véronique Dimier, *The Invention of a European Development Aid Bureaucracy: Recycling Empire* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

African empire than he did in Brussels. 'What's the difference between God and Cheysson?' asked a contemporary EEC joke, the answer being that whereas God was everywhere, Cheysson was everywhere but Brussels. It was thus useful politically for Jenkins to remind his hyperactive development Commissioner that he too had an interest in Africa and intended to follow closely the progress of Community policies towards the region. There was no better way of doing this than by visiting Africa himself.

When in Sudan, Senegal, Mali, or Ghana, Jenkins' itinerary was thus built around a succession of set-piece discussions with the country's political leadership, in the course of which mutual priorities would be reviewed and particular issues to do with the renegotiation of Lomé explored. These were combined with trips away from the capital city, sometimes to visit cultural monuments, at other times to inspect development projects being partially or wholly financed by the European Community.[61] In Senegal Jenkins ended up discussing both the dangers of communism and the merits of Proust with Léopold Senghor, the country's President; in Timbuktu in Mali he had to ride one camel and eat another; and in Ghana the trip included a lengthy excursion to the Kpong dam, a project into which a significant amount of Community funding had been poured.[62] Also of value were the meetings with the Community representatives in each associate country, encounters that underlined the way in which their work was noticed and appreciated by the Commission. Fundamentally, however, what exactly the Commission president did in each African country mattered much less than his being there in the first place.

The visit to Greenland is probably also best viewed as a political gesture, albeit this time aimed at a territory that was contesting its links with the Community ever more vigorously. The question of whether Greenland should be allowed to leave the EEC had been raised in the course of Jenkins' official visit to Denmark in June 1977.[63] In the 1972 Danish referendum on Community membership, a majority of Danes had voted yes, but in Greenland negative votes had exceeded the positive ones. Following their discussions in Copenhagen, Jenkins and his team decided to suggest that the Commission president visit Greenland, both

[61] The records of Jenkins' discussions in Sudan are in File 16 of the Tickell collection; those of his West African trip in File 17.

[62] Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 379–86.

[63] TP, File 16, 'Records of Meetings and Conversations, September 1976 to 1977', note of meeting between the President of the European Commission and the Danish Foreign Minister, Christianborg Palace, Copenhagen, 1115 Hours, Friday, 10 June 1977.

to sound out opinion and to reiterate the case for continued Community membership.[64] The Danes agreed, and in May 1978 the Commission president thus spent 3 days visiting the country, talking to local politicians, making a series of speeches, and touring a number of projects paid for with Community funds.[65] In part this was symbolic politics, intended to show the Danes that the Commission was sensitive to their political problems, the Greenlanders that the Commission was interested in their affairs, and the European public more generally that the Commission was not a remote and distant bureaucracy, but instead an institution willing to listen to public complaints and to engage in local debates. But it should also be seen as part of an effort to educate the Danish and Greenland populations about what the Community could do for them and to rebut some of the more alarmist claims about its implications.

This educational aspect was a feature of many of Jenkins' travels. Both within the Community and beyond, Jenkins, like most previous and subsequent Commission presidents was a tireless speech-maker and interview-giver.[66] Prominent within most such speeches, interviews, and press conferences were attempts to demystify the European Community and to explain its operation. So in Japan in the autumn of 1977, Jenkins gave a speech to the Foreign Correspondents Club, in December 1978 he addressed the National Press Club in Washington, in Ghana in 1979 he spent 45 min recording a televised interview, and in Delhi in 1980 he had a long televised joust with someone he described as a '[p]rovocatively anti-EEC interviewer'.[67] During Jenkins' period in office such proselytising was almost certainly necessary. At the time, the Brussels press corps remained much less extensive than it would subsequently become and almost wholly European.[68] Global news coverage of the integration process was therefore thin at best and frequently ill-informed. Well-publicised

[64] TP, File 7, 'Float, October 1977 to February 1978', Tickell to Jenkins, 'Visit to Greenland', 21 October 1977.

[65] Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 266–9.

[66] For a flavour of Jenkins' speech-making, see the online collection at http://aei.pitt.edu/view/eusries/GENERAL=3ASpeeches.html. More comprehensive collections can be found in both the Commission archives and amongst Jenkins' personal papers now in the Bodleian Library, Oxford.

[67] Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 156, 362, 596–7. The reference to the interview in Ghana, omitted from the published version of the diary, is in the unpublished diary entry for Friday, 12 January. JP, Bodleian Library, Box 386, p. 560.

[68] A detailed study of the Brussels press corps during this period is under preparation by Martin Herzer at the European University Institute, Florence.

foreign trips by a high-profile figure like Jenkins, who spoke eloquently and was well used to combative exchanges with journalists, were hence a rare opportunity to reverse this trend and procure some detailed and accurate press. If the world would not come to Brussels to find out about the integration process, Brussels—or its most prominent representative at least—would have to go to the world.

A third consideration was the need to emphasise the European Community's foreign policy role—and the place of the Commission within this. The desire to see a more united Europe able to speak with one voice at an international level had a long pedigree. Indeed, this hope predated the integration process itself and constituted one of the original motivations for establishing what would become the European Communities. But the realisation of such aspirations had proved fraught with difficulties. By 1970s a structure intended to permit the member states of the European Community to coordinate their foreign policy existed in the form of the European Political Cooperation (EPC) process.[69] Its actual track record during its first decade of operation was mixed, however, with occasional successes like the European role in the CSCE process flanked with equally high-profile failures such as the attempt to devise a common stance on the Middle East.[70] EPC, moreover, was a primarily intergovernmental structure operating under different rules from 'normal' Community policies and affording scant room for a European Commission contribution. Some member states, indeed, notably France, continued to contest the Commission's right to be involved at all, periodically snubbing its representatives and seeking to exclude them from political discussions and cut them out of the exchange of information.[71]

It is against this rather sensitive backdrop that a significant part of Jenkins' foreign diplomacy needs to be seen. The trip to China was a case in point. The European Community's success in establishing formal diplomatic ties with the People's Republic of China had been one of the great successes of the previous Commission, largely masterminded by

[69] The best historical account of its creation is Daniel Möckli, *European Foreign Policy during the Cold War: Heath, Brandt, Pompidou and the Dream of Political Unity* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2009).

[70] For the former see Angela Romano, *From Détente in Europe to European Détente: How the West Shaped the Helsinki CSCE* (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2009). For a nuanced account of the latter see Aurélie Elisa Gfeller, *Building a European Identity: France, the United States, and the Oil Shock, 1973–1974* (New York: Berghahn, 2012); Möckli is rather more critical.

[71] Christopher Audland, *Right Place, Right Time* (Stanhope: Memoir Club, 2004).

Christopher Soames, and carried out with little or no assistance from the member states.[72] In revisiting Beijing, Jenkins was thus seeking to build on this prior achievement and renew the message—aimed as much at Europe's diplomats as at his non-European interlocutors—that the Commission had no intention of being shut out from the key foreign policy developments of the day. His discussions with Deng Xiaoping, Huang Hua, and Hua Guofeng were hence primarily political, despite the ostensible purpose of the visit being the signature of a commercial treaty between the EC and the PRC. With Deng, for instance, the conversation moved from a surprisingly acute set of questions about the likely impact of direct elections on inter-institutional relations within the EC, to a broad *tour d'horizon* of global affairs, taking in US–European relations, Soviet policy, Yugoslavia, Turkey, and the Middle East and culminating in a fairly plain-speaking exchange about the Chinese invasion of Vietnam, launched just days before Jenkins had been due to arrive. The meeting then ended with fulsome statements about the importance of European–Chinese relations, the Commission president describing the success of China's modernisation process as something that 'could give that historic impulse of demand which [the world] badly needed' and Deng for his part concluding that 'the Chinese wanted to see a strong and powerful Europe, and he believed that Europe wanted the same of China.'[73] Substantive trade discussions by contrast barely figured, only arising in the meeting with Li Quiang, the Minister for Foreign Trade, and then in a fashion that highlighted the paucity of existing commercial links rather than their abundance.[74] The purpose of the visit in other words was as much political as economic, with Jenkins seeking to persuade the Chinese that the European Community and the European Commission were valid diplomatic partners alongside the individual member states. Unintentionally, however, the trip to China also demonstrated how great was the challenge ahead in this regard, since although an explicit invitation was made to Hua, suggesting that he visit the Commission when he came to Europe that autumn, in the

[72] For details see Marie Julie Chenard, 'The European Community's Opening to the People's Republic of China, 1969–1979: Internal Decision-Making on External Relations' (PhD, London School of Economics, 2012).

[73] TP, File 17, 'Records of Meetings and Conversations, 1978 to March 1979', record of a conversation between the President of the European Commission and Vice-President Deng Xiaoping, Great Hall of the People, Peking, 23 February 1979.

[74] Ibid., record of a Conversation between the President of the European Commission and the Minister of Foreign Trade of China, Peking, 23 February 1979.

event the Chinese vice premier chose to go to France, Britain, Germany, and Italy rather than stopping off in Brussels.[75] The Commission's foreign policy ambitions were evident; its capacity to persuade those outside the Community of its diplomatic weight was much more open to question.

Fourth and finally, Jenkins' trips abroad were also designed to promote European trade. Several of the major journeys—that to China or that to Yugoslavia for instance—set the seal on important commercial arrangements. Others, such as the voyages to Africa and indeed some of the interaction with the United States, can be seen as contributing to a wider European negotiating effort towards a renewal of the Lomé Agreement and a new GATT deal respectively. And the president of the Commission was not above occasionally talking about particular commercial deals. While in Japan, for example, he unsuccessfully pressed Fukuda to consider equipping Japanese Airlines with the latest generation of Airbus rather than Boeing planes.[76] Ultimately, however, such precise commercial discussions were neither Jenkins' forte nor the best use of his time. Instead they were matters best left for Haferkamp and his DGI negotiators. The president's role by contrast was to try to emphasise that the EEC was more than a narrow commercial entity and that the Commission, as its institutional heart, was a worthy participant in international diplomacy. The bilateral discussions analysed in this chapter should hence be seen as a continuation of the battle for G7 representation described in Chap. 4, rather than a primarily economic affair.

Conclusions

If such were the aims of Jenkins bilateral diplomacy, how should his contribution be assessed? At one level, the verdict can be very positive. Jenkins clearly enjoyed the international aspect of his job and brought to it both a significant level of expertise—he had been widely seen as a future British Foreign Secretary after all, and had gained substantial experience of international negotiations in his previous job as Chancellor of the Exchequer—and a wide intellectual range. As is very clear from the

[75] Ibid., record of a conversation between the President of the European Commission and Chairman Hua Guofeng, Great Hall of the People, Peking, 24 February 1979; for details of Hua's eventual European itinerary, see *Financial Times*, 13 and 15 October 1979.

[76] TP, File 16, 'Records of Meetings and Conversations, September 1976 to 1977', record of a call of the President of the European Commission on the Japanese Prime Minister, Prime Minister's Official Residence, Tokyo, 12 October 1977.

extensive records kept by his private office, and from his diary entries, he felt very much home whether discussing monetary affairs with Carter or Blumenthal, geopolitics with Deng Xiaoping or Indira Ghandi, or French literature, over dinner with Léopold Senghor. He also had the physical stamina to cope with the demands posed by frequent travel and the eloquence and public presence to make his mark as a spokesman for and interpreter of Community Europe. It also helped that his private office was headed by Crispin Tickell, an experienced diplomat, who could provide him with valuable extra support and draw upon his own close links with some of the key diplomatic advisors, on the American side in particular. And perhaps most important of all, he had the political judgement to identify which external challenges really mattered and to organise the Commission's disparate forces for a determined effort to reach the target set. This strength was perhaps most apparent on the issue of enlargement, but also was evident on issues such as the Tokyo Round negotiations or the renegotiation of Lomé.

Viewed with hindsight, however, the Commission's weaknesses emerge as clearly as its strengths from this review of Jenkins' external diplomacy. On most key policy issues such as enlargement or even trade diplomacy, Jenkins and his aides could only deliver as much and as quickly as the member states were ready to allow. This would prove sufficient in the case of the Greek application, as it would in the climactic stages of the Tokyo Round, but would fall short in the case of Spanish and Portuguese membership, leaving the two Iberian candidates waiting on the threshold of the Community for nearly half a decade longer than Jenkins had hoped and predicted. And the Commission's vulnerability to rivalry or obstructionism from the member states was visible too in Jenkins' dealings with foreign interlocutors. With China, for instance, Brussels' appeal as a destination for the vice premier's valedictory European trip proved insufficient to resist rival invitations from Paris, London, Rome, and Bonn. Nor, for all the warmth of the various Carter–Jenkins meetings can the Commission–White House dialogue really be equated to the ever more detailed exchanges being carried out between the United States and its principal European allies.[77]

[77] For a discussion of the tight links developed in the mid-1970s see N. Piers Ludlow, 'The Real Years of Europe? U.S.–West European Relations during the Ford Administration', *Journal of Cold War Studies* 15, no. 3 (2013): 136–61.

Given these weaknesses, it is hard to resist the conclusion that some of the enthusiasm with which Jenkins threw himself into the external representation aspect of his job reflected what Peter Hennessy has called, in the context of British politics, 'the VC10 syndrome'—in other words the temptation to escape from some of the frustrations and discomforts of political battles close to home into the semi-detached and rather pampered existence of the international statesman.[78] The desire to escape Brussels and both the complexities of politics within the Commission and those between the Commission and the member states was entirely understandable.[79] But it came at a cost, with the eruption of several crises at Commission level while Jenkins was away from the Berlaymont.[80] None of these would prove impossible to solve. They do act as reminder, however, that the key contributions that any Commission president can make lie at the European level rather than further afield. It is thus back to the internal challenges of institutional reform, the control of CAP expenditure, and the preparations for the 1979 direct elections to the European Parliament that the next chapter must turn.

[78] See his evidence to the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, 8 December 2010. The name derives from the type of aircraft used by British prime ministers between the 1960s and the 1990s.

[79] Jenkins could be very candid about this: Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 594.

[80] For a relatively trivial example, see ibid., 477–8.

CHAPTER 7

The Search for a New Policy Priority: Commission Reform, Direct Elections, Agriculture, and Energy

With the successful launch of the European Monetary System in March 1979, Roy Jenkins found himself for the first time since mid-1977 without a personal political priority. To be sure, the Commission president had surrendered the leadership role in the field of monetary integration to Helmut Schmidt and Valéry Giscard d'Estaing much earlier than this, as Chap. 5 acknowledged. But such had been his level of personal commitment to the success of the EMS and so strong had been his ongoing interest in a project which he had played a key role in launching, that Jenkins had gone on deriving a strong sense of involvement and of purpose from the EMS story even when relegated to a secondary role. The extent to which the ups and downs of discussions about European monetary integration dominate the pages of the *European Diary* for 1978 bears witness to this.[1] The somewhat delayed completion of the project in early 1979 therefore left a sizeable hole. Which issue Jenkins would fasten on to next was hence a question of some importance for the latter half of his presidency.

There were several possible contenders to fill this policy gap. Commission reform was one; devising an effective institutional response to the challenge posed by the first direct elections to the European Parliament due to take place in 1979 another; and the transformation of

[1] Roy Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981* (London: Collins, 1989), 198–367.

N.P. Ludlow, *Roy Jenkins and the European Commission Presidency, 1976–1980*, DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-51530-8_7

the ever-more expensive and unsustainable Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) a third option. Additionally, the second oil shock, triggered by the Iranian Revolution, and the consequent aggravation of Western Europe's energy crisis, meant that energy policy suddenly became a central concern and a policy area where many hoped for a dynamic European response. As this chapter will show, Jenkins was able to contribute ideas and a degree of leadership in all four of these fields. But as will also become clear, none of them became as central to the second half of his presidency as monetary integration had been to the first. Nor did it prove possible in any of these policy areas to make the type of major leap forward accomplished in the monetary field. The quest for a new 'big idea' was thus to some extent a tale of frustration and disappointment. Furthermore, 1979 and 1980 were also years when Jenkins' own lack of enthusiasm for a second term of office as Commission president and his susceptibility to the gravitational pull of UK politics became ever more significant. The non-arrival of a new central policy theme may well, in other words, have had as much to do with Jenkins' own hesitations and misgivings about seeking a new European priority as it did with the inherent difficulties in finding an appropriate area in which to replicate the impact he had had over monetary integration.

Commission Reform

Transforming the operation of the institution that he headed could have become Roy Jenkins' second great European cause. It was after all a task to which he had applied himself even before arriving in Brussels, as Chap. 3 pointed out. It had been something he and his team had tried to carry out in the early months of 1977.[2] And it had still been an issue that Jenkins and his *cabinet* had been discussing as a priority at their annual away-day, held in Jenkins' Oxfordshire home, in July 1978.[3] On that occasion, Jenkins' summing up of the debate had been recorded as:

> The President agreed that the Commission as a bureaucracy was not respected. Policy advances had been made, but *in spite* of the Commission and not as a result of it. There were too many matters which were pursued

[2] See Chap. 4.

[3] TP, File 17, 'Meetings and Conversations, 1978 to March 1979', meeting at East Hendred, 31 July 1978.

> by the Services which bore little relation to the priorities of the Commission or other European institutions. The Commission had to face change if it wished to avoid a really serious 'upset'.[4]

With 2 years' experience under his belt, moreover, Jenkins would now be in a position to devise his own priorities for Commission reform rather than being obliged to accept those passed down by an earlier cohort of would-be reformers.[5]

Despite these incentives for action, Commission reform did not emerge as the key preoccupation of Jenkins' last 2 years in Brussels. In part this reflected the decision, foreshadowed in that July 1978 meeting, but confirmed at the Commission's Comblain-la-Tour meeting in September, to entrust the study of how the Commission might be made more efficient and effective to an outside review body.[6] Jenkins did get quite involved in the task of identifying a suitable chairman for this group, initially seeking to persuade Johannes Witteveen, the former head of the IMF, to take the job, and then when Witteveen declined, settling on another Dutchman, Dirk Spierenburg.[7] It is also likely that the inclusion of Dick Taverne in the review team was his idea, since the former Labour MP and future member of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) had been Financial Secretary at the Treasury in the late 1960s when Jenkins had been Chancellor of the Exchequer, and had been closely involved with Jenkins in the organisation of pro-European Labour MPs in the wake of the 1970 electoral defeat.[8] The Commission president, moreover, showed himself willing to supply the review team with the starting information they required, hosting a dinner at the start of their work in January 1979 at which Tugendhat, Noël, and several members of Jenkins' *cabinet* were present, and then having several subsequent meetings with them.[9] When the report was completed,

[4] Ibid.

[5] See Chap. 3.

[6] Both Tickell and Phillips trailed this idea at East Hendred, although whether it was theirs or the president's own is unclear. TP, File 17, 'Meeting at East Hendred', 31 July 1978. For the discussion of Commission reform at Comblain-la-Tour, see ECHA, COM (78) PV 485, 2ème partie, session du 17 septembre 1978.

[7] Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 310, 326, and 339.

[8] There is a reference to detailed discussion with his cabinet colleagues about possible names for inclusion in the review team in an entry subsequently omitted from the published version. East Hendred papers, unpublished diary, entry for 27 September 1978.

[9] Interestingly, meetings with Spierenburg seemed to be particularly prone to be cut from the published version of the diary. The two references that survive are Jenkins, *European*

furthermore, he swallowed any misgivings he may have had about its findings—revealingly the original text of the *European Diary* described the outcome as 'quite a good report', only for the 'quite' to be crossed out[10]—and showed great energy in ensuring that its recommendations were taken seriously.[11] Spierenburg was thus invited to present his findings to the assembled Commission at their meeting at Villiers-le-Temple in October 1979.[12] Jenkins as chair of the meeting then had to defend the committee's recommendations against quite significant internal dissent—Vouël the Luxembourg Commissioner was so offended by what he believed (mistakenly) to be a suggestion by Jenkins that countries might 'share' a single Commissioner rather than always having one each that he absented himself from the group photo taken at the end of the Commission's away-day[13]—before steering his colleagues to the conclusion that an internal group should be set up, presided by Ortoli, to oversee the implementation of Spierenburg's recommendations.[14] In the autumn of 1980, the Commission president also made a speech to all senior Commission staff, outlining what had been done in response to the report, and what the Commission still intended to do.[15] And yet despite this extensive show of commitment, Jenkins could not really make the cause of Commission reform fully his own, since a deliberate decision had been taken to outsource the process to an external review body. He could—and did—give his blessing to an organizational shake-up. But having set the review in motion, he could do relatively little to shape its conclusions or to direct its outcomes.

As Jenkins would discover in the 15 months that separated the publication of the Spierenburg Report from the end of his 4-year term, Commission reform was also something that was not wholly within the power of the Commission to deliver. A good number of Spierenburg's

Diary, 1977–1981, 437 and 501. For others see JP, Bodleian Library, Box 386, entries for 25 January 1979, 31 January 1979, 5 July 1979, and 4 September 1979. More paperwork relating to the enquiry can be found in TP, Box 2, sub-folder on 'External (Independent) Review Body'.

[10] JP, Box 386, entry for 4 September 1979. The entry for that day in the published version makes no reference at all to the report: Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 493–4.

[11] For the full text see http://aei.pitt.edu/993/1/Spirenberg_report.pdf

[12] ECHA, PV (79) 530 final, 3ème partie, 6 and 7 October 1979.

[13] JP, Box 386, entry for 7 October 1979.

[14] ECHA, PV (79) 530 final, 3ème partie, 6 and 7 October 1979.

[15] See http://aei.pitt.edu/11377/1/11377.pdf

recommendations on internal reorganisation and an alteration of recruitment, promotion, and staff mobility procedures could be carried out unilaterally—provided the powerful staff unions did not object. Much of this change was introduced, hence the president's claim, in the November 1980 speech referred to above that: 'In the last year, the Commission has gone as far as it reasonably can to implement those parts of the Spierenburg report which fall directly within its own competences. This has involved extensive discussions; considerable administrative upheaval; a measure of uncertainty for our staff; and difficult decisions.'[16] But a large portion of the changes that Spierenburg and his team had called for involved either additional budgetary resources or alterations in the treaty-given rights of the member states. Neither of these materialised, the former falling foul of a member state desire to trim all non-agriculture related aspects of the EEC budget, and the latter a victim of a disinclination of most European governments to alter any aspect of the existing institutional balance. There was no move, for instance, to abolish the second Commissioner appointed by the larger member states, despite repeated suggestions by Jenkins and many others that there were not enough good jobs to go round the existing 13 posts, let alone the 15 or 16 Commissioners likely once Greece, Spain, and Portugal had joined the EEC.

Even more fundamental, however, was the difficulty of reconciling far-reaching and disruptive Commission reform with the style of leadership adopted by Jenkins as president. For all his reputation as parliamentary gladiator, Jenkins tended to recoil from too much direct confrontation. Instead his preference, which became ever clearer as his time in Brussels wore on, was to win round those he regarded as the key members of the Commission, well in advance of most controversial decisions. In this way he could ensure that were he to encounter opposition in Commission meetings, it would come only from the weaker and more marginal members of the Commission. Central to this tactic were his relations with Ortoli, Davignon, and Gundelach, the three Commissioners whom he and his *cabinet* regarded as the most able allies, but also the most potentially damaging opponents. With all three behind him, Jenkins had little to fear from the remaining nine Commissioners; were he to lose the support of Ortoli, Davignon, and Gundelach, by contrast, his chances of imposing his will on his colleagues would be dramatically reduced. Similarly, Jenkins and his team chose to work as closely as possible with Emile Noël, the

[16] Ibid.

long-serving secretary-general and hence in some ways the embodiment of institutional continuity.[17]

In order to keep Ortoli, Davignon, and Gundelach loyal, Jenkins resorted to frequent consultation. Most famously this took the form of multiple 'four horsemen' dinners (or occasionally lunches) designed to give the president and his most important colleagues a chance to coordinate their positions on whatever issues the Commission was confronted with. The frequency of such dinners tended to increase whenever the Commission had to deal with a particularly controversial or divisive problem.[18] One of Tickell's key duties as Jenkins' *chef de cabinet* moreover was to ensure that communication remained good between the president and the other key members of his Commission.[19] It was also no coincidence that the internal committee entrusted with the task of implementing the proposed Spierenburg reforms was chaired by Ortoli and also included Davignon as one of its three members.[20] But most crucial of all to the maintenance of good relations with the other three horsemen was a tacit understanding that the Commission president would not intervene too heavy-handedly in their particular areas of responsibility and would, on the contrary, allow them a great deal of freedom to establish their own policy priorities. And with Noël too, frequent consultation was blended with a full acceptance of the secretary-general's ongoing role at the very heart of the organisation. He too was therefore deeply involved in the implementation of the Spierenburg reforms.[21]

As far as the quest to improve the working of the Commission was concerned this decision to accord Ortoli, Davignon, Gundelach, and Noël so much freedom had at least two important implications. First of all it meant some of the biggest and most core sections of the Commission were shielded from large-scale reform, except insofar as the other three

[17] The closeness of the working relationship with Noël was something that both Tickell and Hayden Phillips underlined when I interviewed them. See http://archives.eui.eu/en/oral_history/INT235. The rapport can further be gauged by the very warm tribute that Jenkins paid Noël on the occasion of his retirement in 1987, reprinted in Roy Jenkins, *Roy Jenkins' Gallery of 20th Century Portraits: And Oxford Papers* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1988), 139–43.

[18] The published version of the *European Diaries* significantly understates the number of such dinners.

[19] Interview with Tickell, 21 August 2010.

[20] ECHA, PV (79) 530 final, 3ème partie, 6 and 7 October 1979.

[21] He chaired an additional working group on the issue.

horsemen and the secretary-general were prepared to acquiesce in the planned alterations. No root and branch reform of the Commission could be carried out that excluded DGII (Economic and Financial Affairs), DGIII (Internal Market and Industrial Affairs), DGVI (Agriculture), and the Secretariat General. Furthermore, DGII had been prominent amongst those parts of the Commission singled out as most needing change in the preliminary paperwork given to Jenkins prior to his arrival in Brussels.[22] Second, Jenkins' approach to the three Commissioners he regarded as most important, helped enshrine what contemporary commentators often referred to as the rule of the 'barons'—in other words a system in which the most important Commissioners enjoyed substantial autonomy and took few orders from either their president or the Commission as a whole.[23] This certainly had the merit of allowing the three most able members of the Jenkins Commission to pursue their own priorities, relatively unencumbered with the need to seek constant authorisation from the top. Davignon in particular would exploit this to the full, and engage in a range of policy initiatives of great significance, notably in the steel and electronics sectors.[24] And under Jenkins, the president himself and his lieutenants like Tickell were forceful and self-confident enough to ensure that this laissez-faire approach did not lead to total anarchy. Indeed the level of four horsemen consultation noted above helped ensure that the barons were more often than not fully aligned with their king when important decisions needed to be taken. But the legacy was such that a less forceful Commission president, especially one who also lacked the quality of *cabinet* advisors that Jenkins enjoyed, would struggle to impose any form of collective discipline on his most powerful colleagues. Some of the difficulties that would be experienced by Gaston Thorn especially vis-à-vis Davignon and Ortoli could thus trace their roots to the style of internal leadership adopted by Jenkins.[25] The special status accorded to the

[22] TP, Box 1, folder 'Reform of the Commission', 'Economic and Monetary Matters. The Role of the Commission. Some suggestions for improvement', 13 July 1976.

[23] The term was popularised in part by the regular 'Market Place' column in *The Bulletin*. See, for example, 25 February 1977. It was subsequently picked up by more serious analysts.

[24] For a detailed exploration of Davignon's activities in the high technology sector, see Arthe van Laer, 'Vers une politique industrielle commune: Les actions de la Commission Européenne dans les secteurs de l'informatique et des télécommunications (1965–1984)' (PhD dissertation, Louvain-la-Neuve, 2010).

[25] Klaus Schwabe, 'Gaston Thorn (1981–1985): A Forgotten President', in *An Impossible Job? The Presidents of the European Commission, 1958–2014*, ed. J. van der Harst and G. Voerman

'barons' was also something fiercely resented by those Commissioners whom Jenkins did not regard as so central. The notorious incident in September 1979 when Vredeling threw an ashtray (or whisky bottle—accounts vary) at a Dutch MEP, missed, but caused £5,000 worth of damage mainly by shattering a mirror, was explained by his aides as the product of deep frustration at the way that Jenkins had treated him earlier that evening.[26] Burke's evident frustrations with the Jenkins presidency may well have a similar cause.[27]

Jenkins' impact on the internal workings of the Commission was therefore rather mixed. Some useful internal change was brought about through the Spierenburg Report and its aftermath. This internal restructuring and alterations in the way in which the Commission handled the recruitment, promotion, and mobility of staff, can hence be added on the positive side of the balance sheet to several of the changes that Jenkins had made at the very outset of his presidency, notably the separation of the enlargement portfolio from the general responsibility for external relations, the merger of the responsibilities for the internal market and industry, and the establishment of the central advisory group. In addition, the influx in 1977 of a number of high-powered British civil servants, steeped in the administrative traditions of Whitehall rather than Paris or Bonn, helped change a number of working methods in Brussels. The transformation of the way in which Commissioners, including the president, were briefed prior to top level meetings was one such reform; the institution of informal Commission 'away-days' such as those at La Roche-en-Ardenne, Comblain-la-Tour, or the two held at Villiers-le-Temple, was another.[28] The much talked about sweeping reform of the Commission did not occur, however, with many of the administrative deficiencies identified by Jenkins and his team as much in evidence at the end of 1980 as they had been

(London: John Harper, 2015), 151–72. My interview with Tugendhat (17 August 2010) also underlined Thorn's ineffectiveness vis-à-vis his most powerful Commissioners.

[26] A detailed discussion of the incident is available at http://www.beereboom.nl/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=81&Itemid=31; for Jenkins' own account, see Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 505.

[27] Interview with Richard Burke, 10 May 2012, available at http://archives.eui.eu/en/oral_history/INT116

[28] Éric Bussière, Vincent Dujardin, Michel Dumoulin, N. P. Ludlow, J. W. L Brouwer, and Pierre Tilly, *The European Commission 1973–86: History and Memories of an Institution* (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2014), 125–6.

in 1977. Furthermore, the combination of Jenkins' relatively hands-off leadership style and the unusually high number of Commissioners who would stay on in Brussels after Jenkins left and Thorn took his place, would present Jenkins' successor with a challenge to his leadership and to the unity of his Commission that he would never fully overcome. Much of this failure, of course, was due to Thorn's own weaknesses. But his inheritance from the Jenkins Commission in terms of the collegiality—or lack of it—on the part of the most powerful Commissioners undoubtedly aggravated his problems.[29]

The Challenge of an Elected Parliament

A second institutional challenge that might have become the central theme of Jenkins' final 2 years in Brussels was the Commission's response to the first direct elections of the European Parliament held in June 1979. The decision to move towards the election of MEPs by universal suffrage, rather than having a parliament formed of national parliamentarians nominated to also attend sessions in Strasbourg, predated Jenkins' presidency.[30] The crucial decisions in this regard had been taken at European Council level in 1974 and 1975, following a lengthy campaign by several member states, Italy in particular, and by the European parliamentarians themselves.[31] A substantial amount about how the first European elections would work, however, still remained to be decided. Furthermore, the European Commission would need to reinvent the manner in which it handled relations with the new directly elected and enlarged assembly,

[29] Revealingly one of the issues where Jenkins and Spierenburg failed to understand one another was on 'collegiality' within the Commission. JP, Box 386, entry for Thursday, 5 July 1979.

[30] Historians have yet to turn their attention properly to the emergence of much more active—and ultimately influential—parliament than might have been expected on the basis of the Treaty provisions. In the meantime a combination of 'official history' and political science work will have to do: European University Institute, *Building Parliament: 50 Years of European Parliament History* (Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2009); Berthold Rittberger, *Building Europe's Parliament: Democratic Representation beyond the Nation-State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

[31] The Conclusions of the Rome Council are available at http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/european-council/conclusions/1992-1975/. For the Paris summit a year earlier, see Emmanuel Mourlon-Druol, 'Filling the EEC Leadership Vacuum? The Creation of the European Council in 1974', *Cold War History* 10, no. 3 (August 2010): 315–39.

which was widely predicted to be more forceful and more demanding than its predecessors had been.[32]

Jenkins made clear from the outset that he was very much in favour of the move to direct elections, promising to treat the final indirectly elected assembly as if it were already directly elected, and referring to the imminent institutional change in a positive fashion in a series of public speeches.[33] He also led a systematic review by the Commission of the way in which it would have to adapt its working methods in order to adjust to a new and potentially more assertive parliament. In June 1979, a few days after the Community-wide vote, the Commission held a special meeting at Val Duchesse devoted wholly to relations with the new Parliament, with a paper by Jenkins as its centrepiece.[34] At this meeting and in its aftermath, decisions were taken on a new approach to answering parliamentary written questions, new rules outlined on the attendance of Commissioners in Strasbourg, and steps taken to form a Parliamentary Affairs group, with a representative nominated by each Commissioner, to follow parliamentary developments with particular attention.[35] And special responsibility for handling relations with the Parliament was passed from the relatively lightweight Irish Commissioner, Richard Burke, to the rather more substantial figure of Lorenzo Natali.[36]

A similar message of how seriously—and positively—Jenkins and his Commission regarded the advent of direct elections, was conveyed by the president's two speeches to the new Parliament's opening session in July 1979. The first and the shorter of the two saluted Simone Veil's election as the president, welcomed her 'to one of the Community's smallest clubs, the union of Presidents', noted the significance of 'the first international elections in history', and underlined the contribution that the newly elected body could make:

> this Parliament, resting as it does on a wide public support and commanding a new democratic authority, represents an important evolution for

[32] For the Commission's internal assessment of what direct elections might mean, see ECHA, BDT 39/1986, Dossier 750, 'Quelque réflexions sur l'évolution des relations entre les institutions à la suite de l'élection des membres du Parlément Européen au suffrage universel direct', December 1978.

[33] See, for instance, his speech to the Federal Committee for European elections, Frankfurt, 24 April 1979. Available at http://aei.pitt.edu/11310/

[34] ECHA, COM(79) PV 519, 2ème partie, séance du 15 juin 1979; a copy of Jenkins' paper is in ECHA, BDT 39/1986, Dossier 759.

[35] ECHA, BDT 39/1986, Dossier 759, SEC (79) 1163, 9 July 1979.

[36] Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 461–3.

> the Community. It is right that it should exercise to the fullest possible extent its powers to question and to subject to criticism the way in which the Commission exercises its powers and the way in which the Council of Ministers reaches or does not reach decisions.
>
> We need the spur of constructive advice and imagination and we will welcome all your efforts in that direction. It is right too that the Parliament, as a major partner with the Commission and the Council in the formulation of the Community's budget, should assert itself in the development of the financial muscle that underlies Community policies. This is an area of potentially great significance for the internal development of the Community where this House will have an essential influence. Equally it is right that the Parliament should aim to broaden the basis of popular support for the Community's institutions and create a greater sense of involvement in policies.

Jenkins therefore promised that the Commission would do all that it could 'to create and to sustain a positive and creative relationship with this House', before briefly outlining the various decisions that had just been taken by the Commission in order to make this possible.[37] The next day Jenkins returned to the floor of the Strasbourg Assembly to deliver a rather longer speech about Europe's prospects and the challenges ahead, designed to demonstrate how seriously the Commission viewed the new Parliament as a partner. This too ended with an optimistic assessment of the integration process and the cooperative role of the Commission and Parliament within it.[38]

The realities of cooperation with the directly elected Parliament were less comfortable, however, than Jenkins' ringing rhetoric implied. At a minor level, this reflected the somewhat chaotic and disorganised nature of an assembly many of whose members had no prior experience of European politics or of the challenges of working together in a multi-national, multi-lingual environment. The Commission president's diary for 1979 and 1980 abounds with instances where the time slot for his speeches or for the parliamentary questions to which he was meant to respond was shifted at the last minute with predictably disruptive effects given the distance between Brussels and Strasbourg, to say nothing of Jenkins' already packed schedule.[39] Simone Veil, furthermore, proved a distinctly more

[37] Statement to the Parliament by the Rt Hon Roy Jenkins, Wednesday, 18 July 1979, available at http://aei.pitt.edu/11342/

[38] The Right Hon Roy Jenkins address to the European Parliament, Thursday, 19 July 1979, available at http://aei.pitt.edu/11341/1/11341.pdf

[39] For example, Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 568.

eccentric interlocutor than Emilio Colombo, her immediate predecessor, had been.[40] Rather more serious, though, was the way in which the new Parliament's determined efforts to win greater powers to accompany its new democratic mandate inevitably harmed the Commission's interests. Never was this clearer than in December 1979 when the Parliament voted down the draft budget for 1980, leaving the European Commission, as the principal user of the budget, in a precarious and exposed position.[41]

Jenkins reacted to this parliamentary coup with a great deal of patience and *sang froid*. His short statement in the immediate aftermath of the negative vote was particularly well judged, regretting the decision but acknowledging that Parliament was acting within its rights:

> The train, if I may so put it, is temporarily off the tracks. The Commission will try to get it back again at what it judges to be the earliest favourable moment. For that it will require cooperation from both parts of the budgetary authority [i.e. both the Council and the Parliament].[42]

He also went out of his way to defend the MEPs' actions to those members of national governments inclined to condemn their actions as dangerous. To Francesco Cossiga, the Italian Prime Minister and someone who as holder of the rotating Council presidency in the first months of 1980 would be deeply involved in finding a resolution to the crisis, Jenkins insisted 'Parliament had not behaved unreasonably or irresponsibly.' A solution could certainly be found—and he believed Parliament wanted one. But the MEPs needed to be kept fully informed of the steps being taken to devise a new budgetary document. 'It was very important to avoid treating the parliamentarians as children who had to leave the room when the grown-ups discussed serious matters.'[43]

[40] Ibid., 504–5.

[41] For a good account of Parliament's actions and motivations from an MEP centrally involved, see Robert Jackson, '"And Now We Are One": The First Year of the European Parliament', in *European Yearbook 1979*, ed. Council of Europe (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1981), 55–70.

[42] Official Journal of the European Communities, Debates of the European Parliament, 1979–1980 session, report of proceedings from 10 to 14 December 1979, 201. Available at http://aei.pitt.edu/65007/1/B2796.pdf. See also Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 537–8.

[43] TP, File 18, 'Meetings and Conversations, April 1979 to December 1980', record of a conversation over lunch given by the President of the Italian Council of Ministers for the President of the European Commission, Palazzo Chigi, Rome, 11 January 1980.

There was no escape, however, from the fact that the new Parliament tended to be awkward and prickly to deal with. The Commission was hence frequently on the defensive in its interaction with the new Strasbourg assembly, forced to account for its actions and justify itself rather than able to seize the rhetorical or political high ground. This applied in the autumn of 1979 as the long and embarrassing row over Commission expenses reached its conclusion.[44] It applied again in early 1980 as Tugendhat in particular had to work hard to identify a way out of the impasse caused by the rejection of the budget. And the testy rapport between the Commission and Parliament would add a further level of complexity to the British budgetary affair that will be the centrepiece of the next chapter, since many MEPs made clear their suspicions that neither a British Commission president, nor his British Commissioner responsible for budgetary affairs, could be expected to deal impartially with the UK quest to reduce its contribution to the Community budget.[45]

At a fundamental level, moreover, Jenkins and the Commission could do little to address the heart of parliamentary discontent which was the institution's relative powerlessness within the Community system. The Commission president could indicate his support for some of the changes that Parliament was pressing for. He crossed swords for instance with the French Foreign Minister over the question of whether the President of the European Council should appear before the Parliament—something that Giscard was particularly loath to do—snapping back when Jean François-Poncet observed that there was nothing in the Treaty of Rome requiring this, that there was nothing in the Treaty of Rome about the existence of the European Council either.[46] He also held a serious conversation with the Irish Taoiseach during the Irish presidency about whether the Irish leader should take the plunge and set a precedent by visiting Strasbourg in the aftermath of the Dublin Council, making very clear in the process that this would be a move that he supported.[47] He took a similar line with Cossiga during the Italian

[44] For the final stages of this see Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 508 and 512–13.

[45] Interview with Christopher Tugendhat, 17 August 2010, available at http://archives.eui.eu/en/oral_history/INT286

[46] TP, File 15, 'European Councils, Record of Informal Meeting of Foreign Ministers', Echternach, 25 October 1980.

[47] TP, File 18, 'Meetings and Conversations, April 1979 to December 1980', call of the President of the Commission on the Irish Prime Minister, Dublin, 26 November 1979.

presidency.[48] Likewise, he made clear to the Dutch his view that some way should be found to involve Parliament much more in the choice of his successor as president of the Commission.[49] But substantial new powers for the Parliament would require Treaty change, and this was something that only the member states and not the European Commission could provide. And as the 1980s began, it was clear that the mood of the member states was not very open to any form of Treaty change, let alone an increase in the European Parliament's powers or responsibilities. The Commission was thus likely to go on being caught in the crossfire of an increasingly bitter confrontation between Strasbourg and the member states, with little capacity to sway the outcome one way or the other, and with scant short-term prospects of the row being resolved.[50] All too typically, Jenkins' very last interaction with the Parliament would be a crisis breakfast meeting in December 1980 which just managed to avert another rejection of the Community budget.[51] It would only be in 1985 with the negotiation of the Single European Act that a serious step in the direction of greater power for the Parliament would be taken.

All of this meant that responding to the direct elections could not really become the defining task of the second half of Jenkins' term. Although an issue of importance to his Commission, it was not something that either he or his colleagues had very much capacity to solve, since the institutional changes needed were not within the Commission's gift. It also can be doubted whether this was the type of issue that was likely most to excite Jenkins. As Robert Marjolin perceptively observed (and Jenkins chose to report) when asked by Jenkins whether he might be interested in chairing the planned review team on the Commission, 'Like you, I am interested in policy not in organization.'[52] Jenkins could, when needed, turn his mind to institutional matters, and on the whole showed judgement and sense when doing so. But the details of how the Community system worked were not the type of issues that most appealed to him, and as such neither Commission reform nor a response to the direct elections were well-suited

[48] Ibid., record of a conversation between the President of the European Commission and the Italian President of the Council of Ministers, Rome, 18 February 1980.

[49] Ibid., record of a meeting between the President of the European Commission and the Netherlands Foreign Minister, 10 rue de Praetère, 31 March 1980.

[50] Bussière et al., *The European Commission 1973–86*, 231–41.

[51] Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 656.

[52] Ibid., 310.

to replace monetary union as the defining task for 1979 and 1980. A new key policy was needed instead.

Slaying Europe's Sacred Cow?

The most obvious policy area for Jenkins to act were he to underline his reformist intent would be agriculture. Europe's complex, expensive, and highly protectionist Common Agricultural Policy had long been the object of criticism, scorn, or even derision within Britain.[53] Few British pro-Europeans had ever mounted much of a defence of the policy: their standard line when talking about agriculture in the debates about British membership of the 1960s and 1970s had been to rebut some of the wilder claims about the damage that the CAP was likely to cause, to explain how the policy had been an unfortunate necessity to get the integration process of the ground, and to maintain that Britain's best chance of adapting, if not cutting back, the costly support system was to seek to change the CAP from within.[54] A British presidency of the European Commission surely offered the best possible chance for this change from within to be realised?

Nor was it just cynical British observers who believed that the CAP needed to be reformed. By the late 1970s, the agricultural support system was widely recognised as a policy in danger of running out of control. Overall expenditure on agricultural support had risen sharply throughout the decade: in 1973, the first year of the enlarged nine-member Community, the 'guarantee' section of the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF) had cost 3614.4 million units of account (MEUA); 3 years later, in the final year of the Ortoli presidency, the cost had been 5636.7; in the course of the Jenkins years it would more than double, peaking at 11,291.9 MEUA in 1980.[55] Such

[53] For a flavour see the Centre for Contemporary British History oral history conference on 'British Agriculture and the UK Applications to Join the EEC', ed. Michael Kandiah, 2008. Available at http://www.kcl.ac.uk/sspp/departments/icbh/witness/PDFfiles/Agriculture.pdf

[54] N. Piers Ludlow, 'Safeguarding British Identity or Betraying It? The Role of British "Tradition" in the Parliamentary Great Debate on EC Membership, October 1971', *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 53, no. 1 (January 2015): 11–13.

[55] Daniel Strasser, *The Finances of Europe: The Budgetary and Financial Law of the European Communities* (Luxembourg: Commission of the European Communities, 1992), 155. In this period, Community accounts were kept in the 'unit of account', a notional measure composed of a basket of European national currencies. In the early 1980s, UEAs would be replaced by ECUs.

constant upward movement triggered real doubts about the sustainability of the system. By 1980, Jenkins was making alarmist predictions about 'the bankruptcy of the Community within 18 months' unless price policy restraint were shown.[56] The effects of the CAP at the level of production of individual commodities were also unsatisfactory with costly surpluses triggering widespread criticism of wine and milk 'lakes' or butter and grain 'mountains'. These were expensive to store, costly to dispose of, and prone to attract complaint regardless of the methods used to rid the Community of its unwanted production. Dumping the material in the markets of the developing world had serious adverse effects on local producers; selling it at vastly reduced prices to the Soviet bloc was controversial in Cold War terms; and simply throwing it away was deemed horrendously wasteful.[57] As the Commission president observed to the Irish Prime Minister: 'the present surpluses simply had to be cut. There was no point in producing what people did not want.'[58] The runaway costs of agricultural support also aggravated two of the other preoccupations of the European Commission. They were a major factor in the European Parliament's rejection of the Community budget in December 1979, as MEPs had objected to the fact that huge portions of the overall budget were classed as 'obligatory' expenditure and were thus removed wholly from their control.[59] And they also were inextricably linked to the intractable problem of Britain's budgetary contribution, since the greater the percentage of the Community budget that was spent on agriculture, the greater the likely imbalance between the amount that the UK paid into Community coffers and the amount that it got back in the form of EEC expenditure within Britain.[60] This too gave the Commission a powerful incentive to seek to address the policy's underlying difficulties.

[56] TP, File 18, 'Meetings and Conversations, April 1979 to December 1980', record of a conversation between the President of the European Commission and the Italian Prime Minister, Italian Embassy, Brussels, 25 April 1980.

[57] For the former see Martin Rempe, 'Airy Promises: The Senegal and the EEC's Common Agricultural Policy in the 1960s', in *Fertile Ground for Europe? The History of European Integration and the Common Agricultural Policy since 1945*, ed. Kiran Patel (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2009), 221–40. For a testimony on the controversy surrounding butter sales, see Bussière et al., *The European Commission 1973–86*, 321.

[58] TP, File 18, 'Meetings and Conversations, April 1979 to December 1980', call of the President of the European Commission on the Irish Prime Minister, Dublin, 26 November 1979.

[59] Jackson, "And Now We Are One".

[60] See Chap. 8.

Jenkins and his immediate entourage talked extensively about launching a drive to reform the CAP. They were after all well equipped to do this, with Graham Avery having the sort of specialist knowledge on the subject that would have allowed him to play a role akin to that played by Michael Emerson on monetary issues. Agriculture was thus discussed as an alternative to action in the monetary field at the 1977 East Hendred gathering of the Jenkins *cabinet*.[61] It was talked about once more in the equivalent meeting in 1978.[62] And it was considered yet again in both 1979 and 1980.[63] Such talk within Jenkins' inner team was matched by consideration of the issue amongst the wider Commission. What to do about the CAP featured prominently on the agenda of all of the key Commission away-days held between 1977 and 1980.[64] In part this reflected the fact the Commission believed itself to have been given a mandate by the European Council in Bremen in June 1978 to re-examine the workings of the agricultural support system and to discuss how the surpluses in particular could be eliminated.[65] Oddly, though, the official presidency conclusions of the Bremen Council contain no reference to this.[66] It is clear nonetheless that several national leaders, including Helmut Schmidt in particular, harboured serious concerns about the costs and distorting effects of the CAP. In November 1979, for example, the German Chancellor told Jenkins that: 'He would like the Commission in its proposal to put forward ideas for reducing expenditure on the main products in surplus.'[67] Any sustained effort to reform the policy would therefore have enjoyed some heavyweight allies from the outset.

[61] See Chap. 5.

[62] TP, File 17, 'Meetings and Conversations, 1978 to March 1979', meeting at East Hendred, 31 July 1978.

[63] TP, File 18, 'Meetings and Conversations, April 1979 to December 1980', informal meeting of the cabinet, Monday, 30 July 1979, and ibid., informal meeting of the cabinet, Monday, 28 July 1980.

[64] ECHA, COM (77) PV 442, 2ème partie (séance du 18 septembre 1977); COM (78) PV 485, 2ème partie, session du 17 septembre 1978; PV (79) 530 final, 3ème partie, 6 and 7 October 1979; COM (80) PV 575 final, 3ème partie, 11 October 1980.

[65] ECHA, COM (78) PV 485, 2ème partie, session du 17 septembre 1978.

[66] The European Council conclusions are available at http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/search/?q=Bremen&search=search

[67] TP, File 18, 'Meetings and Conversations, April 1979 to December 1980', conversation between the President of the European Commission and the Federal German Chancellor, 7 November 1979.

The obstacles to large-scale CAP reform, however, were every bit as formidable as the incentives to act. They began within the Commission itself, and included Gundelach himself and the massed ranks of DGVI, still one of the largest and most prestigious Directorates General. The Danish Commissioner for agriculture and the numerous experts employed with DGVI were not necessarily hostile to any alteration of the Community farm support system. On the contrary, much of their workload centred on the constant fine-tuning of the CAP, and on the task of adapting the policy to an ever-changing political and economic context. Their extensive, and moderately successful, effort during the latter half of the 1970s to improve the relative position of those southern European farmers producing so-called 'Mediterranean' products—i.e. olive oil, citrus fruits, and wine—would be a striking example of their readiness to embrace change. But adaptation was one thing; root and branch reform quite another. Any attempt seriously to challenge the centrality of the CAP within the Community system, to cut back significantly the staggering 70 % or so of the EEC budget devoted to agricultural support, or to dispute the underlying principles of the CAP such as Community preference, would have been fiercely and formidably resisted. Nor would Gundelach have lacked internal allies in any such fight. Another of the four horsemen, Ortoli, would most certainly have ridden to his aid, as would, on grounds of nationality alone, Claude Cheysson, the other French Commissioner, and his Dutch and Irish counterparts.[68] Several other Commissioners would also have had severe qualms about too sweeping an attack on what remained the Community's most prominent and integrated policy. To have pushed for anything more than the gradual adaptation of the CAP would have been, in terms of the internal politics of the Commission, a much bloodier and more brutal battle for Jenkins than the skirmishing with Ortoli in 1977 and 1978 over the tactics and objectives of the push for monetary integration.

The forces ranged against widescale reform at member state level would be equally daunting. Needless to say the British government would most probably have been supportive of any serious attempt substantially

[68] For an indication of the sort of situation Jenkins might have found himself in, had he tried to be radical see Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 566. Cheysson's views on the CAP emerge from a document he drew up on 'Europe's political priorities' at the very start of the Jenkins presidency. ECHA, SEC (77) 238, 11 January 1977.

to amend and prune the CAP.[69] But whereas it was almost certain that those countries that did well out of the system—the Dutch, the Danes, the Irish, and the French—would have fought tooth and nail to protect the core features of the existing policy, it was not at all clear that those who sometimes appeared more open to CAP reform would actually translate such a readiness to contemplate a reconfiguration of the system into actual political support. The Italians would be a case in point. Much of the Italian political class felt, with some justification, that their country had done poorly out of the CAP since the start of its operation in the early 1960s, largely because the subsidy system had been heavily tilted towards 'northern' produce like milk, grain, and beef, rather than the typical output of Mediterranean agriculture.[70] Because of the Italians' pattern of food imports, furthermore, they continued to pay into the EEC rather more than would have been expected on the basis of their per capita wealth. But whether such discontent would have made them reliable allies in a battle radically to change the CAP, let alone cut back its size, was much more open to doubt. After all, Italy still had a larger percentage of its population engaged in agriculture than any other member state.[71] Rome's main concern was thus a rebalancing of the system, a levelling up of Mediterranean agricultural support to levels more similar to that for 'northern' products, rather than any effort to scale back overall agricultural support. Unlike Britain, Italy had no reason to reject the idea of supporting European agricultural production against the rigours of global competition, or of supporting the incomes of those who chose to continue working the land.[72] Nor would Germany be any more reliable an ally. For a start Germany had a long track record of complaining about the CAP, especially when talking to those like the British or Americans who were likely to agree, only to fall short of fighting for large-scale change when decisions actually needed

[69] Margaret Thatcher left little doubt about her contempt for the policy. See, for example, TP, File 18, 'Meetings and Conversations, April 1979 to December 1980', record of a conversation between the President of the European Commission and the British Prime Minister, Number 10 Downing Street, London, 21 May 1979. But her predecessor's views on this would have been very similar.

[70] For an analysis of the problem in the early years of the CAP, see N. Piers Ludlow, *The European Community and the Crises of the 1960s: Negotiating the Gaullist Challenge* (London: Routledge, 2006), 62–64.

[71] 16.7 % of the Italian labour force was employed in agriculture in 1975; the equivalent figure for France was 12.9 %: see https://research.stlouisfed.org/fred2/series/ITAPEMANA

[72] For the 'social' roots of the CAP see Ann-Christina L. Knudsen, *Farmers on Welfare: The Making of Europe's Common Agricultural Policy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009).

to be taken.[73] Second, the internal politics of CAP reform in Germany were always likely to be complex given that German farmers actually did very well out of the existing system and were well enough organised to ensure that their political rulers were acutely aware of this fact.[74] There was hence unlikely to be unanimity in favour of a major alteration, even within an SPD-led government. And third, Germany's interest in containing expenditure on agricultural subsidies collided head-on with the underlying priority of Bonn's European policy which was close partnership with Paris.[75] Jenkins' slightly weary comment to Mrs Thatcher that 'Herr Schmidt was always barking at the Common Agricultural Policy but unfortunately his bark was worse than his bite' was largely justified by Germany and Schmidt's track record on the issue.[76]

In the circumstances it was unsurprising that Jenkins and his team were cautious rather than bold when it came to CAP reform. Some alterations to the Community's central policy were made during the 1977–80 period. The most important of these was almost certainly the introduction of a system of co-responsibility levies on milk production in 1977, and then the reinforcement of this system 3 years later. Such levies, forerunners of the full milk quotas introduced later in the 1980s, constituted an important, if very limited, departure from the notion that the Community would cover the whole costs of surplus agricultural production, regardless of the sums involved. Instead, farmers whose milk production rose would find themselves paying a levy on the additional output thereby significantly reducing the incentive to over-produce.[77] Elsewhere, the Commission pressed hard for a 'prudent price policy', designed to curb the rise of the commodity prices guaranteed to Community famers and limit both EEC agricultural production and the size of the agricultural surpluses. In 1978, for instance, the Commission pressed for an average agricultural commodity

[73] N. Piers Ludlow, 'The Making of the CAP: Towards a Historical Analysis of the EU's First Major Policy', *Contemporary European History* 14, no. 3 (2005): 347–71.

[74] For the background see Kiran Klaus Patel, *Europäisierung wider Willen: Die Bundesrepublik Deutschland in der Agrarintegration der EWG 1955–1973* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2009), 494.

[75] Jürgen Elvert, 'Die Europapolitik Der Bundesrepublik Deutschland in Der Zeit Der Kanzlerschaft Helmut Schmidts (1974–1982)', in *Quelles Architectures Pour Quelle Europe?*, ed. Sylvain Schirmann (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2011), 205–27.

[76] TP, File 18, 'Meetings and Conversations, April 1979 to December 1980', call of the President of the European Commission on the British Prime Minister, Number 10 Downing Street, 22 October 1979.

[77] Bussière et al., *The European Commission 1973–86*, 322–5.

price rise of 2 %, a figure which at a time of high inflation was tantamount to a price cut.[78] And from the same year a determined effort was made to phase out the so-called Monetary Compensatory Amounts (MCAs), an instrument introduced in the early 1970s to shield the CAP and the common price system that was meant to lie at its heart from the distorting effects of exchange rate fluctuations between the different European currencies. It was Jenkins' hope that one of the beneficial side-effects of the creation of the European Monetary System would be to remove the need for these complex compensatory mechanisms.[79] The Commission president also went on believing that the mounting budgetary pressures within the Community would make more extensive change to the CAP inevitable in the medium term. There was thus a residual element of optimism about agricultural expenditure in the final East Hendred meeting of the cabinet.[80] But any significant change would not occur on Jenkins' watch.

Actually delivering even a modest set of alterations to the CAP would not prove easy, however. The co-responsibility levies were introduced, although initially set at so low a level that they had little immediate effect. It would not be until the 1980 readjustment that they began really to bite.[81] But Gundelach's efforts to persuade ministers of agriculture to accept 'prudent' prices were only partially successful, with the final level of commodity prices set substantially above that recommended by the Commission throughout the Jenkins years. Nor did the push to get rid of the MCAs fare much better, since countries whose currencies were strong (especially the Federal Republic of Germany and the Netherlands) had become highly reliant on the MCAs as an additional source of revenue for their farmers, and were reluctant to wean their farmers off this supplement. The early EMS, furthermore, while limiting currency fluctuations within Europe, did not eliminate them altogether. The scrapping of MCAs would therefore not happen until 1984 when it formed part of a general package of financial measures agreed at the Fontainebleau Council in June.[82]

[78] European Community Information Service, Agricultural Background Note, 1/1978, 12 January 1978, available at http://aei.pitt.edu/60674/1/AgriBN_1.78.pdf. Jenkins had, however, wanted to go for a 1 per cent increase. Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 179.

[79] See Jenkins' speech to the Royal Agricultural Show, Stoneleigh, Kenilworth, 3 July 1978, available at http://aei.pitt.edu/12672/1/12672.pdf

[80] TP, File 18, 'Meetings and Conversations, April 1979 to December 1980', informal meeting of the cabinet, Monday, 28 July 1980.

[81] Bussière et al., *The European Commission 1973–86*, 322.

[82] Ibid., 320.

The Commission president's personal involvement in the push to make the CAP sustainable can be questioned, furthermore. Inevitably Jenkins did find himself handling aspects of the agricultural dossier, whether as part of his weekly duties chairing the meetings of the Commission, his role during Question Time at the European Parliament, or in his numerous conversations with ministers and leaders across the Community. Gundelach also needed a degree of support in his efforts to persuade reluctant farm ministers to accept lower price settlements than their national famers wanted. The entry for 18 January 1980, in the unpublished version of Jenkins' diary for instance recalls a 40-min conversation with the Agricultural Commissioner in which Jenkins tried 'to stiffen him up as much as I possibly could. He said he certainly hadn't ruled out a zero increase, but wasn't sure etc. thought however that he could do zero for butter. I said I was in favour of zero for the whole lot of products in surplus and it was much better to take a firm line. He said well, maybe he would, but went away nonetheless feeling doubtful.'[83] Similarly, the CAP needed to be explained and defended when Jenkins travelled outside of the EEC.[84] But there is little sense from either the *European Diary* or the files of the president's *cabinet* that Jenkins made the issue his own in the way that had happened with the EMS. On the contrary, the Commission president appears to have been happy to leave Gundelach to make most of the running on agricultural matters, even if the price of so doing was to make far-reaching reform unobtainable. To some extent this may well have reflected Jenkins' pre-existing expertise; as a former Chancellor of the Exchequer he already knew a substantial amount about monetary affairs and was confident of his ability to master the detail involved, whereas he had much less experience and prior knowledge of agricultural policy. There is a telling contrast between the repeated allusions in the *European Diary* to Gundelach's skill, even 'brilliance' in explaining aspects of the CAP, and the level of impatience that Jenkins had earlier displayed to Ortoli's approach to monetary integration.[85] Also significant may have been his judgement of how feasible substantial progress might be. On monetary matters he correctly realised that a significant step forward might be practical.

[83] JP, Box 379, entry for 18 January 1980.

[84] A good example would be TP, File 17, 'Meetings and Conversations, 1978 to March 1979', call by the President of the European Commission on the Canadian Secretary for External Affairs, Pearson Building, Ottawa, Wednesday, 8 March 1978.

[85] Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 313. For the rather less than complimentary references to Ortoli's approach, see Chap. 5.

Whether this was the case on agriculture was much less certain. But perhaps most importantly of all there is no evidence that the Commission president felt any real intellectual excitement about CAP reform, whereas it is very clear that he developed a strong commitment to monetary integration. Changing Europe's farm policy was hence never a real candidate to replace monetary integration as Jenkins' central policy priority. Instead it was a dossier that he had to engage with, since it formed so central a part of the Commission's activities, but with which he would not seek to deal with any more than was necessary effectively to do his job.

The Energy Challenge

Another major policy issue that Jenkins had to grapple with during the latter half of his presidency was energy. This was not a result of a deliberate choice. Energy did not, for instance, feature amongst the Commission priorities that were identified in 1978.[86] But it became an unavoidable priority in the wake of the Iranian Revolution of 1979 and the second oil shock, since the sudden rise in oil prices seriously threatened the West's recovery from economic recession. As a result, oil prices and what to do in response to their upward surge, became a key topic of discussion in every forum of Western cooperation, including the European Community. Rising oil prices also had potential knock-on effects on a whole series of issues that were already being dealt with by the Commission, including international trade, North–South relations, and intra-European currency movements. The Jenkins Commission therefore had no option other than to place energy policy at the centre of its concerns in 1979 and 1980.

When dealing with energy matters, the Commission was not wholly without relevant powers. Admittedly these were most extensive in the coal and atomic energy sectors—where the Commission benefited from the provisions of the European Coal and Steel Community treaty and that creating Euratom—and much less developed regarding oil. But given that part of the debate in 1979 and 1980 centred on the alternatives to oil and ways of reducing Western Europe's dependence on imports from the Middle East, leverage over the production of coal and atomic energy was

[86] It featured neither at East Hendred, nor at Comblain-la-Tour. TP, File 17, 'Meetings and Conversations, 1978 to March 1979', meeting at East Hendred, 31 July 1978; ECHA, COM (78) PV 485, 2ème partie.

of some value.[87] Still more important was the EEC's potential to coordinate the position of the Nine prior to both wider Western discussions, especially within the G7, and to dialogue with the oil producers themselves.[88] In addition it was possible to envisage the European structures being used to pool oil reserves or to set joint targets for energy diversification. It was also the case that US government seemed keen to encourage Europe to become more united on this issue, and to promote a strong Commission role.[89]

There was thus some logic to the Commission's activism in this area in the course of Jenkins' final 2 years in Brussels. The Commission was, for instance, centrally involved in the Community decision at the Strasbourg Council of June 1989 to commit the EEC member states to levels of oil imports for the 1980–5 period no higher than the total imports for 1978.[90] This European commitment fed directly into the global energy consumption targets set at the Tokyo G7 summit later that month.[91] A further Commission paper on energy was submitted to the Dublin Council in December 1979, this time making a range of suggestions including steps to raise European coal production, ideas about how the various national energy saving programmes might be better coordinated, and a plea to reverse 'the slippage' occurring in several member states' development of nuclear energy.[92] Energy policy and the need for a collective European response began to feature prominently in all of Jenkins' programmatic speeches during this period.[93]

Once again, however, there were serious problems about making energy policy the key priority of the latter half of Jenkins' presidency. The identity

[87] Bussière et al., *The European Commission 1973–86*, 379–80.

[88] Ibid., 382–3.

[89] See, for instance, Carter's letter to Jenkins on 12 March 1980. It seems likely from the text that very similar messages were sent to all of the participants in G7 meetings. But it is still of some significance that Jenkins was included in the circulation list. TP, File 12, 'Float, February to July 1980', Carter to Jenkins, 12 March 1980.

[90] The Commission paper on which the Council decision was based was COM (79) 316 final, 14 June 1979, available at http://aei.pitt.edu/31880/1/COM_(79)_316_final.pdf

[91] Robert D. Putnam and Nicholas Bayne, *Hanging Together: The Seven-Power Summits* (London: Heinemann for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1984), 113–18.

[92] COM (79) 682 final, 22 November 1979. Available at http://aei.pitt.edu/1513/1/energy_policy_COM_79_682.pdf

[93] The second of his two speeches delivered to the inaugural session of the new European Parliament would be a case in point: The Right Hon Roy Jenkins address to the European Parliament, Thursday, 19 July 1979, available at http://aei.pitt.edu/11341/1/11341.pdf

of the Commissioner responsible was one such, since Guido Brunner to whom the energy portfolio had been given was not someone whom the president rated highly.[94] A truly dynamic Commission response would most probably have required Jenkins to assume prime responsibility for the policy field himself—something he showed no inclination to do. Matters were made worse by the fact that Len Williams, the British Director General of DGXVII (Energy) made clear in early 1980 that he wished to leave the Commission, triggering a prolonged period of uncertainty about who would be running this most topically relevant part of the bureaucracy.[95] And then in the summer of 1980, Brunner himself announced his intention of standing as an FDP candidate in the Bundestag elections planned for October and his need to step down from his Commission duties as a result.[96] Brunner's responsibilities had to be redistributed amongst other Commissioners for the remainder of his term. At the very time that the Commission ought to have been providing leadership on the energy issue, it was struggling to maintain a full complement of relevant officials!

Rather more fundamentally, the Commission's odd assortment of powers in the energy field fell far short of what would have been necessary to devise a comprehensive response to the oil shock, in the absence of a strong degree of member state consensus about what needed to be done. Realistically, the Commission could only have become a very central actor in the field of energy policy, had the member states agreed to devise a Common Energy Policy, and allocated important supervisory powers in this sector to the Commission. But while all European governments could accept that something needed to happen at the Community level in the energy sector, securing agreement as to what this should be was much more difficult. States varied widely in their attitudes towards different types of energy generation (some much more favourable towards nuclear energy for instance, others fairly hostile), over the degree of state control desirable in the sector, and towards cooperation with other major consumer powers (the United States first and foremost) or with the producer countries. By the late 1970s there was also a growing gulf between countries such as Britain and the Netherlands which had access to oil and/

[94] Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 143. The unpublished diary contains rather more comments in a similar vein.

[95] TP, File 12, 'Float, February to July 1980', Tickell to Jenkins, 'The Williams Affair', 26 March 1980.

[96] Ibid., Tickell to Jenkins, 'Commissioner Brunner', 1 July 1980.

or gas reserves, and the majority of EEC member states which did not. Establishing a common policy capable of bridging such divergent interests would prove an impossible task. Instead, the vast majority of energy policy decisions in Western Europe went on being taken at a national level, with the Commission able to do little more than issue periodic pleas for coordination and harmonisation.

A Gradual Loss of Dynamism?

The lack of a single prevailing policy concern in the latter part of Jenkins' presidency does not mean, of course, that either the Commission or its president was inactive during these years. As this chapter should have made clear, this was far from the case with plenty happening on Commission reform, the response to the European Parliament's direct elections, and agricultural and energy policy. The Commission continued, moreover, to show significant commitment throughout 1979 and 1980 to ongoing priorities like enlargement and international diplomacy discussed in the previous chapter. And there is plenty more that would have to be included in a comprehensive catalogue of Jenkins' activities during this period, let alone a list of what the Commission more widely was engaged in. The late 1970s, for instance, was a period when substantial work was already under way in Brussels on measures designed to combat Europe's growing backwardness in high-technology industries, especially telecommunications and computers, vis-à-vis both the United States and Japan.[97] Likewise, the outline of a plan to tackle the growing number of non-tariff barriers that were clogging up Europe's common market was already under discussion within DGIII (Internal Market and Industrial Affairs). Indeed the link between the two issues was already perceived. Jenkins told Giscard in November 1980, for instance, 'What the Commission was proposing was the setting of accepted standards within the Community and the creation of a single market to enable the Community to match the scale of the American and Japanese markets. Otherwise he feared that present trends [towards technological backwardness] would continue and Europe would fall further and further behind.'[98] Both the construction of

[97] Laer, 'Vers une politique industrielle commune'.

[98] TP, File 18, 'Meetings and Conversations, April 1979 to December 1980', record of a conversation between the President of the European Commission and the President of the French Republic, Elysée, 26 November 1980.

a single market and the bid to redress Europe's technological backwardness would become key components in the rediscovered dynamism of the integration process in the mid to late 1980s.[99] Jenkins moreover deserves some credit for placing the dynamic figure of Étienne Davignon in charge of a combined portfolio comprising industry and the internal market and hence in a position to encourage both developments.

What this lack of a central policy priority did mean, however, was a return to a pattern of the Commission in general and its president in particular reacting to events rather than determining them which had been characteristic of Jenkins' first months in Brussels. This was already apparent in Jenkins' handling of the energy issue detailed above. To some extent too it applied to much of Jenkins' approach to agriculture and the containment of the costs and over-production of the CAP. And it would be true, most clearly of all, of the last great controversy of Jenkins' time in Brussels, namely the row over Britain's budgetary contribution which will lie at the heart of the next and final chapter. None were battles that Jenkins chose to fight; but all, and most especially the last, would come to dominate his final months in Brussels.

There was also a degree of appropriateness that Jenkins' final confrontation should be over an issue so closely connected with Britain. For the 1979–80 period was also the time when the Commission president made up his mind not to seek a second term but instead to essay a return to British politics. This decision, most probably taken towards the middle of 1979, did not immediately damage his position, since he was careful not to disclose at once the fact that he would not be remaining in Brussels beyond 1980.[100] Jenkins' own focus, however, would increasingly turn back to British affairs during the 1979–80 period. The failure to choose a new European policy priority to replace monetary integration was thus not simply a reflection of the lack of suitable alternatives, but instead an indication of how Jenkins' priorities and energies had already begun to shift elsewhere.

[99] Andrew Moravcsik, 'Negotiating the Single European Act: National Interests and Conventional Statecraft in the European Community', *International Organization* 45, no. 1 (January 1991): 19–56; Wayne Sandholtz and John Zysman, '1992: Recasting the European Bargain', *World Politics* 42, no. 1 (October 1989): 95–128.

[100] Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 377.

CHAPTER 8

The Curse of British Politics: Thatcher, the British Budgetary Dispute, and the Lure of Domestic Politics

Roy Jenkins was a very British president throughout his time in Brussels. This applied to his immediate entourage within the Commission. It applied to his methods of working. It applied to his social life. It applied to his pattern of travel. And it applied to his relations with the press. During his early years as president, however, this was more of an advantage than a disadvantage. The infusion of certain British (or more specifically Whitehall) working methods into a Commission still shaped primarily by French and German administrative traditions was largely beneficial for the whole organisation, as was the spectacle of a very recognisable and prominent British politician performing on the European and world stages as leader of the Commission. If the presence of British influence at the very heart of the European institutional system allowed a quicker and better response to various UK frustrations with the integration process, so much the better.

In the latter stages of the Jenkins' presidency, however, this Britishness started becoming rather more of a problem. In part this reflected the growing disappointment of Jenkins' hopes that his presence in Brussels might help smooth the UK's troubled relations with Europe. Labour's decision to stay outside of the EMS was one disturbing sign; the persistence of a series of low-level skirmishes over agriculture, industrial policy, fish, and the role of the Commission another. The Conservatives' victory in the May 1979 British general election briefly promised to alter the situation. Even Margaret Thatcher tried hard to sound pro-European in

N.P. Ludlow, *Roy Jenkins and the European Commission Presidency, 1976–1980*, DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-51530-8_8

her initial meetings with Jenkins, while both Peter Carrington and Ian Gilmour were Foreign Office ministers who had strong pro-European views and enjoyed a friendly rapport with the Commission president. But the rapid emergence of the confrontation over Britain's contribution to the Community budget soon put paid to such hopes and ensured that the dominant pattern of British/European discord reappeared. Also awkward for Jenkins was the way in which the budgetary row cast doubt over his own impartiality. As he himself conceded, even his allies elsewhere in Europe began to question whether the Commission president's stance was truly neutral or instead reflected his national origins.[1]

Also problematic during 1979 and 1980 were the effects on Jenkins of the siren call of British politics. The dramatic change to the British domestic political landscape brought about by Jim Callaghan's defeat and Thatcher's victory encouraged Jenkins, who had earlier seen no real hope of a domestic political return, to begin once again to engage with the British political process. The process that would lead to his involvement with the launch of the Social Democratic Party in 1981 had begun.[2] As far as his presidency was concerned, this mattered in at least two ways. First of all it helped confirm in his mind that he would seek to serve just the one term in Brussels. This in itself lessened his effectiveness in what he now knew would be his final 18 months or so at the Commission. There was little point in launching bold new initiatives if there was no time to carry them through. Second, it meant that in 1980 an increasing amount of his energy and attention, if not yet time, were wrapped up in plotting a return to British politics rather than running the European Commission. It would be an undoubted exaggeration to talk about Jenkins' presidency effectively coming to an end with the 29–30 May 1980 deal on the British budgetary question. But there was a very strong sense of winding down apparent in Jenkins' final 6 months in Brussels, although perhaps not quite as much as an initial reading of the *European Diary* would suggest.

A Very British President

In his first biography of Jenkins, written in 1983, John Campbell speculated that one of the weaknesses of the presidency may have been the extent to which Jenkins surrounded himself with British-trained staff thereby

[1] Roy Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981* (London: Collins, 1989), 546.

[2] Ivor Crewe and Anthony King, *SDP: The Birth, Life and Death of the Social Democratic Party* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 52–70.

insulating himself from the rest of the European Commission.[3] At first sight it seems a little unfair to talk of this as either unusual or a weakness. Most Commissioners staff their *cabinets* primarily with fellow-countrymen and often with a good number who are new to the Commission. In this sense Jenkins was doing no more than following a time-honoured tradition. Furthermore, a number of the positive effects of the Jenkins presidency on the way in which the Commission operated were attributable precisely to the presence at the heart of the system of a number of highly professional UK civil servants. The very quality of the records on which this book relies, for instance, is a lasting reminder of the moment when the president's private office was run as if it were in Whitehall. But Campbell's description was certainly accurate in that those with whom Jenkins worked most closely in the Commission were mainly British, and in many cases working inside the Brussels bureaucracy for the first time. And those members of the *cabinet* who were not British, very rapidly assimilated. This was true of their working practices, with Michel Vanden Abeele, Étienne Reuter, and Klaus Ebermann quickly learning to write records of Jenkins' meetings and conversations every bit as full and as comprehensive as those produced by Crispin Tickell, Hayden Phillips, or Nick Stuart. But it seems to have spread even more widely. When interviewed recently for the Commission history project, Vanden Abeele recalled with pleasure his trips to East Hendred for the annual *cabinet* get-together where he was introduced to croquet, and the way in which he began buying his suits from Savile Row.[4] When at work therefore Jenkins was to some extent shielded from the multiple nationalities and multi-lingual nature of the organisation that he headed.

What was perhaps a little more unusual was the extent to which this Anglophone and British bubble extended to Jenkins' very active social life. As becomes abundantly clear from both Campbell's second, much fuller biography, and from the *European Diary*, dinner-time conversation was something that mattered immensely to Jenkins.[5] Indeed, he hated

[3] John Campbell, *Roy Jenkins: A Biography* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1983), 184–185.

[4] Interview of Michel Vanden Abeele by Christian Van der Velde, 30 November 2010, available at http://archives.eui.eu/en/oral_history/INT294. In the interview Vanden Abeele actually talks about being introduced to cricket not croquet at East Hendred, but as Jenkins was a very keen croquet player but not really a cricketer at all, it seems likely that either the interviewee was confusing his English pastimes or the person who did the transcription misheard the recording.

[5] John Campbell, *Roy Jenkins: A Well-Rounded Life* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2014); Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*.

dining alone. Given that Jennifer, his wife, was still working in Britain and hence away from Brussels more often than not, this meant that the responsibility of keeping Jenkins company for those evening meals when he did not have an official engagement tended to fall to those members of his *cabinet* with whom he was closest. In the first 2 years this tended to mean Hayden Phillips and Laura Grenfell; when they both left, Phillips in 1978, Grenfell the following year, their role was taken up by a combination of the Tickells, Michael Jenkins, Nick Stuart, Penelope Duckham, and sometimes Pauline Neville-Jones from Christopher Tugendhat's *cabinet*.[6] This weekday evening companionship was flanked with multiple, primarily British Brussels dinner parties, populated largely either by other expatriates or by the many friends who came out to stay at rue Praetère.

This is not to say that Jenkins shunned all non-British company. There were plenty of official dinners at which the president would sit next to Commission colleagues, Brussels diplomats, visiting dignitaries, or their spouses. Jenkins made a habit, for instance, of dining regularly with the foreign minister and permanent representative of whichever Community member state held the rotating presidency of the Council of Ministers.[7] And Jenkins' own guest list, whether at home or in Brussels or Strasbourg restaurants, quite often included not just the three horsemen, but a handful of other regular non-British guests, whether from the Commission or the diplomatic corps. Both the Beaumarchais and the Tinés—long-standing French friends—continued to figure prominently in Jenkins' engagement diary. But while Jenkins' French improved greatly during his time in Brussels, he still found it much more of an effort than conversing in English.[8] As a result, there was an understandable tilt towards the Anglophone—and more often than not the British—in the list of those whom he ate with regularly.

The frequency with which Jenkins returned to England reinforced this semi-insulation from non-British Brussels. At one level the fact that

[6] The number of times all of the above dined with Jenkins, but most especially Hayden Phillips and Laura Grenfell, can only really be gauged from the unedited version of the diary, since a lot of these quiet meals at rue de Praetère were pruned from the published version. The full version is now available in the Jenkins papers in the Bodleian Library, Oxford.

[7] See, for example, EHP, entry for 16 January 1978 which refers to a dinner with the incoming Danish presidency.

[8] The fact that the diary, especially the unpublished version, so frequently recorded when Jenkins had been obliged to speak in French over dinner, confirms that this went on being somewhat more demanding than talking in English.

Jenkins managed to spend at least one weekend in three in England, whether in his London house or more often at East Hendred, was unsurprising, especially as Jennifer was still working in England. Nor was it unique in Brussels. Emile Noël, the executive secretary and then secretary-general of the Commission from 1958 all the way through until 1986 famously returned to Paris most weekends; Ortoli was also known to head back frequently to the French capital. But it was striking nonetheless and enabled Jenkins to remain in close contact with his very extensive network of friends in England. Far from quiet weekends in the country, his trips back to England were characterised by a social life every bit as intensive as that in Brussels.[9] Also noticeable were the number of speaking engagements around Britain that Jenkins accepted or graduation ceremonies at British universities that he attended during the 4 years of his presidency—at least five UK universities awarded the Commission president an honorary degree during this 4-year period, and Jenkins not only attended the ceremony but dined and in most cases delivered a speech as well.[10] So while away from British life (and politics) professionally, Jenkins remained deeply embedded within the UK.

He also went on devoting a great deal of time to the British press.[11] That he still read it assiduously is not at all remarkable—once acquired, a politician's habits are unlikely to disappear rapidly. But after a poor start when the unsuccessful experiment with Ruggiero as spokesman alienated a significant part of the Brussels press corps, Jenkins got into the habit of lunching regularly with Brussels-based British journalists in an effort to win them over to his side.[12] Several British journalists also featured amongst the guests at dinners hosted by Jenkins, most often Brussels correspondents, but also including the editors of *The Economist*, *The Guardian*, and *The Sunday Times.*[13] And while president he continued to do a number of radio and television events for the BBC, most famously the Dimbleby Lecture which will be returned to below, but also an appearance on a radio phone-in show. Again this attention devoted to the British press did not entirely preclude giving interviews to correspondents of newspapers from elsewhere: the *Diary* records meetings with *Le Monde*'s

[9] For a colourful example, see Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 282.

[10] Ibid., 128, 281–2, 296–7, 356, 477.

[11] See entry for 23 January 1977 in the unpublished diary.

[12] According to the unpublished diary, the first such lunch seems to have been on 23 March 1977. For a later example, see the entry for 29 November 1978.

[13] Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 40–1, 201, 260.

Brussels correspondent, a journalist from a Japanese business paper, Emmanuelle Gazzo, the editor of *Agence Europe*, and several figures from the American press.[14] The imbalance was very clear nevertheless; Jenkins cared much more about how his presidency was covered in Britain than anywhere else.

In the first part of the presidency none of this appeared to matter that much. Jenkins had been appointed to the job as a heavyweight national politician, and the fact that he continued to live and to behave much as he had done while in his political prime in the UK should not have come as a total surprise. Nor was it necessarily harmful. On the contrary, Jenkins' determination to remain a prominent figure within Britain could be seen as the best way of beginning to convince the British public that EEC membership was delivering tangible benefits. After all, one of the difficulties in the British debate about Europe was the public's tendency to perceive the integration process as something run by other nationalities, largely for their own benefit. Coverage of Jenkins' presidency could begin to change this, and rid British rhetoric about Europe of its 'us versus them' adversarial tone. Likewise the courting of the British press made good strategic sense. Although in the late 1970s, the majority of British newspapers remained much more pro-European than they have since become, it was still worthwhile trying to ensure that UK newspapers fully understood how the Community functioned and paid enough attention to its actions.[15] Were they to do so, this too might help improve British public sentiment towards the EEC. A very British Commission president could be an asset, in other words, in altering the British views of the integration process.

The Persistence of the British Problem

Such optimism would prove to be largely misplaced, however, since as the presidency progressed there was no sign of improvement in the British approach to Europe. The trend, indeed, seemed to be in the other direction entirely. At first, admittedly, the difficulties were mainly associated with the handful of ministers in the Callaghan government known for their Eurosceptic views. It was no great surprise that Tony Benn as Minister for

[14] Ibid., 93 and 114. See entry for 17 March 1977 in unpublished diary for the *Washington Post*.

[15] Oliver Daddow, 'The UK Media and "Europe": From Permissive Consensus to Destructive Dissent', *International Affairs* 88, no. 6 (November 2012): 1219–36.

Energy or John Silkin as Minister of Agriculture proved somewhat disruptive presences in their respective Councils.[16] The discovery that Jenkins' erstwhile ally David Owen, now Foreign Secretary, was also prone to tirades against European federalism and had suggested at Cabinet level that the British should promote 'a loose, confederal, non-dynamic, semi-free trade area EEC' was rather more unexpected.[17] But the real disappointment was to come with Callaghan's decision that Britain would not participate in the EMS.[18] This new British 'no' to a European project was far from a total surprise of course. Ever since Jenkins had first involved himself in the debate about monetary integration it had been recognised that the UK was the member state least likely to take part.[19] And in the short term at least, the disappointment at the Labour government's decision was counter-balanced by the Commission president's satisfaction that the eight other Community member states had decided to take part. For a president who had hoped fundamentally to alter the tone of the British debate about its participation in the integration process, it was nevertheless a significant blow to see his country opt out of the most ambitious European initiative of the period.

The Conservative Party's victory in the May 1979 British general election briefly gave grounds for the hope that the mood music between London and Brussels might alter for the better. Peter Carrington's appointment as Foreign Secretary was a particularly promising sign, as Carrington had a solid reputation as a pro-European and was also someone with whom Jenkins got on very well.[20] Just days after the election, the two men shared a flight to the Château Mercuès in the south-west of France where the French presidency had organised an informal meeting of the Community foreign ministers, an event that would mark the new foreign secretary's debut within the EEC. En route, Jenkins was able to persuade Carrington of the value of making a really positive statement

[16] TP, File 8, 'Float, March–August 1978', Tickell to Phillips, 5 June 1978. Gundelach identified Silkin as the second most dislikable member of the Agricultural Council, pipped to the post by his German counterpart, Josef Ertl. Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 334.

[17] TP, File 7, 'Float, October 1977 to February 1978', Tickell to Jenkins, 'Dr Owen', 12 December 1977; Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 133–4.

[18] Edmund Dell, 'Britain and the Origins of the European Monetary System', *Contemporary European History* 3, no. 1 (1994): 1–60.

[19] See ECHA, SEC (77) 3125/2, 16 September 1977.

[20] Peter Carrington, *Reflect on Things Past: The Memoirs of Lord Carrington* (London: Collins, 1988).

about the new government's pro-European intent, something that the foreign secretary duly delivered and which was very well received by his fellow ministers.[21] Jenkins' first experience of working with the new UK government could hardly have been more positive. Also encouraging was the fact that Ian Gilmour, another pro-European and an even closer friend of Jenkins, had been made a Foreign Office minister, albeit initially with a brief to focus on the solution to the Rhodesian crisis.[22]

More pleasing still were Thatcher's efforts to affirm the pro-European attitude of her government. Jenkins had twice seen Thatcher in the period prior to her election, the second time when the Conservative Party leader had visited the Berlaymont. On each occasion, she had emphasised her intention of maintaining her party's traditional pro-European stance, without ever indicating how a Conservative government would differ from the Labour one on any matters of substance.[23] But the manner in which she opened her first meeting as Prime Minister with Jenkins was nonetheless striking:

> Mrs Thatcher said that her Government had inherited from the Macmillan and Heath Government a fundamentally favourable attitude towards British membership of the European Community. She herself believed in the Community and wanted to make it work well. The British had to operate within its framework to achieve British as well as Community ends. It would be catastrophic for Britain to be outside.

Jenkins readily agreed, noting a little later in the meeting how much the UK had paid for its earlier exclusion from European decision-making. Even the British budgetary question was in many ways an outcome of choices about how the EEC should be financed, having been made at a time when there was no British voice at the European table.[24] The Commission president's overall verdict in his diary of this first meeting with the new British leader was 'quite good and certainly friendly'.[25]

[21] Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 445–6.

[22] Jenkins had been friends with Gilmour since 1957: Campbell, *Roy Jenkins: A Well-Rounded Life*, 190–2; Ian Gilmour, *Dancing with Dogma: Britain under Thatcherism* (London and New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 225–32.

[23] Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 129–30 and 179–80.

[24] TP, File 18, 'Meetings and Conversations, April 1979 to December 1980', record of a conversation between the President of the European Commission and the British Prime Minister, Number 10 Downing Street, London, 21 May 1979.

[25] Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 450.

All too quickly, however, such positive signs were overwhelmed by the difficulties created by the row over how much the British should contribute to the Community budget. The issue was not a new one. Indeed it has even been claimed, not entirely convincingly, that the issue was that which ultimately sank Britain's very first attempt to join the EEC in the early 1960s.[26] How much the CAP would cost the UK, and how disadvantageous payments from Britain towards the EEC might prove for Britain's precarious balance of payments position was certainly a significant factor in the Wilson government's debate about British membership in the latter half of the 1960s.[27] The question was again central during the membership talks of 1970–1, featuring prominently amongst the points discussed by Edward Heath and Georges Pompidou in their famous May 1971 summit in Paris.[28] And it had been crucial in the 'renegotiation' of Britain's membership terms in 1974–5, the establishment of a 'financial mechanism' designed to correct Britain's excessive contribution to the EEC budget being one of the few tangible outcomes secured by Wilson's government as it sought to improve on the terms of membership agreed to by the previous government.[29] The controversy thus ran like a linking thread, from the very outset of Britain's tentative courtship of the EEC, through to the early 1980s and Thatcher's determined campaign 'to get her money back'.

It was also an issue that whoever won the 1979 election would have had to raise, given that from 1980 onwards the transitional arrangements that had been designed to smooth Britain's path into the EEC expired, confronting the UK with the full extent of the budgetary problem for the first time. Callaghan had been well aware of this fact and had alerted Jenkins prior to the election of his intention to raise the issue were Labour to emerge victorious. 'The British were not prepared to be the paymasters of

[26] Ann-Christina L. Knudsen, 'The Politics of Financing the Community and the Fate of the First British Membership Application', *Journal of European Integration History* 11, no. 2 (2005): 11–30.

[27] Helen Parr, *Britain's Policy Towards the European Community: Harold Wilson and Britain's World Role, 1964–1967* (London: Routledge, 2006), 134–5.

[28] Daniel Furby, 'The Revival and Success of Britain's Second Application for Membership of the European Community 1968–71' (Queen Mary University of London, 2009), 232–75.

[29] Stephen Wall, *The Official History of Britain and the European Community*, vol. 2: *From Rejection to Referendum, 1963–1975* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), 576–7.

Europe', he had warned.[30] In the event, however, it would fall to Thatcher and the Conservatives to deal with the problem rather than a Labour government.

So what was the British Budgetary Question (BBQ)—often redubbed in Brussels 'the Bloody British Question'?[31] And why had it proved so intractable? The roots of the problem went back to the way in which the Community was financed, a system which had been planned in the early 1960s, but had taken until 1970 to finalise, and the pattern of EEC expenditure. Both were uniquely disadvantageous to Britain. As far as income was concerned, the EEC benefited from 1970 onwards from what were known as 'own resources'—i.e. sources of revenue that would accrue automatically to the central budget without having to be decided upon collectively by the member states.[32] The acquisition of such 'own resources' had been regarded as a major step forward by the European Commission since the automatic nature of the revenue stream freed the European institutions from their previous dependence on an annual contribution from each member state—a type of income that each member could threaten to withhold.[33] Instead, money would flow into the Community's coffers automatically. In the 1970s such money came from three distinct sources. The first were customs receipts; the second were the proceeds of the levies imposed upon imported foodstuffs; and the third was a slice of the money that each member state raised through Value Added Tax (VAT). The British contributed unusually high sums in all three categories. As a country that still imported more manufactured products from outside of the Community, the British handed over more customs receipts than any of their counterparts. According to Commission estimates for 1979, 25 % of all customs receipts within the EEC came from Britain. This dependence on external trade was also very pronounced for agricultural products, with the result that the British contributed a disproportionately large amount in

[30] TP, File 17, 'Meetings and Conversations 1978 to March 1979', meeting between the President of the European Commission and the British Prime Minister, Number 10 Downing Street, London, 8 March 1979. He had also raised the issue with Jenkins the previous November. Roy Jenkins, *A Life at the Centre* (London: Macmillan, 1991), 492.

[31] Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 545.

[32] The best introductory guide is Michael Shackleton, *Financing the European Community* (London: Pinter, 1990).

[33] Éric Bussière, Vincent Dujardin, Michel Dumoulin, N. P. Ludlow, J. W. L Brouwer, and Pierre Tilly, *The European Commission 1973–86: History and Memories of an Institution* (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2014), 244.

agricultural levies too. Of the total levies, 17.5 % came from the UK. And as a country prone to higher consumer spending than many of its continental counterparts, the British raised proportionally more VAT, with the inevitable result that the sum that they then had to pass on to the EEC budget was also higher. The portion of the Community's VAT receipts that came from the UK in 1979 was 18 %. When all three figures were combined, the total British contribution to the Community budget was 20 %, an amount that needed to be set against a British share of the total Community GNP of 15.5 %.[34]

Britain did very poorly on the expenditure side too. In the mid-1970s, the vast majority of the EEC budget was spent on agriculture. As noted in Chap. 7, spending on the CAP exceeded 70 % of the total Community budget in each of the years that Jenkins was president. Most of this money took the form of export restitutions—i.e. subsidies given to EEC food exporters to compensate them for the difference between the artificially high 'European' price for their produce, and the actual price they received when selling their produce on the world market—direct subsidies, or market 'intervention'.[35] This last consisted of Community expenditure designed to support the prices that farmers received within the EEC, by buying up surplus produce, and storing it (or sometimes destroying it). For all three types of expenditure, there was a direct link between the quantity of food a country produced (and in the case of subsidies, also the number of farmers operating on its territory) and the amount of money that country received. Britain, which had fewer farmers and produced significantly less food than most other member states, was always likely to do comparatively poorly under such a system. The Commission estimates for 1979 were that 5 % of agricultural expenditure would go to Britain.[36]

When the British had first joined, there had been some hope, both in London and in Brussels, that the potential problems posed by the UK's disproportionately small share of CAP receipts could be alleviated by the broadening out of Community expenditure. Regional policy had been a particular source of optimism. In Britain and Northern Ireland there were a number of regions that had a per capita income substantially below

[34] The figures come from TP, File 20, 'British Budgetary Problem', Michael Jenkins' note, 'Structural nature of the UK's budgetary deficit', 10 May 1979.

[35] Rosemary Fennel, *The Common Agricultural Policy of the European Community: Its Institutional and Administrative Organisation* (London: Granada, 1979).

[36] TP, File 20, 'British Budgetary Problem', Michael Jenkins' note, 'Structural nature of the UK's budgetary deficit', 10 May 1979.

the Community average, and towards which substantial regional subsidies could therefore legitimately be directed.[37] Such income flows could be used to lessen the imbalances produced by the CAP. It had been for that reason that the Heath government lobbied vigorously and effectively to ensure that George Thomson, one of the two British Commissioners appointed in 1973, was given the regional policy portfolio.[38] But such hopes had been thwarted by the very slow growth in regional expenditure. At a time of economic recession, the member states were not prepared to devote substantial new sums of money to an underdeveloped category of Community expenditure. As a result, regional policy had remained stunted and had never developed into an alternative flow of money able to challenge the pre-eminence of the CAP within the Community budget, and to offset, to some extent at least, the imbalances in terms of who received the bulk of Community funds.[39] Instead, the expenditure system continued to be tilted towards the interests of large agricultural producers such as France, the Netherlands, or Ireland, and against those of countries like Britain with fewer farmers and a smaller agricultural output.

For much of the 1970s, the potential imbalances implicit in such a system had been masked by the fact that Britain was still benefiting from the transitional arrangements designed to ease its passage into the EEC, and was hence not having to hand over as much money to the Community as would normally have been the case. Such transitional arrangements were due to come to an end, however, in 1980. At this point, Britain and its partners would for the first time be confronted with the full implications of the EEC financial system for a country like the UK. And to make matters worse, the fact that the British economy had been particularly hard hit by the 1970s downturn meant that the UK had also become one of the poorer Community member states. If left unchecked a situation was likely to arise in which the third poorest member state (only Ireland and Italy had lower incomes per head) found itself becoming either the largest net contributor to the EEC budget, or, under more optimistic calculations, the second largest net contributor after the Germans. Needless to say this

[37] Wall, *The Official History of Britain and the European Community*, vol. 2, 436.

[38] N. Piers Ludlow, 'The British Are Coming: The Arrival and Impact of the First Cohorts of British Fonctionnaires in the European Commission', in *Teilungen überwinden. Europäische und Internationale Geschichte im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert. Festschrift für Wilfried Loth*, ed. Michaela Bachem-Rehm, Claudia Hiepel, and Henning Türk (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2014).

[39] For a rather upbeat account of the development of regional policy, see Bussière et al., *The European Commission 1973–86*, 337–50.

was not a situation that any British government would readily accept. Nor was it a state of affairs best designed to win over the sceptical British public to the merits of the integration process. Something needed to be done. In their efforts to secure redress, furthermore, the British could point to the Commission's promise, made publicly as the membership negotiations had been concluded, that 'Should unacceptable situations arise within the present Community, or an enlarged Community, the very survival of the Community would demand that the institutions find equitable solutions.'[40] This pledge reflected the fact that both Britain and the Six had foreseen that a problem might well arise with regard to Britain's budgetary contribution, but did not believe the membership negotiations themselves to be the ideal time or place for a solution to be sought. Instead the Commission had issued what was in effect a promissory note. It was this that the British government was now seeking to cash in.

Most of Britain's partners were prepared to acknowledge that there was a problem with the UK's potential contribution which would have to be addressed. There were, however, a series of factors that meant that all eight other European member states would take a significant amount of convincing before they were likely to agree to lessen the amount that Britain was expected to pay. The first and most basic was that this was an argument about money, and arguments about money are nearly always the most hard fought and bitter in any international setting. It was no coincidence that the most notorious dispute in the European Community's relatively short history—the so-called empty chair crisis of 1965–6, still often talked of around Brussels simply as 'the crisis'—had, in its initial stages at least, been a squabble between France and its fellow member states about the spending priorities of the fledgling EEC.[41] This underlying rule was given added relevance by a context of economic downturn which meant that in 1979 and 1980, the state finances of virtually every European country were under severe strain. Even the West Germans, who had weathered the downturn of the 1970s better than any other European country, were feeling hard-up.[42] Any funds earmarked to lessen Britain's

[40] Wall, *The Official History of Britain and the European Community*, vol. 2, 426.

[41] N. Piers Ludlow, *The European Community and the Crises of the 1960s: Negotiating the Gaullist Challenge* (London: Routledge, 2006), 40–70.

[42] See Schmidt's comments to Jenkins in their January 1980 meeting. TP, File 18, 'Meetings and Conversations, April 1979 to December 1980', record of a conversation between the President of the European Commission and the Federal German Chancellor, Chancellor's Office, Bonn, 31 January 1980.

budgetary burden would have to be subtracted from national balance sheets that had already been pared to the bone. Generosity to Britain would hurt, in other words, both financially and politically.

A second obstacle in the way of rapid agreement with Britain's case was that the UK government had already accepted the financial rules of the Community, not just once but twice. As explained above, the fact that the budgetary system would not work to Britain's advantage had been correctly anticipated at the time of the membership negotiations—and yet the British had nevertheless gone ahead and joined the EEC. By so doing, they were in effect accepting the rules of the game as established prior to their membership. Furthermore, the British had then sought to reopen the financial dossier in the course of the 'renegotiation' in 1974–5. This had caused much irritation and annoyance at the time, but the UK's partners had reluctantly accepted to reprise discussions about certain aspects of the accession treaty. And once again the British government had settled, this time accepting a 'financial mechanism' designed to resolve precisely the problem that they were now seeking to raise once more.[43] So acceding to Britain's request would not simply mean calling into question the Treaty of Accession, but it would also mean disregarding—or going beyond—the deal struck by Wilson in Dublin in 1975. Allowing new member states continually to revisit their terms of membership did not set an encouraging precedent at a time when the Nine were girding themselves for another round of enlargement and all the disruption that this was likely to bring.[44] Talking to Jenkins in November 1979, Henri Simonet, the Belgian Foreign Minister, said quite bluntly that 'it would be politically unworkable to create a situation where a Member State could continue to renegotiate its conditions for entry into the Community.'[45]

Equally worrying from a *communautaire* viewpoint would be doing anything that legitimated the notion of a *juste retour* within the EEC—in other words the idea that each member state should derive financial benefits from the EEC in direct proportion to the amount that it paid in. This was seen by many governments, especially those of the smaller member states, as something that could undermine the whole integration process.

[43] Wall, *The Official History of Britain and the European Community*, vol. 2, 511–80.

[44] For the wider disquiet surrounding the issue of enlargement, see Bussière et al., *The European Commission 1973–86*, 429–44.

[45] TP, File 18, 'Meetings and Conversations, April 1979 to December 1980', record of the lunch given by the Belgian Prime Minister for the President of the European Commission, Brussels, 20 November 1979.

For a start, it would imply that a price could and should be placed on all that an individual member state did for Europe and all that Europe did for each member state. This ran contrary to deeply rooted beliefs that the integration process was about more than just material gain, and instead involved various unquantifiable benefits such as the preservation of European peace and stability, or the protection of the rights of the smaller states.[46] It also implied that participation in the integration process should be conditional on calculable financial or economic gain, another notion that the most strongly pro-European member states were keen to reject. Nobody wanted a return to the situation in the mid-1960s when Gaullist France had on several occasions threatened to leave the Community were it not allowed to have its way on the latest round of agricultural negotiations.[47] Furthermore, even a set of calculations that set to one side all intangibles such as stability or peace, and sought just to establish a rough equilibrium in national terms between financial gains and financial losses would be deeply restrictive on what the Community could do. Any redistributive mechanism of the sort that the MacDougall Report had envisaged as a necessary complement to monetary union would be totally out of the question for instance, as would any new EC initiative in an economic sector or towards a particular problem that was unevenly distributed across the Community.[48] A way of meeting Britain's grievances would thus have to be found that did not appear to establish a general principle of *juste retour* or set a precedent that others could evoke.

Some member states—notably but not exclusively the French—also felt that Britain's difficulties were a direct result of the country's desire to behave differently from the other Community member states. After all, the whole point of the own resources system had been to provide countries with an incentive to buy their food and their other imports within the European common market. That the UK did badly out of such a system reflected the fact that the British chose to go on buying more of their food from their traditional suppliers in the Commonwealth than anyone else, and more manufactured products from the non-European sources. Were

[46] Anjo G. Harryvan, *In Pursuit of Influence: The Netherlands' European Policy during the Formative Years of the European Union, 1952–1973* (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2009); Antonio Varsori, *La Cenerentola d'Europa? L'Italia e l'integrazione europea dal 1947 a oggi* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2010).

[47] Andrew Moravcsik, 'De Gaulle Between Grain and Grandeur: The Political Economy of French EC Policy, 1958–1970 (Part 1)', *Journal of Cold War Studies* 2, no. 2 (2000): 3–43.

[48] See Chap. 5 for discussion of MacDougall's ideas.

they to conform to the European norm by contrast and trade primarily with their new partners much of the problem would go away. Once more Commission figures illustrate the problem. In 1979, only 35 % of British trade was with the other members of the EEC; all other Community members by contrast did more than half of their trade with their European partners.[49] Britain had quite deliberately made its bed in this particular way; it was thus up to them to lie on it.

Finally the British would also have to confront a mounting sense of annoyance at their track record since joining. The UK had not proved an easy member state to deal with since its accession in 1973. First there had been the disruption and drama of the renegotiation. Then there had been the referendum, the first and so far only in–out poll of this nature conducted by an EC member state. Nor had this managed to settle the question, with both Wilson and Callaghan playing the role of semi-permanent malcontent in most major Community discussions since 1975, opting out of the boldest new policy area, the EMS, and expressing strong misgivings about many others, notably agriculture and fish. Other states fought their battles with the European majority of course. Other member states fell foul of European Court rulings or set themselves on collision course with the European Commission. And other states periodically invoked the sensitivity of their public opinion about some suggested European policy. But few had been quite as consistently problematic since their arrival as the British, which had led some to conclude that enlargement in general was hard, if not impossible, to reconcile with rapid advance, and others darkly to wonder whether de Gaulle had not been right in the first place in suggesting that Britain was not sufficiently European to belong to a European Community. All of this meant that the BBQ was not something that could be seen in isolation. Instead it was part of a pattern—and a pattern that preoccupied many of those states that had previously been most eager to see Britain take its place within the EEC.[50]

This complex background made the abrasive fashion in which Britain's new Prime Minister embarked upon her campaign to get 'her money' back particularly unfortunate. The BBQ was a battle that any British

[49] TP, File 20, 'British Budgetary Problem', Michael Jenkins' note, 'Structural nature of the UK's budgetary deficit', 10 May 1979.

[50] The Belgian attitude was very clear on this point: TP, File 18, 'Meetings and Conversations, April 1979 to December 1980', record of the lunch given by the Belgian Prime Minister for the President of the European Commission, Brussels, 20 November 1979.

leader would have needed to fight. And it was one where ultimately they were likely to win at least partial redress, given the size of the underlying budgetary disparity and the fact that the imbalance was only likely to increase in the short to medium term. But it did not have to be fought in a manner that alienated most of Europe's leaders, including the two most powerful, namely Giscard and Schmidt, and came to dominate a succession of European summits, pushing all other topics to the margins.[51] Nor did the campaign have to be waged in a fashion that accentuated the pre-existing 'us versus them' nature of the British debate about Europe. Unfortunately, this was precisely the aspect of the confrontation that Thatcher most welcomed, since it gave her an opportunity to win popularity at home as the doughty fighter against unreasonable foreigners. As Ian Gilmour perceptively observed, 'a running battle with our European neighbours was the next best thing to a war' in terms of gaining popular approval and distracting public attention from Britain's domestic difficulties.[52] It was also an approach that matched closely Thatcher's own assessment of the situation. The Prime Minister's meeting with Jenkins in October 1979 was remarkable for the depth of her resentment towards virtually all aspects of the integration process and her utter conviction that right and reason were entirely exclusive to the British side of the case. The flavour of the encounter is perhaps best conveyed by her statement that 'France was the kept woman of Europe … the French were trying to take her money and her fish and she would not let them have a penny piece.' The Commission president's vain attempts to explain that France too was a net contributor to the EEC budget or that there might be tactical advantages in soft-pedalling certain aspects of the British case made no impression whatsoever.[53]

Jenkins clearly found Thatcher's approach infuriating, not least because he believed in the underlying justice of the British case, but felt that the manner in which it was being pursued was counter-productive and damaging. In the aftermath of the November 1979 Dublin summit, the first

[51] Jenkins' own accounts of the three European Council meetings monopolised by this first round of confrontations over the BBQ have become the most vivid and frequently cited source. Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 464–7, 528–32, and 592–4.

[52] Gilmour, *Dancing with Dogma*, 240.

[53] TP, File 18, 'Meetings and Conversations, April 1979 to December 1980', call of the President of the European Commission on the British Prime Minister, Number 10 Downing Street, London, 22 October 1979.

set-piece European encounter to be taken over by the interminable row over the BBQ, the Commission president noted wearily in his diary that:

> [Mrs Thatcher has] only one of the three necessary qualities of a great advocate. She has nerve and determination to win, but she certainly does not have a good understanding of the case against her … which means that her constantly reiterated cry of 'It's my money I want back', strikes an insistently jarring note … She lacks also the third quality, which is that of not boring the judge and the jury, and she bored everybody endlessly by only understanding about four of the fourteen or so points on the British side and repeating each of them twenty-seven times.[54]

Ironically, however, a row which was generally unfortunate as far as the European Community was concerned—and particularly disastrous for relations between Britain and its European partners—turned out to be an episode which gave a shape and a rationale to the last phases of Jenkins' presidency that might otherwise have been lacking. Negotiating a truce in the bitter row between Thatcher and her fellow members of the European Council would be the last significant achievement of Jenkins' time in Brussels.

Seizing the Opportunity: Jenkins as BBQ Mediator

In both his memoirs and his diaries, Jenkins presents the BBQ as something that complicated the latter half of his presidency and made him vulnerable to the accusation that he was adopting an excessively pro-British approach.[55] There is undoubtedly some validity to these claims. The Commission president's strenuous efforts to persuade other European leaders that the British Prime Minister did have a case and that something would have to be done to alleviate the British position, could easily be construed as a departure from the disinterested 'European' position, free from all national bias, that the Commission's representative ought to adopt. This was certainly the line taken by some of the French press.[56] But it was also a suspicion harboured by a number of the governments with whom the Commission president had previously enjoyed good relations. In May 1980, for instance, Simonet, the former Belgian foreign minister, let

[54] Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 528–9.
[55] Jenkins, *A Life at the Centre*, 491–2; Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 545–7.
[56] Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 594.

Jenkins know 'that the Belgians, who had previously been strongly pushing my continuation in office, now thought that the gap between Britain and the rest of the Community was so great that the time had not arrived when any Englishman could be President of the Commission almost indefinitely, which 8 years would amount to.'[57] Similarly, Tugendhat, the Budget Commissioner, believed that being English complicated the situation when the Commission sought to keep the European Parliament abreast of the situation in the budgetary dispute.[58] And the national sensitivities at play also emerged clearly within the internal politics of the Commission. Davignon and several other Commissioners showed themselves to be exceptionally anxious about the position that the Commission planned to adopt on the issue, complaining about the lack of adequate consultation, despite the unprecedented intensity of four horsemen meals in the last months of 1979 and early part of 1980.[59] Then in the Commission meeting held immediately prior to the crucial Council of Ministers meeting in late May 1980, Jenkins and Tugendhat found themselves outvoted, 11–2, for the first and only occasion in the whole Jenkins presidency.[60]

In some respects, however, a British Commission president was in a better position to mediate between the UK and its partners on this most sensitive of issues than anybody else would have been. Jenkins understood the British stance and he realised how damaging the dispute could become—to both Britain and the rest of the Community—were it allowed to fester. He was hence not tempted to ignore it, or to hope that if her partners dug in their heels, Thatcher would drop the issue and become more cooperative. But he was also much better placed than any other British politician to understand the sensitivity of the issue to other member states, and to advise London on how the British imperative to settle could be met without infringing any sacrosanct Community principles. This awareness of how both sides approached the dispute reflected his excellent lines of communication to all of the capitals involved.

The dialogue with London took full advantage of the friendly ties that still persisted between the British civil servants on secondment to Jenkins' entourage in Brussels and their colleagues who had remained at

[57] Ibid., 601.

[58] Interview with Christopher Tugendhat, available at http://archives.eui.eu/en/oral_history/INT286

[59] Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 588–9.

[60] Ibid., 603.

home. Tickell's files on the British Budgetary Question, for instance, are full of detailed correspondence, and the records of discussions, with Sir Robert Armstrong, the Cabinet Secretary.[61] A number of internal British documents, including for instance extracts from Thatcher's meetings with key European interlocutors such as Schmidt or Giscard, also found their way to the Jenkins *cabinet*.[62] In return, Tickell passed on to his London contacts information about the Commission's discussions with other member states.[63] Jenkins himself meanwhile had several meetings with Thatcher as well as keeping in close touch with both Carrington and Gilmour, the latter now free from his Rhodesian duties and able to act as a key British negotiator and envoy on the BBQ.[64] It was a measure of how close were ties between the Commission president and the key British negotiators that Gilmour and several other members of his team dined at rue de Praetère with Jenkins and a number of the Commission specialists on the eve of the 29–30 May 1980 Council of Ministers meeting.[65] The dinner was not free from tension—indeed it is clear from both Jenkins' diary and still more Tickell's detailed internal history of the negotiations, that there was quite a row, especially between David Hannay and those from the Commission, over recent changes to the Commission paper due to be submitted to the Council meeting—but the overall effect was to ensure that all of the participants were very aware of each other's positions and had a shrewd sense of what was, and what was not, negotiable.[66]

Importantly, however, such close contacts with the British were more or less replicated with the other key member states. Those same Commission file series mentioned above also featured the records of detailed conversations about the British budgetary question between Tickell and Schmidt's close aide, Horst Schulmann.[67] This link, which had also been of some

[61] For example, TP, File 20, 'British Budgetary Problem', Tickell to Jenkins, 'Convergence and Budgetary Questions', 13 December 1979.

[62] See, for instance, the extract from Thatcher's 25 February meeting with Schmidt, which Tickell was able to pass on to Jenkins by 6 March. TP, File 20, 'British Budgetary Problem'.

[63] TP, File 12, 'Float, February to July 1980', Tickell to Armstrong, 5 March 1980.

[64] Gilmour, *Dancing with Dogma*, 232–41.

[65] Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 603.

[66] The nearly 30-page Tickell 'history' is in TP, File 20, 'British Budgetary Problem', 'Settlement of the British Budgetary Issue Reached at the General Affairs Council of 29/30 May 1980', 29 July 1980. The dinner is also mentioned in David Hannay, *Britain's Quest for a Role: A Diplomatic Memoir from Europe to the UN* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2013), 100.

[67] See, for instance, TP, File 18, 'Meetings and Conversations, April 1979 to December 1980', Tickell to Jenkins, 'Conversation with Herr Schulmann', 19 March 1980.

importance during the EMS negotiations, owed its closeness to the fact that both Tickell and Schulmann acted as sherpas for their respective leaders in the run-up to all G7 meetings.[68] In the final stages of the negotiations, other members of the Commission were mobilised and asked to use their national contacts to obtain the latest possible information on the approach likely to be taken by 'the country they knew best'.[69] Jenkins' efforts to see all of the European leaders on a regular basis were also of importance as the Commission sought to prepare the ground for a deal over the BBQ, not least because of the need to convince some of the doubters that the issue was one that merited at least some of the time and attention it was being given. These bilateral meetings included discussions with both Schmidt and Giscard, although in the case of Germany and France, Jenkins' interactions with von Dohnanyi and Barre mattered almost as much as his encounters with the two principals, in part because personal relations were easier—Jenkins' rapport with Giscard was by now rather poor, and even that with Schmidt was less smooth than it had been—but also because the German State Secretary and the French Prime Minister were arguably more on top of the details of this particular dossier than were their respective leaders. In certain cases, Jenkins' role stretched beyond mere communication and instead became that of facilitating bilateral dialogue between the British and their key partners. In January 1980, for instance, the Commission president suggested that a good way of allowing the Chancellor to explore the BBQ with Carrington, without having to involve either Thatcher or Hans-Dietrich Genscher, the German Foreign Minister, would be to invite Schmidt and Carrington to dinner at East Hendred.[70] The plan went ahead, with the two men able to have over an hour's *tête-à-tête* conversation in Oxfordshire on 23 February 1980.[71]

[68] For an interesting initial study of this network, see Emmanuel Mourlon-Druol, 'Less than a Permanent Secretariat, More than an Ad Hoc Preparatory Group: A Prosopography of the Personal Representatives of the G7 Summits (1975–1991)', in *International Summitry and Global Governance: The Rise of the G7 and the European Council, 1974–1991*, ed. Federico Romero and Emmanuel Mourlon-Druol (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), 64–91.

[69] Tickell's 'history' is good on this aspect of the Commission's activities. TP, File 20, 'British Budgetary Problem', 'Settlement of the British Budgetary Issue Reached at the General Affairs Council of 29/30 May 1980', 29 July 1980.

[70] TP, File 18, 'Meetings and Conversations, April 1979 to December 1980', record of a conversation between the President of the European Commission and the Federal German Chancellor, Chancellor's Office, Bonn, 31 January 1980.

[71] Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 571–2.

Also crucial was coordination with the other main source of compromise and mediation within the European Community system, namely the Council presidency. In the early stages of the BBQ controversy this involved fairly frequent meetings with the Irish, particularly dialogue between Jenkins and the Taoiseach, Jack Lynch.[72] Cooperation with the Italian presidency in the first half of 1980 was much closer, however, reflecting awareness in both Brussels and Rome of how damaging the row over Britain's contribution could prove were it not settled during the 6 months when the Italians were at the helm of Council discussions. At first admittedly there was a little bit of an edge to discussions between the Italians and the Commission, since the Italians had hoped for a more general discussion of the budgetary arrangements within the EEC in the course of which their own problems with the CAP might be addressed.[73] Jenkins and the Commission, by contrast, wanted to focus on Britain's contribution and avoid clogging up the negotiations with anything else. But once the Italians abandoned their special pleading, they formed an extremely effective partnership with the Commission. Jenkins met Cossiga, the Prime Minister, three times between January and April, each time sharing his views on the BBQ and then, once it became clear that a breakthrough would have to be attained at Council of Ministers level rather than at the European Council, switched his attention to Emilio Colombo, the Italian Foreign Minister.[74] It was their double-act plus the intervention of von Dohnanyi that would prove decisive in the marathon meeting of 29–30 May.[75] And at official level, Tickell kept closely in touch with both Eugenio Plaja, the Italian permanent representative in Brussels (and hence chair of COREPER during the first half of 1980) and Renato Ruggiero, Jenkins' former spokesman, who was now back at the Farnesina and who

[72] See, for instance, TP, File 18, 'Meetings and Conversations, April 1979 to December 1980', record of a meeting between the President of the European Commission and the Irish Prime Minister, Dublin, 19 October 1979.

[73] This sentiment had been at its peak in the early autumn of 1979, but was slow to vanish entirely. See TP, File 18, 'Meetings and Conversations, April 1979 to December 1980', record of conversation between the President of the European Community [sic] and the Italian Foreign Minister, Villa Madama, Rome, 9 September 1979.

[74] TP, File 18, 'Meetings and Conversations, April 1979 to December 1980', call of the President of the Commission on the Italian President of the Council of Ministers, Palazzo Chigi, Rome, 11 January 1980. The records of the 18 February and 23April meetings are in the same file.

[75] Gilmour, *Dancing with Dogma*, 238.

had been entrusted with much of the legwork on the BBQ.[76] Each side kept the other well informed about all of their bilateral encounters, and was careful not to pre-empt the other with unannounced suggestions for potential compromise.

The Commission also contributed a great deal of expertise to the debate about Britain's budgetary contribution. In many ways it was almost the perfect issue for the Commission. It centred on the EEC budget, which meant that the Commission had the most up-to-date figures about both national contributions and receipts, plus the ability to predict the likely trends of each. The ability to produce or not to produce figures indeed became an important aspect of the negotiation, with Jenkins and Tickell deliberately deciding not to circulate the Commission projections of how much Britain was likely to pay in by 1982 on the grounds that the figure was so high it would 'probably do more harm than good'.[77] Only the numbers for 1980 and 1981 were provided instead. The key intellectual challenge of the negotiation was also ideally suited for the Commission, since it involved devising a means of refunding the British excess contribution without decisively undermining the principles of Community finance which had led to the problem in the first place. As the guardian of the treaty and of the budget, the Commission knew better than any how the system worked, and was thus well positioned to reconcile Britain's needs and Community rules. And it was an issue where even the potential internal divisions within the Commission could actually prove helpful. The tension between those such as Michael Jenkins, now back in the Secretariat General, who were most responsive to Britain's needs and those in DGII whose views were more influenced by Ortoli and the French Director, Jean-Claude Morel, responsible for 'Structures and Economic Development', fairly accurately mirrored the divergent views around the Council table.[78] Any compromise text that emerged from a deeply divided Commission was therefore well-placed to bridge opinions within the deeply divided Community.[79]

[76] See, for instance, File 12, 'Float, February to July 1980', Tickell to Jenkins, 'Convergence and Budgetary Questions', 27 May 1980.

[77] TP, File 20, 'British Budgetary Question', Tickell to Jenkins, 'Commission's Paper on Figures for the Council', 21 May 1980.

[78] For evidence that concern at the obstructive role that could be played by some in DGII spread beyond Jenkins' entourage, see TP, File 20, 'British Budgetary Question', Tickell to Jenkins, 'British Budgetary Contribution', 18 June 1979.

[79] ECHA, COM (80) PV 561, 2ème partie—although this is an instance where the Commission minutes are guilty of substantially playing down the degree of internal disagreement.

This combination of detailed dialogue with all of the parties to the negotiations, close cooperation with the Italian presidency, and unrivalled in-house expertise, eventually enabled Jenkins' Commission to make a decisive contribution to the 29–30 May 1980 deal which, temporarily at least, settled the BBQ. Their role was not without controversy. In the autumn of 1979 the Commission was criticised for having produced only a paper setting out possible options for a solution, rather than supplying a precisely calibrated compromise package.[80] In the first half of 1980, there were again complaints about the Commission's reluctance to produce precise estimates of how much money Britain ought to receive.[81] And there were grumblings about Jenkins' reluctance to part company from an Italian presidency that was adjudged to be indecisive and slow. But the May 1980 deal swept away such complaints.[82] Colombo and von Dohnanyi played key parts in securing the agreement of course, the former as a virtuoso chair, the latter as the progenitor of the decisive compromise. And Carrington and Gilmour also deserve credit, first for realising that a worthwhile solution was on offer, and then for having the courage and determination to sell the deal to a Prime Minister who gave every impression of wanting the dispute to continue.[83] Commission papers, however, had formed the core of the eventual solution. It was the Commission that had suggested the three-element combination that made up the final deal. This comprised the removal of the restrictions on the 1975 financial mechanism which had prevented it from being effective hitherto; a lump sum for 1980 and 1981 designed to make up the shortfall between the money that Britain would receive from the financial mechanism and the total amount that it 'overpaid'; and the issuing of a mandate to the Commission to explore the medium-term changes to the financing of the EEC needed to eliminate

[80] File 18, 'Meetings and Conversations, April 1979 to December 1980', conversation between the President of the European Commission and the Federal German Chancellor, 7 November 1979.

[81] TP, File 18, 'Meetings and Conversations, April 1979 to December 1980', call of the President of the European Commission on the French Prime Minister, Hôtel Matignon, Paris, 4 March 1980.

[82] The most detailed accounts of the final negotiations are Tickell's history, and that drawn up by the Italian permanent representation in Brussels. TP, File 20, 'British Budgetary Problem', 'Settlement of the British Budgetary Issue Reached at the General Affairs Council of 29/30 May 1980' and 'Summary Record of the Foreign Affairs Council Session of 29–30 May 1980'.

[83] Gilmour, *Dancing with Dogma*, 238–41.

the root causes of the BBQ.[84] Furthermore, the Commission president had been a key player in the night-long negotiations necessary to finalise a deal, joining Colombo in a lengthy series of 'confessionals' with the main protagonists and helping steer them in the direction of agreement. And in the small hours of the morning when tempers were fraying all round, it had been Emile Noël, the Commission Secretary-General, who had drawn upon all of his experience to craft the form of words necessary to bridge the final disagreement.[85] The champagne that Jenkins permitted himself over his belated breakfast on 30 May was well deserved.[86]

Important though it was to have reached an agreement, any measured assessment of the 29–30 May deal does need to recognise two inescapable realities. The first was that the battle over the BBQ was not over; it had merely become subject to, what Tickell described as, 'a two year truce'.[87] Well before Britain received the second instalment of money agreed during the fraught overnight negotiations, discussions would need to start up again about what would happen in 1982 and beyond. Second and more fundamentally, the BBQ was only part of a much larger financial issue facing the EEC, a choice well set out in one of the last speeches that Jenkins would deliver as Commission president in November 1980. Addressing an audience in Luxembourg, Jenkins highlighted the largely static nature of Community income, the constant struggle to restrain its expenditure, especially on agriculture, and, much more importantly, the unsustainability of an EEC budget the vast majority of which was devoted to an economic sector of dwindling significance. The only sensible answer he thus proclaimed was for the Commission to use the 'mandate' received on 30 May to initiate a discussion amongst Europe's leaders the outcome of which should be a substantial medium-term increase in the Community's budget, probably amounting to 2 or 2.5 % of the EEC's GNP, as opposed to the current 1 % ceiling.[88] A similar message was conveyed in many of Jenkins' farewell conversations with member state governments in the

[84] The outlines of this package had been visible in the Commission papers produced in March 1980: ECHA, COM (80) 50 final and 147 final, 20 March 1980.

[85] TP, File 20, 'British Budgetary Problem', 'Settlement of the British Budgetary Issue Reached at the General Affairs Council of 29/30 May 1980'.

[86] Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 607.

[87] TP, File 20, 'British Budgetary Problem', 'Settlement of the British Budgetary Issue Reached at the General Affairs Council of 29/30 May 1980'.

[88] Churchill Memorial Lecture, Luxembourg, 20 November 1980, available at http://aei.pitt.edu/11376/1/11376.pdf

final months of 1980.[89] As Jenkins recognised, however, obtaining agreement to such an increase, especially at a time of recession, would be very hard indeed. The challenge he would bequeath to his successor was hence a huge one—and one that would contribute substantially to the woes of Gaston Thorn's presidency.[90]

The Lure of British Politics

When Jenkins had arrived in Brussels his career in British politics appeared to be over. His decisive defeat in the 1976 Labour Party leadership race seemed to confirm that he had little future within a party that had become an increasingly uncomfortable political home ever since the 1970 general election defeat. His erstwhile rival, Jim Callaghan, seemed better equipped than Jenkins was ever likely to be to navigate the fiercely factional waters of internal Labour Party politics. The standing of those who adhered to Jenkins' social democratic creed within the Labour Party seemed ever more precarious. And when those to the right of the party did succeed, as when Jenkins' former protégé, David Owen, inherited the post of Foreign Secretary following Tony Crosland's sudden death, this only strengthened the sense that the former deputy leader's time had been and gone. A degree of fascination with British domestic politics remained, however. Enough ambition persisted, moreover, for Jenkins rapidly to dismiss suggestions from Callaghan that he might accept one of the traditional compensations for superannuated British politicians in the form of either a peerage or the post of Governor-General of Hong Kong.[91] What he might do instead was totally unclear. But a conventional return to the House of Commons and to Labour Party politics seemed unthinkable.

Thatcher's victory in the May 1979 general election transformed the situation, however. It was not just Callaghan's defeat and the consequent uncertainty about who would inherit the leadership of the Labour Party—although clearly this mattered, especially as a lurch of the party to the

[89] See, for example, TP, File 18, 'Meetings and Conversations, April 1979 to December 1980', conversations between the President of the European Commission and the Netherlands Foreign Minister, and later with the Netherlands Prime Minister, The Hague, 9 December 1980.

[90] Klaus Schwabe, 'Gaston Thorn (1981–1985): A Forgotten President', in *An Impossible Job? The Presidents of the European Commission, 1958–2014*, ed. Jan Van der Harst and Gerrit Voerman (London: John Harper, 2015).

[91] Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 376.

left remained a likely outcome. Also important was the way in which the election of an inexperienced and divisive figure as Prime Minister left many moderates within the Tory Party uncertain about their own political identity and future. The whole centre ground of British politics suddenly seemed up for grabs. As a result, Jenkins' interest in his domestic political hinterland increased enormously as soon as the election was over. Quite what he would do was still highly uncertain. But the mere opening up of new possibilities ensured that from May 1979 onwards, much more of the Commission president's attention was turned towards British politics than had been the case in 1977 and 1978.[92]

The first opportunity for Jenkins to take up a position in this new, changed British political landscape came with the Dimbleby Lecture, delivered in November 1979. When the invitation to deliver an hour-long televised public lecture had been issued by the BBC in May, there had been no stipulation at all about what the topic might be, although Jenkins is probably correct to surmise that the BBC expected the Commission president to talk about Europe.[93] Instead he chose to launch a carefully reasoned attack on the rigidities of the British political system which, he suggested, increasingly pulled both main political parties towards the political extremes. This was neither what the public wanted, nor the country needed. What was required was a change in the electoral system—the lecture contained a strong plea for a system of proportional representation—and the emergence of the politics of the 'radical centre'. Jenkins chose not to specify where this 'radical centre' should be located in party-political terms, but his disenchantment with the British political status quo was made very plain to all.[94]

The importance Jenkins attached to this first major foray back into British domestic politics comes across very clearly from the *European Diary*. He put a great deal of effort into drafting the lecture, became extremely nervous before delivering it, and was highly attentive to—and pleased with—the feedback he received.[95] He had made the most of this opportunity to remind the British public and the British political class of the contribution he could still make to domestic politics. But thanks

[92] Interview with David Marquand.

[93] Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 377.

[94] The full text of Jenkins' Dimbleby lecture, entitled 'Home thoughts from abroad', is available at http://www.totalpolitics.com/speeches/liberal/liberal-politics-general/33323/1979-richard-dimbleby-lecture.thtml

[95] Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, esp. 523–8.

in large part to the BBQ, the Dimbleby Lecture did not yet represent a prolonged distraction from Jenkins' European duties. There was much too much that still needed to be done in Brussels. Dealing with the aftermath of the lecture thus became something that, like the writing of the lecture itself, occupied the Commission president primarily at weekends and in the holidays, rather than impinging significantly upon the manner in which he ran the Commission. References to what Jenkins increasingly described as 'centre party' discussions or reflections do begin to crop up in the diary from late 1979 onwards, but primarily during momentary pauses in Commission activity rather than in a fashion which constituted a major distraction from his main responsibilities.[96]

This would change significantly in June 1980. In part this reflected the fact that early in the month Jenkins had a valuable new opportunity to make a significant domestic political speech in the UK in the form of the Parliamentary Press Gallery speech, delivered at the House of Commons. This he used to deliver a rather more explicit, although still partially coded, call for the launch of a new liberal, social democratic party.[97] As Jenkins put it in his diary, 'I went off feeling rather like Guy Fawkes having set fire to a fuse and wondering what on earth was going to happen.'[98] At much the same time, the internal ructions within the Labour Party were worsening, with the position of Callaghan who had stayed on as leader seriously weakened by an increasingly bitter dispute about how the party should determine its manifesto and select its leader. Newspaper speculation mounted about when the former Prime Minister would step down.[99] Both the need and the scope for a party realignment were seemingly being confirmed. More importantly, however, the growing salience of British domestic politics in Jenkins' life was the result of the gaping hole that opened up in the Commission president's timetable and energy requirements as soon as the deal was struck on the British budgetary question. All of a sudden, the issue that had dominated Jenkins' professional life for the previous 12 months was no more. As the *Diary* put it, 'The issue went away like a summer storm.'[100] And with a mere 6 months more to go until the end of his presidency there was little time to devise any Brussels-centred replacement. Thoughts about how to

[96] The first reference to such a meeting is in ibid., 540.

[97] See, for example, 'Jenkins goes on stand-by for Centre take-off', *The Guardian*, 10 June 1980.

[98] Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 609.

[99] Crewe and King, *SDP*, 43–6.

[100] Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 547.

make a come-back in British politics inevitably expanded to fill the void left by the BBQ.

In reality of course Jenkins was not yet in a position to devote himself full time to plotting his UK political return. Although a handful of former MPs and activists had started meeting to discuss the launch of a new centre party and were intermittently in contact with Jenkins about their efforts, most of the heavyweight allies that the Commission president would need were his hopes for a relaunch of the radical centre in British politics to be realised were still mired in the bitter battle underway within the Labour Party.[101] Over the summer and autumn, Shirley Williams, Bill Rodgers, and David Owen, or the 'Gang of Three' as they had been dubbed by the press after their joint publication of an open letter in August 1980, were still thinking primarily in terms of wresting back control of the Labour Party from the dominant left, rather than leaving the party altogether.[102] There was inevitably a large gap between their viewpoints, and that of Jenkins who had mentally burnt his bridges with the Labour Party quite some time before, when each of the three met or spoke with the Commission president during this period. Furthermore, Jenkins still had too much else to do to be able fully to engage in centre-party planning. Indeed, the published version of the *European Diary* gives a somewhat misleading impression of the degree to which Jenkins' European duties had fallen away in the latter half of 1980, since the editing out of 'European' events during these final months is much more ruthless than in most earlier parts of the volume. Whole weeks of Brussels business are omitted for instance.[103] Virtually all of the references to meetings or discussions connected to the later launch of the SDP are preserved, by contrast. This probably does accurately reflect what seemed memorable and important to Jenkins during the final phases of his presidency; but it rather distorts the actual distribution of his time.

There is nevertheless a distinct end-of-term feel to a lot of the routine paperwork connected to Jenkins' last few months in Brussels. The final East Hendred meeting in late July would be a case in point; the final

[101] Crewe and King, *SDP*, 58–70.

[102] Ibid., 27–51.

[103] There is nothing in the published version between Tuesday, 7 October and Monday, 13 October, despite the fact that the Commission away-day at Villiers-le-Temple took place during the intervening period. See unpublished diary entries for Saturday, 11 October and Sunday, 12 October.

Commission away-day in Villiers-le-Temple another.[104] The Commission president also suffered from minor but persistent health difficulties during this period, which may well have reflected his uncertainty about the way ahead, but which certainly contributed to a sense of listlessness and drift.[105] Useful discussions in the Commission and with the member states could still take place of course and some significant business was done. But as most important policy decisions would now fall to Jenkins' successor and those who served with him, rather than to this Commission, the pressure to tackle anything at all controversial was very clearly reduced. The outgoing president proved conscientious in meeting Gaston Thorn, thereby making certain that the Luxembourg politician would be very well briefed when he took over in January.[106] He also proved solicitous in trying to ensure that those with whom he had worked while in Brussels fared well afterwards. He thus lobbied hard for Tickell to be given a good next posting by the Foreign Office, as well as a knighthood.[107] And there was still a certain amount of routine business that had to be done, like working to draft the EC budget for 1981. But early talk of making significant progress on the mandate substantially to rethink the Community's whole financial system in the light of the BBQ before the end of the year quickly fell away.[108] It would be Thorn who would have to grasp this particular nettle, not Jenkins.

Jenkins' presidency thus came to an end in a minor key. There were no great crises in the final few months. Thorn would inherit an institution that was working reasonably well, looming budgetary crisis apart. And Jenkins was able to indulge in a farewell tour of the Community capitals where nearly all of his discussions with national leaders were friendly and constructive. Even Giscard was less spiky than normal. But the energy and the commitment of the middle phases of the presidency had gone. The

[104] For the former: TP, File 18, 'Meetings and Conversations, April 1979 to December 1980', informal meeting of the cabinet: East Hendred, Monday, 28 July 1980. For the latter, ECHA, COM (80) PV 575 final, 3ème partie.

[105] These are much more clearly conveyed by the unpublished diary than by the published version.

[106] For one of several encounters see Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981*, 647.

[107] Ibid., 632.

[108] In the run-up to the final BBQ Council meeting, Jenkins had spoken to the Commission about submitting a substantial analysis of the Community's financial system and ways in which it could be improved before the end of his presidency. TP, File 20, 'British Budgetary Question', speaking note for 27 May 1980 Commission meeting.

nerves and the exhilaration felt by the Commission president were now much more likely to derive from the increasingly rapid progress towards the launch of a new centre party, than they were from European controversies. Both Jenkins' heart and mind had returned to British politics several months before he actually stepped down as Commission president.

CHAPTER 9

Conclusions

This book has painted a detailed picture of the Jenkins presidency of the European Commission. It has set out the aims and expectations with which Roy Jenkins approached the job, as well as the experience he brought to it. It has depicted the main policy achievements—and disappointments—of his years in Brussels. It has sketched his patterns of work, of travel, and of interaction with the many other figures within the Commission and beyond with whom he needed to function while president. And it has tried to portray the fluctuation of his mood and of his views about the role, as well as his varying levels of energy, commitment, and enjoyment. So what can be learned from this detailed portrait of one man's tenure of the Commission presidency? Is it so specific a picture that it reveals little that is more widely applicable about either the nature of the job or of the wider European and global systems? If not, what more general conclusions can be drawn?

The Nature of the Job

The first conclusion centres on the president's interaction with his fellow European leaders. Roy Jenkins was a politician of considerable substance and one of the main achievements of his presidency was to underline how effectively a heavyweight leader at the helm of the Commission could work with national leaders, whether bilaterally or multilaterally. The sizeable

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collection of records of conversations that are gathered in the Tickell files and that have been referred to so frequently in these pages preserve a set of exchanges that were invariably very substantive; often quite hard-hitting and candid about the difficulties and problems ahead or about the disagreements that persisted; and full of ideas, suggestions, and analyses of how the problems of Europe or the wider Western world could be addressed. They are also normally very equal, with both the Commission president and his interlocutor exchanging views and ideas with little apparent regard for the differences in power or status between the head of the European Commission and a US or French president, a German chancellor, or a Japanese or Dutch prime minister. And to the extent that can be judged by the fairly neutral tones of official records, combined in Jenkins' case with his own recollections recorded in the *European Diary*, it would appear that most of these conversations were courteous, even friendly. There were a few somewhat more strained exchanges with Valéry Giscard d'Estaing—although Jenkins was far from unique in finding the French president a prickly conversational companion. And in a few instances Jenkins had to sit back and let Helmut Schmidt unburden himself of his multiple frustrations and anxieties about the state of the world. Margaret Thatcher too would periodically decide to embark upon a lengthy soliloquy about the flawed nature of her European counterparts and the unfairness of the European system. But in most cases the Commission president was able to interact easily and well with all of the European and world leaders with whom he had to speak, and to contribute significantly to the conversation both in terms of the quantity and the quality of his ideas and interventions. As Tickell (who took the minutes of most of these meetings) observed, it was clear that Jenkins belonged at this level.[1]

The same applied to his contribution to the many multilateral meetings in which he participated as Commission president. To be sure he had reservations about the huge sprawling sessions of the Council of Ministers, but then so did many of the participants in these often rather chaotic meetings.[2] And when need be he could be an effective participant, as was illustrated by his role in the (temporary) resolution of the row over Britain's budgetary contribution. He knew most of those involved, was always on top of the material discussed, and had the experience of how large-scale negotiations worked to be able to time his interventions

[1] Interview with Tickell, 21 August 2010.
[2] Willy Brandt, *People and Politics: The Years 1960–1975* (London: Collins, 1978), 158.

effectively. His mastery of English, one of the two principal working languages in most European meetings of this era (French being the other), also meant that he could use his verbal skills in the search of the right form of words needed to bridge a gap or nuance a problem. Likewise he played an active role in the periodic informal gatherings of the foreign ministers. A lot of the substance on these occasions revolved around foreign policy issues where the Commission had little direct influence and where its right to express a viewpoint was contested by some, notably the French. But as a Foreign Secretary *manqué*, Jenkins had the knowledge and the expertise to be accepted as a participant even in discussions of world affairs of this sort. Similarly he was prepared to take a lead part in fairly robust debates about institutional matters—his clash with Jean François-Poncet over the question of whether the President of the European Council should appear before the European Parliament was noted in Chap. 7.

The multilateral meetings that mattered most, though, were the summits, whether those of the European Council or those of the G7. And it was here that Jenkins was able to have the greatest impact. Indeed it would be fair to say that he was the first Commission president to become an important player at European Council level; and he was indisputably the first to attend the global summits, having won the right to be present only after the bitter row with the French and British described in Chap. 4. As an unelected 'official' in such gatherings of national leaders, the Commission president could not automatically assume that he would thrive. But Jenkins had the presence, the confidence, and the ability to make substantive contributions, both policy-related and procedural, that justified his participation and turned him, in both forums, into an accepted member of the club. This was important, since in 1977, the Commission role in neither had been wholly secure, and a weaker figure might well have allowed participation at G7 level to slip away and permitted himself to become marginalised within the European Council. As it was, however, Jenkins had consolidated both roles sufficiently firmly by the end of 1980 for the Commission president to preserve his presence in the two types of summit, despite the failings at this level of Gaston Thorn, and hence to provide the foundations on which Jacques Delors could later build.

The second conclusion would be that Jenkins proved able to use this presence at the European and global top tables to produce tangible policy results. In a purely European context, the clearest instances of this would be Jenkins' contribution to the launch of the European Monetary System

(the core of Chap. 5) and his role in negotiating a temporary ceasefire over the British budgetary issue. Obtaining results was in no way automatic. No Commission president has the power to decide such matters unilaterally, or easy mechanisms with which to pressurise the reluctant to move in the desired direction. Instead Jenkins and the others to have filled his post have to rely on an ability to cajole, persuade, and, most important of all, recruit the allies needed to take the issue forward. In the process they also need to accept that once others have joined the fight at their side, the Commission's ability to shape the final outcome is always likely to be eclipsed by the greater strength and resources of those who have joined them in the battle. The EMS therefore became Schmidt's and Giscard's project, much more than that of Jenkins despite his role at the very outset. But one of Jenkins' merits was his ability to accept this reality; there is little trace of resentment in his records when the German and French leaders 'took over' his dossier, but instead a pleased realisation that the odds of success had shortened significantly. To use the type of sporting metaphor that some of Jenkins' own speeches deployed, the Commission president was content to play the small but nimble scrum-half able to pass the ball to the faster, stronger, and larger runners capable of penetrating the remaining defences and crossing the try-line.

Jenkins also proved able to deliver results in some of the international negotiations in which he took part. Of these perhaps the most important were the talks on Greek accession, where his ability to turn the Commission from a hindrance to Athens into one of Greece's strongest allies proved of lasting importance. Once again Jenkins could not deliver by himself. In a hybrid system like the European Community, others, in this case the German Council presidency in particular, were needed in order to turn what the Commission desired into reality. And it was also the case that Jenkins' personal contribution was intermittent and mattered much less on a day-to-day basis than that of those like Lorenzo Natali or Roland de Kergolay who spent much of their time on the Greek negotiations. But the president made a vital contribution in shifting the mood within the Commission, in equipping it with the mechanisms and organisation that it needed to play a positive role, and in presenting and defending its achievements at the highest level. It was a similar story with Jenkins' contribution to the success of the Tokyo Round of GATT negotiations, the renewal of the Lomé Agreement linking the EC with its numerous partners in the developing world, and even the commercial agreement signed with Yugoslavia in 1979.

In those cases where agreement was not yet in reach, the Commission president could play a useful function in helping to keep an issue alive and on the agenda of European discussions in the hope that more propitious circumstances might arise and allow progress in the future. This was the slightly frustrating but still valuable role that Jenkins was reduced to playing over enlargement towards Spain and Portugal after the French-induced slowdown of these talks. It was also that which he could be seen to be playing with regard to ideas about internal European liberalisation and the creation of a working internal market towards the end of his presidency. And it was still more apparent in the discussion about the long-term reform of the Community's finances. Jenkins' sound-bite to Giscard in their final meeting was entirely accurate: 'we [the Community] had an undynamic revenue system but an all too dynamic system of expenditure.' New crises similar to that with the British would thus inevitably recur.[3] The Commission president had no real chance of being a part of the long-term solution, on any of these issues, if and when one could be found. But at least he could go on raising the problem and trying to ensure that his successors might find the member states more willing to move ahead. Being a prophet crying in the wilderness forms an important part of the Commission president's role.

The frustrations involved in this last facet of his job, though, link well with the third conclusion that is possible to draw from a detailed examination of Jenkins' presidency, namely the very limited power of the Commission to deliver concrete policy outcomes. To some extent this reflects the difficulty of reaching agreement on policy matters within the Commission itself. Inevitably perhaps, an organisation whose members are drawn from all of the member states, and who reflect many of the currents of opinion and political allegiances observable within Western Europe, has a tendency to mirror the wider national and ideological disagreements in its own debate. This can happen even in the absence of direct instructions passed from national capitals to Commissioners and senior officials of the same nationality. In cases where this does happen—as it certainly did at several moments during the Jenkins presidency—the internal divides are likely to be even deeper and harder to overcome. And the problem is made worse by the unavailability to the Commission president of the types of

[3] TP, File 18, 'Meetings and Conversations, April 1979 to December 1980', record of a conversation between the President of the European Commission and the President of the French Republic, Elysée, 26 November 1980.

leverage, reward, and sanction that most national leaders can deploy when seeking to build internal consensus or maintain internal discipline. The European Commission is a difficult entity to lead.

A far greater difficulty confronted by any Commission president wanting to get things done is division or inertia at the level of member state governments. A skilful Commission president can help crystallise agreement which is almost there amongst the member states. To some extent they can also help build a coalition for advance, or wear down those opposing change, through force of argument, technical expertise, and political savvy. They may also be able to identify side-payments in other fields of European cooperation that can be used to reward those who rally to the majority, or devise loopholes, transitional arrangements, or escape clauses that make it easier for dissenters to give way. But fundamentally the Commission has no power to make member states act against their will or to produce European agreement where no consensus exists. As a result, the outcomes of any Commission presidency are always highly contingent on the state of opinion amongst the member states, their willingness to move forward, and their desire to seek solutions to the problems of the moment at European level rather than elsewhere.

The list of policy areas where Jenkins would have liked to advance but where his hopes of doing so fell victim to such realities is a long one. It includes CAP reform which, co-responsibility levies for milk apart, was perhaps the biggest non-event of his presidency. Also included is Commission reform, or at least those parts of Commission reform that were not within the power of the Commission to address internally but which instead needed either treaty change or additional resources. On Jenkins' list too was energy policy (much talked about during these years but with precious few actual results), enlargement beyond Greece, and most worryingly of all real reform of the Community's finances. The budgetary headache that Jenkins would pass on unresolved to his successor was a highly serious one, and one that would come to dominate Gaston Thorn's 4 years in charge. None of these omissions however, was really a product of negligence or inactivity on the part of the president. Instead they reflected the inescapable realities of trying to make decisions in a system like the European Community where power is shared between the Commission and the Council, and where without the consent of the latter almost nothing can happen. Such disappointments were in a sense hard-wired into the structure of the whole system. The Commission after all is designed to think long term and to contemplate the implications of policy

change across the whole Community. On something like enlargement, as Chap. 6 argued, it was therefore able to see the inevitability of accompanying a move from Nine to Twelve with a readjustment of several key policy areas, notably the CAP and the CFP, and a significant recalibration of the whole budgetary system to cope with the arrival of three new and poorer member states. But national decision-makers, while intermittently conscious of such medium-term needs, are more likely to be swayed by shorter-term calculations, whether connected to the immediate problems of national finance, the state of public opinion, or the challenges likely in some imminent electoral test. On Iberian enlargement, Commission foresight was thus trumped, in the short term at least, by Giscard's electoral concerns and fear of losing the French farmers' vote. And in such circumstances there was little that the Commission could do, but accept the short-term frustration of its aspirations, keep the issue alive, and hope that at some future moment, the required member state agreement would arrive thereby allowing progress to be made.

This conclusion has important implications for the ongoing scholarly debate about what mattered most in triggering the huge acceleration of the integration process that would be associated with the latter half of the 1980s. Much has been written (including by me) about Delors' centrality to this process.[4] But a detailed look at what was blocking progress half a decade earlier does rather underline that the core problem did not really lie with Commission inertia or inactivity. Instead the Jenkins Commission, and indeed that headed by Gaston Thorn, had a string of relevant ideas about what Europe needed, including many of those later associated with Delors. What prevented any significant progress in this direction prior to 1985, however, was the total absence of member state consensus on the way ahead, or indeed, on the relevance of European-level advance to the economic and political problems of the time. Without either of these, no amount of intellectual fertility within the Commission, or silver-tongued advocacy by its president, was likely to be able to deliver tangible results.

[4] Charles Grant, *Delors: Inside the House That Jacques Built* (London: Nicholas Brealey, 1994); George Ross, *Jacques Delors and European Integration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); Helen Drake, *Jacques Delors: Perspectives on a European Leader* (London: Routledge, 2000); Ken Endo, *The Presidency of the European Commission under Jacques Delors: The Politics of Shared Leadership* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999); N. Piers Ludlow, 'Jacques Delors (1985–1995): Navigating the European Stream at Full Flow', in *An Impossible Job? The Presidents of the European Commission, 1958–2014*, ed. Jan Van der Harst and Gerrit Voerman (London: John Harper, 2015), 173–96.

The single most important factor in explaining the European *relance* of the mid-1980s was thus the re-emergence of agreement amongst the member states about the importance of European integration, the need to set ambitious medium-term targets (notably the completion of the Single Market), and the necessity of allowing a degree of institutional change so as to make it possible to realise such goals.[5] It is within the Council and not within the Commission that the deepest roots of the mid-1980s acceleration of the integration process are to be found.

A fourth conclusion about the nature of the job concerns the extent to which the Commission president can be disconnected from many of the ongoing activities of the institution that he or she runs. This has been brought home to me by the process of simultaneously working on both this project and the much wider history of the European Commission during the 1973–86 period recently published under the title *The European Commission 1973–86: Histories and Memories of an Institution*. The latter is an undertaking characterised by its coverage of all aspects of Commission activity which is both its main strength and its main weakness since the obsession with breadth does rather get in the way of detailed analysis of any single policy area. The juxtaposition of the two projects, however, highlights how narrowly focused were Jenkins' interests and activities compared with those of the Commission as a whole. As a result, important areas of Commission activity during these years scarcely feature at all in his conversations with fellow leaders, in his speeches, in his internal administrative correspondence or discussions, or in his *Diary*. Such is the case of the very substantial and highly interventionist activity in the steel sector pushed forward by Étienne Davignon during this period; another example would be the controversial directive on worker consultation about key corporate decisions known as the Vredeling Directive after the Dutch Commissioner largely responsible for its creation.

Jenkins of course knew about such activities. Within the Commission no policy proposals can go forward to the Council of Ministers without being discussed and approved by the whole Commission. The president would thus almost certainly have chaired the key meetings at which each stage of these activities was debated and fine-tuned. And as a conscientious and well-briefed chair, Jenkins would no doubt have been fully cognizant

[5] This rather supports the main thrust of Andrew Moravcsik, *The Choice for Europe: Social Purpose and State Power from Messina to Maastricht* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998).

of the main issues and points of contention as they were passing through the Commission.[6] He was also an experienced enough politician to know that a bad set of policy proposals, even one with which he had little to do personally, could tarnish the reputation of the whole institution and diminish its success of getting its own way on issues which he cared about more. So he had a vested interest in ensuring that all proposals that were sent to the Council of Ministers were well thought through and stood some chances of success. But it is nevertheless striking how many issues that he must have known about and been marginally involved with, nevertheless passed under the radar as far as his own activities and interests were concerned. The Vredeling Directive merits a single reference in the *European Diary*; steel a handful more, all of them mere passing allusions.[7] Nor are there many more references about either subject in the unpublished version. And references to either are few and far between in the extensive Tickell papers collection. The president's eye view of the Commission's activities, adopted by this book, thus offers a very partial, but revealingly restricted, view of what the Commission as a whole was dealing with. This may in part reflect Jenkins' somewhat hands-off management style and his preference for focusing on a few key priorities. But it also reflects the sheer breadth of Commission activity and the impossibility of the president having much involvement with more than a fraction of its activities. And if this was true of the Commission in the 1970s with its comparatively narrow range of powers and policy areas, how much more true must it be of the much larger entity of more recent times, with its incomparably wider policy remit? There are thus important limits to the degree to which the even a strong president controls or steers the European Commission.

A fifth conclusion about the nature of the Commission presidency is to highlight the brevity of the 4-year term that was the norm from the late 1960s through to the mid-1980s.[8] Inevitably, Jenkins took a while to find his feet in a political and administrative context of which he had had little direct experience. His productivity during his first few months in office was thus adversely affected by the need to learn how the system worked both within the Commission and in the wider Community, and

[6] File 14 in the Tickell papers contains a complete set of 'steering briefs' prepared for each Commission meeting, and many Council meetings also.

[7] Roy Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977–1981* (London: Collins, 1989), 633, 188–9, 241, 295, 641.

[8] The Maastricht Treaty would change the standard 4-year term to a 5-year one.

to decide what his policy priorities should be. And equally inevitably there was a prolonged winding-down stage in the latter part of his presidency when his capacity and desire to launch bold new ventures was substantially reduced by the knowledge that there was no prospect of seeing the undertaking through before leaving office. The period of maximum productivity between the two was surprisingly short, not that much more than 2 and half years, perhaps three. In a system where decision-making is as slow and as complex as it is in the European Community, this leaves very little time for decisive leadership. Jenkins made good use of this brief period. It is no coincidence that the years in question—mid-1977 through to late 1979—closely map onto the period when monetary integration was his central concern. But the narrowness of the window of opportunity for a Commission president serving a single, 4-year term to act is nevertheless highly striking.

In this light of this, Jenkins could be criticised for misplaying the preparatory 6-month period between his appointment and his assumption of office, the subject of Chap. 3. The decision to avoid Brussels was understandable; a Commission president-to-be flitting through the corridors of the Berlaymont would have been an undignified and disruptive figure. But the fact that virtually his first visit there was the day when he took up official responsibilities could only increase the severity of the culture shock and lengthen the time taken to adapt to the new working realities, however conscientiously Jenkins had sought to read up on the subject in advance and however much well-intentioned advice he had received. Still worse, the decision to devote nearly all of his introductory conversations with the member state governments to the make-up of his Commission rather than to the policy issues that his presidency would pursue represented a serious loss of time. Rather than beginning to gauge what was and was not possible to do in policy terms from mid-1976 onwards, and therefore being able to finalise a programme of activity that began more or less from January 1977 onwards, Jenkins instead was forced to use the first part of 1977 to identify an area where the Commission could and should take the lead.[9] His choice of monetary integration was a good one. But it arguably arrived later than need have been the case. Certainly the later decision to move towards a 5-year term as the norm for Commission presidencies looks a sensible decision in the light of Jenkins' experience. And it

[9] The contrast with Delors is very obvious here, although whether the Frenchmen consciously learnt from Jenkins' mistake is unclear.

also becomes much more comprehensible that both of those Commission presidents whose periods in office tend to be seen as much more successful than Jenkins', namely Walter Hallstein and Jacques Delors, served multiple terms. The former was in office from 1958 to 1967; the latter from 1985 to 1995.

This final point links well with the sixth and last conclusion about the nature of the job, namely the risks involved in appointing someone of Jenkins' political stature and ambition to the Commission presidency. As Chap. 3 made clear, Jenkins was very clearly chosen because Giscard and Schmidt wanted a heavyweight politician to do the job. And as the rest of the book has underlined, many of the strengths that he brought to the job were also those which had served him well in his domestic political career. His confident interaction with leading politicians within the Community and beyond was a direct result of his sense that he was one of them; likewise his ability to steer a potentially fractious Commission, to manage his relations with the newly directly-elected European Parliament, to make public speeches that gained sufficient attention to launch major policy initiatives, or to help temporarily resolve a knotty political problem like the BBQ, all reflected the fact that Jenkins was not a mere technocrat but instead someone who could easily have become Britain's Prime Minister had electoral outcomes been just a little different.

The willingness of someone of Jenkins' calibre and ambition to take on the Commission presidency, however, was entirely due to his political misfortunes during the mid-1970s. He accepted the job because he was fed up with the Labour Party of the period, disillusioned with the final Wilson government, and had been unsuccessful in his bid to gain the party leadership following Wilson's announcement that he was standing down. The Brussels job was an escape route from political failure at home. But Jenkins' readiness to serve as Commission president was always contingent on him not having any tempting political prospects within the UK. As Chap. 8 explained, this meant that when Callaghan lost the 1979 general election to Thatcher, Jenkins was shaken out of the sense of political frustration which had beset him since 1970. It was not immediately clear how he should act or what his tactics should be. Indeed a significant portion of his mood swings and preoccupations during the 1979–80 period were connected to this uncertainty. But his political antennae correctly told him that something new could now be done in the centre ground of British politics and he was determined to be in the vanguard of any such attempt. As a result, any prospect of his agreeing to stay on in Brussels for a second

term vanished as soon as the polls closed in May 1979. With it too, disappeared any prospect of his becoming a great presidency rather than merely a good one.

Again this is a conclusion that has wider implications for the Commission presidency. For a start it means that one of the factors that would enable Delors to be so successful a president was almost certainly the fact that he had never been a typical French politician and remained highly uncertain about his political chances should he leave Brussels and attempt a domestic political come-back. Hallstein too had never been a conventionally successful national politician—he had been appointed to his only political post of note, that of State Secretary within the German Foreign Ministry, directly from an academic position—and had scant prospects of major political career within Germany. Neither felt the lure of a domestic political return as keenly as Jenkins; both were therefore happy to stay for much longer in Brussels. But it also suggests that there is a deeper structural problem with a job that requires the type of political skills and experience that only tend to be found amongst successful national politicians, but is seldom seen, by large-country politicians at least, as sufficiently tempting or powerful for them to take in lieu of domestic success. The inevitable result is that the large-country candidates who do put themselves forward for the post are either those whose domestic careers have ended in failure—which may well not make them ideal candidates—or those who are temporarily in the political doldrums. Those in the latter category, however, are always vulnerable to the gravitational pull of a domestic political return should their political prospects appear to improve. Finding someone sufficiently political to do the job well, but without the national political ambitions to lure them away from Brussels, is not an easy task.

Jenkins and the Presidency

Turning the lens the other way around, it is also worth briefly considering the impact of the 4 years as Commission president on Jenkins himself. Was it an experience that he found fulfilling and useful? Or was it, as some observers seem to feel, just a spell of exile—a period of enforced isolation from his true vocation which was the promotion of social democracy within a British context?[10]

[10] This is certainly the sense conveyed by Ivor Crewe and Anthony King, *SDP: The Birth, Life and Death of the Social Democratic Party* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 56–57.

At one level, Jenkins adapted pretty well to the routines and the demands of the job. A fast learner, he quickly mastered most of the intricacies of the Community system. It almost certainly helped that his interests had always extended well beyond British politics and as both a writer and an analyst he had observed and commented on the functioning of US politics, French politics, or German politics, as well as on what happened domestically. As a result, he had less of an assumption that the Whitehall or Westminster way of doing things was the only sensible way of doing things than many senior British politicians might have done. Instead he seems to have derived genuine satisfaction from mastering a different way of operating and from meeting the challenges of a new and very distinctive job. Nor did he meekly accept that just because a task had always been done in a particular fashion in Brussels he should automatically do the same. He thus ditched the regular meetings with the assembled permanent representatives that Ortoli had instituted, retaining just the lunches, although these too he regarded as something of a bore. And he was prepared to innovate in terms of how the Commission functioned, whether by introducing significant new habits such as the pre-term gathering at Ditchley Park or the annual away-days (both habits that would endure beyond his departure) or making more trivial alterations, such as serving an English-style Christmas dinner to the assembled Commissioners.

He also clearly liked important aspects of the job. The facility with which he took to the top-table representational role was noted above. But he also clearly enjoyed the social side that accompanied many of these high-level meetings. His well-known love of good wine and good food may have been easy to satirise, as in the *Bulletin*'s regular column on the court of the *le roi Jean Quinze*, but it also equipped him well for the dinners that invariably accompanied the European Council meetings, the G7 summits, the informal meetings of Community foreign ministers, or even some of the regular Council sessions. The allusions to the quality of the food and wine served, only a minority of which survive the transition from the unpublished to published versions of the *Diary*, underline how much these creature comforts mattered, as well as the company and the quality of the conversation. Also clearly enjoyable were the periodic visits to, or hosting of, foreign VIPs including not just fellow politicians but also an array of European royalty. As the *Diary* makes very clear, Jenkins did not view his discussions with the Dutch, Danish, Spanish, Belgian, or British royals, or indeed the Pope, as a waste of time, but instead as an interesting and satisfying experience.

Likewise, as was emphasised in Chap. 6, the European and intercontinental travel that formed so important a part of the job, was primarily appreciated rather than resented by Jenkins. There are a few complaints here and there in the *Diary* about bumpy flights, strikes by flight attendants (no food or wine on a flight from Brussels to London—*quelle horreur!*), slow train rides, or difficult drives through fog or snow in the Ardennes. And there were certainly grumbles in the latter half of the presidency when parliamentary and press criticism of Commission 'extravagance' on expenses made necessary a sharp cut-back in the number of times the president could resort to an *avion-taxi* (i.e. a hired private aircraft) rather than a scheduled flight. But few of these petty irritations seem seriously to have detracted from the real pleasure that Jenkins derived from global travel, from visiting or revisiting interesting cities or countries, and from the chance to talk with leading figures in China, India, Japan, Senegal, Greenland, etc. The former travel writer had not lost his taste for exploration, nor did he lack the stamina to survive the lost sleep and the jet lag that inevitably accompanied such a punishing schedule.

He even seems to have grown mildly fond of Brussels. It is true of course that he spent a huge amount of time away from rue de Praetère or from the Berlaymont, whether on official travel or in journeys back to England. The old Brussels joke about French Eurocrats identifying the 18.10 TEE back to Paris as their favourite aspect of Brussels life had some resonance with Jenkins' own experience given the frequency of his weekend escapes to either East Hendred or his London residence. But in fact there is quite a lot in the *Diary* to suggest that he came to appreciate a number of aspects of life in Belgium, amassing a good number of favourite restaurants, both in Brussels and beyond, discovering new country towns to explore, or new museums or cultural destinations to share with the frequent weekend and overnight visitors from England. Even the linguistic difficulties became much less acute as the presidency advanced. It is very clear that in the first few months at least, functioning in French was a real challenge to Jenkins. But from mid-1977 it was one to which he rose with increasing confidence and assurance, if not perhaps huge amounts of pleasure.

There were, though, a series of important frustrations and disappointments associated with his presidency, alongside these pleasures and successes. At a policy level he would have liked to have done much more than actually proved possible. As a seasoned politician, and perhaps particularly as a veteran of the Wilson governments of the 1960s, Jenkins was

well aware, of course, about how many desirable political objectives prove impossible to attain. Failure and disappointment are part and parcel of the political process. But the Commission presidency was particularly frustrating, given the frequency with which the Commission can point the way boldly forward only to discover that absolutely nobody is prepared to follow. As Home Secretary or Chancellor, Jenkins had been able to pull policy levers that produced genuine and immediate results; this would have been even more the case had he succeeded in making it to Number 10 Downing Street as had once seemed likely. But as Commission president there was much less that he could actually change without the sanction and support of the member states—something that was often difficult to secure. He did obtain results, as emphasised above. But these were fewer than he would have liked and were accompanied by a very high number of policy proposals, suggestions, or recommendations that had had no effect whatsoever. For someone who had tasted real executive power, the power of the self-styled 'executive' of the European Community system was disappointingly slight.

He also struggled to build up much of a rapport with many of those who worked for the organisation that he headed. A certain level detachment between the very busy and transient head of the Commission, and those who worked under him, was inevitable of course. No Commission president can really get to know the full workforce of 8000 or so for whom he is officially responsible. But Jenkins also struggled more than most, since his ease in interacting socially with those who he liked, considered interesting, and wanted to talk to, had always coexisted with a high level of awkwardness and unease when forced to converse with those with whom he did not feel an immediate bond. This had been a handicap within the Labour Party, where he was much less good at winning over the rank and file than some of his party rivals had been.[11] And it applied again in Brussels. He tried of course. As president he made regular 'visits' to different portions of the Commission trying to meet and exchange a few words with all who worked there. He held receptions for large numbers of staff. And he conscientiously attended the intermittent ceremonies at which long-serving or retiring members of staff were presented with medals to acknowledge their contribution. But all of these procedures were painful obligations rather than tasks to which he took naturally—and it is likely that many of those with whom he met on these occasions were aware of

[11] Interview with David Marquand, 7 June 2011.

how ill at ease and how uncomfortable their president appeared. Jenkins' natural habitat was the grand state banquet or the expensive restaurant, not the staff canteen; his natural mode of communication was serious conversation, not small talk.

The biggest disappointment of his time in Brussels, however, was almost certainly his failure in any way to reverse the downward spiral of relations between Britain and the Community. As a passionate pro-European he had always wanted his fellow countrymen to share his enthusiasm and belief in the benefits that Britain might derive from joining the European Community. And he had clearly hoped that his presence in Brussels might in a small way at least facilitate this process. But as Chap. 8 emphasised, such early hopes had been dashed, first by the scepticism and caution towards Europe exhibited by the Callaghan government, and then by the eruption of the row over Britain's budgetary contribution between Thatcher and her Community partners. The UK's status as the most awkward and problematic member state in the European Community seemed even more secure in 1981 as Jenkins left office than it had been in 1977 when he arrived.

This failure, although not something that he was personally responsible for, almost certainly helps explain his gradual loss of interest in the presidency, especially by the latter half of 1980, perhaps a little earlier. He did not suffer any personal crisis in his European faith. Jenkins' views were every bit as pro-European after he had left Brussels as they had been before he arrived or while he was there. But he did change his mind about the manner in which he could best serve the cause of Britain in Europe. A return to domestic politics and the promotion of a 'radical centre' with pro-Europeanism very much at the heart of its philosophy became the new goal and the new manner of encouraging British Europeanism in place of service in Brussels. From 1981 onwards the Social Democratic Party (SDP) that he helped found and would lead, became the vehicle for the European beliefs and ambitions that had helped persuade Jenkins to take the Commission job in 1976.

A Bad Time to Be President

The final task of these conclusions is to step back from the detailed story of Jenkins' 4 years in Brussels and offer some reflections about the wider state of the European integration process and indeed the functioning of the Western system. Jenkins' personal importance in these bigger processes

was relatively small. But his time in office and his participation in many of the European and global discussions that went on during this period does mean that his papers and his experiences offer a unique vantage point from which a wider view can be taken.

As far as the integration process is concerned it is clear from a close examination of the 1977–80 period that many of the institutional building blocks that would later prove crucial for the mid-1980s relaunch were already in place. The European Council, the forum within which most of the key decisions would be taken from 1984 onwards, was already up and running and on the whole functioning reasonably well. There was some discontent, especially from Schmidt and Giscard, its founding fathers, that it had already lost some of its initial intimacy and that it was too often serving merely as a court of appeal, where issues that could not be resolved lower down the Community system were presented in the hope that the leaders could collectively find the solution that had eluded ministers or permanent representatives. But despite such anxieties, the European Council had already shown, most clearly with the genesis of the EMS, that it could be the launching pad for really important European decisions. Also significant was the appearance of a directly elected European Parliament. To be sure in the short term the new MEPs were a somewhat restless, noisy, and disruptive influence, angry at their lack of power, but without the means unilaterally to alter the system in the direction that they sought. But over the years ahead, not only would Strasbourg prove to be a useful source of ideas and pressure about how the integration process could rediscover its *élan*, but it would also demonstrate itself to be an institution worthy of receiving the additional powers that it would be given by the Single European Act and an entity that could provide a degree of democratic legitimacy and control to the acceleration of the integration process from 1985 onwards. And even the Council of Ministers was beginning to alter for the better. Jenkins was not in office long enough to witness the extent to which the Council secretariat would be strengthened and improved following the arrival of Niels Ersbøll as secretary-general in 1980. But that date marked the start of the transformation of an institution that had been a bottle-neck for so many European ambitions during the 1970s.

The Commission, too, already had most of the powers and capabilities it would need later on in the decade. The frustrations of Jenkins' years in office, and still more the disastrous 4-year interlude under Gaston Thorn which would follow, masked the degree to which the institution was capable of resuming its role as the motor of the integration process. But its

function as a reservoir of ideas and initiatives had endured, as had its ability to go on pointing to European solutions even when the member states chose not to heed the message. Jenkins' consolidation of the president's role in the European Council also meant that it now had the platform which Delors would later use to such effect to win support for his plans and ambitions. No big institutional alterations were necessary to enable the presidential Commission of the Delors era to emerge.

Standing in the way of the advance, however, were two painful controversies that would need to be disposed of before any big leap forward became possible. Both were issues with which Jenkins had grappled, but on neither had he been able to deliver a comprehensive solution. These obstacles were first of all the major disagreement over the way in which the Community should be financed, an issue that included but went above and beyond the narrower controversy surrounding Britain's budgetary contribution, and second, the lack of advance towards the realisation of enlargement towards Spain and Portugal. For so long as either of these festered, no strong push towards further European integration was likely. It was hence only under the French Council presidency of 1984, which secured the Fontainebleau settlement on financial matters, and lifted its own embargo on progress towards Iberian membership, that the way would be cleared for a European relaunch.

An even more fundamental problem than either of these two blockages, however, was the lack of any real consensus in the early 1980s about what type of advance Europe needed. The policy options eventually chosen—internal market liberalisation and the push towards economic and monetary union—were already under discussion by the late 1970s inside the Commission, in Strasbourg, and within member state governments. Jenkins' involvement with both has been noted above. But at none of these levels had a clear choice in favour of these targets been made. Instead, the single market option and EMU were still rivalled by an alternative set of policy visions that were much more interventionist and *dirigiste*. There were still many in Brussels and elsewhere who wanted Europe to be rebuilt with a strong industrial policy, directing resources and finance at industry, in much the same way that the CAP channelled European money to Europe's dwindling number of farmers. Davignon's policies towards both a declining industry like steel, and one with huge potential for the future like electronics, both bore the traces of such policy impulses, as did some of the more radical ideas under discussion during Jenkins' period in Brussels about European intervention into the energy

sector. As the Luxembourg speech referred to in Chap. 8 makes clear, Jenkins himself shared some of these aspirations. But with the benefit of hindsight it is clear that no big leap forward could happen until a clear-cut choice between these two paths had been made.[12]

Another big decision that still had to be made was whether the best route to economic recovery lay through European cooperation or action at a global level. The period of Jenkins' presidency was also one when a huge amount of hope was vested in the newly formed institutions of global economic coordination and in the G7 summits in particular.[13] It was to these that many looked primarily for the answers to the ongoing economic downturn and to new challenges such as the second oil shock. Such hopes—prominent in Schmidt's and Giscard's world views, but also favoured by the British who were instinctively more comfortable working within a context where the Americans were included—had a degree of logic behind them. After all, the main problems of the era, whether economic underperformance, the challenge of high oil prices, the increasingly fraught relations between the global South and the economically advanced North, or even the underlying Cold War rivalry between East and West, were all global challenges confronting North America, Western Europe, and Japan alike. Why not then seek their solution through global cooperation—or at least through the close collaboration of the leading economic powers of the Western bloc? The battle to secure Commission participation in the G7 encounters was a reflection of such expectations.

In the years immediately after Jenkins' departure from Brussels, however, the case for global intervention would weaken considerably. In part this was caused by the increasingly apparent limitations of G7 coordination. World leaders could agree to aspirational targets in the course of their periodic get-togethers, but actually sticking to such targets and using them as the lode-star for their economic policies proved to be extremely hard to achieve, especially in the absence of any strong institutional machinery to follow up or enforce G7 level decisions. More importantly, though, the loss of faith in the global reflected the divergent economic fortunes of the United States and Japan, on the one hand, who had seemingly

[12] For a wider discussion of these issues, see Laurent Warlouzet, L'Europe occidentale face au choc de la globalisation: la solution de la CEE (1973–1985)' (Habilitation, Université de Rouen, 2015).

[13] Emmanuel Mourlon-Druol and Federico Romero, *International Summitry and Global Governance: The Rise of the G7 and the European Council, 1974–1991* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014).

rediscovered the formula for economic growth during the early 1980s, and the countries of Western Europe, on the other, who were instead still mired in a period of economic stagnation. Adding to this divergence were also the very different attitudes to East–West relations on the two sides of the Atlantic during the early Reagan years—with the United States seemingly favouring a confrontational approach, while most Europeans still hankered after détente—and the much quicker abandonment on the US side than in Europe of faith in North–South dialogue as a mechanism for global advance.[14] If the G7 powers could agree neither on what the main problems were, nor on the best manner of solving them, the chances of global summit level coordination proving the answer to Europe's economic difficulties seemed very slight indeed.

In such circumstances, it made much more sense for the main European powers to seek the solution to their problems at European level, rather than at the global one. By the mid-1980s the underlying dilemma of whether to focus mainly on global solutions to global problems, or instead to favour a regional approach, had been resolved in favour of the latter. If Europe was to revive its economic fortunes, and close the increasing gap in performance between its industry and those of the United States and Japan, it would need to follow a programme of European reform designed to make the fractured European market resemble much more closely the huge integrated domestic markets of the United States and Japan.[15]

Jenkins' key misfortune as Commission president was thus to be in office at a time when neither the best formula for collective European advance, nor the fundamental choice of whether global or European action was likely to prove most effective, had yet been taken. His enthusiasm for EMU did in some ways set a useful precedent for seeking European rather than global answers. Central to the successful launch of the EMS was the belief on the part of Schmidt and Giscard that in monetary matters no progress was likely to be made at a global level, and the consequent realisation that if action was required it would have to be carried out within Western Europe alone. But outside of the field of currency coordination, few of the leaders with whom Jenkins was obliged to work were yet con-

[14] For the context see Kiran Klaus Patel and Kenneth Weisbrode (eds.), *European Integration and the Atlantic Community in the 1980s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

[15] Nicolas Jabko, *Playing the Market: A Political Strategy for Uniting Europe, 1985–2005* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006).

vinced that European cooperation was more capable of delivering faster economic growth than global coordination. Nor was there any shared conviction amongst Europe's rulers about what targets European integration should set. It was this underlying discord that would ensure that Jenkins' periodic successes as Commission president were flanked with an even greater number of failures and disappointments. Jenkins had many of the qualities to be a highly successful president of the European Commission, but he occupied the post at a time when there were few opportunities to demonstrate his leadership or Europe's full potential.

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List of Interviews Conducted

The corrected transcripts of some of these interviews, and a list of many of the others interviewed for the HistCom2 project, can be found at http://archives.eui.eu/en/oral_history/#ECM2

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