

---

## Introduction

*Antonio VARSORI*

The articles which appear in this “open” issue reflect some of the most recent trends in European integration history. The first group deals with a more “traditional” approach to the events related to European integration, that is, the analysis of the political and diplomatic dynamics that characterised the 1960s. In this connection Martin Koopman examines the issue of the “French-German couple” from the German viewpoint and focuses his attention on the misperceptions and differences of opinion which, in spite of the close relationship between de Gaulle and Adenauer, led to the failure of France’s rapprochement policy towards West Germany. Although the German authorities were interested in strengthening their ties with de Gaulle, they regarded this relationship mainly as an opportunity to mediate between France and de Gaulle’s “enemies” rather than as a starting point aimed at the creation of a French-German “directorate”. The author highlights Germany’s internal political debate, which influenced Bonn’s attitude towards both France and the European integration issue.

Vincent Dujardin’s article, which is based on sources from various public and private archives, also focuses on the 1960s. The issue of Britain’s failed attempts to join the European Community has been already widely analysed. Dujardin’s approach is a new one, as he takes into consideration the policy pursued by the Belgian government in the late 1960s and he deals with the initiative that aimed to involve the United Kingdom in some form of European political cooperation through the Western European Union. In this connection the author stresses the role played by Pierre Harmel who tried to solve the problem of de Gaulle’s “veto” of Britain. The attempt ended in failure and Dujardin argues that such an episode is of some relevance as, in his opinion, the “five” had no intention of breaking with France on the issue of Britain’s application. The author also stresses the difficulties of a “small power” when attempting to play the role of a mediator.

The second group of articles deals with the role of personalities in the making of the European integration process. This is a topic that has recently attracted the attention of an increasing number of scholars.. If the role played by some leading European politicians – the so-called “pères de l’Europe” - is still at the centre of historians’ interest, some scholars have begun to focus their attention on “minor” actors in order to understand the environment in which European integration flourished, as well as the every-day working of European institutions. In this connection Charles Barthel’s article deals with the role played by the Luxembourgish industrialist Emile Mayrisch during the second half of the 1920s in the creation of a steel cartel which would have involved both German and French steel industries. Although it is difficult to regard Mayrisch as a minor actor, Barthel’s essay, which is largely based on first-hand archival material, is of much interest as it is evidence of the deep interest nurtured by small countries, not only in promoting some form of economic integration, but also in contributing to the

solution of some of the problems related to French-German rivalry. Moreover the contribution is a confirmation that the historians of European integration should not focus only on what happened in Europe after the Second World War. The study of the 1920s could make a useful contribution to a better understanding of the integration process as a phenomenon that characterised, although in various degrees, the whole twentieth century.

If the name of Emile Mayrisch is not new to scholars of European integration, that of Karl-Maria Hettlage is almost unknown. So the article of Mauve Carbonell – a short biography of Hettlage is of much interest. The German government appointed Hettlage as a senior official at the High Authority of the ECSC between the late 1950s and the 1960s. The author, however, is not so interested in Hettlage's experience as an official but in his early career: for he had been one of Albert Speer's close advisers and took an active part in Nazi Germany's economic policy. On the basis of archival records Mauve Carbonell sketches out a lively portrait of an "expert" with no deep political beliefs, who in his long career could be an important member of the Nazi bureaucracy, a university professor in post-war Germany and a top official of the Coal and Steel Community. Although Hettlage perhaps is not to be regarded as the average representative of the European civil service, Carbonell's article can be a stimulus to further studies dealing with biographies of European top civil servants.

The third group of articles shows that, although sometimes historians' attention seemed to have focussed on the political and diplomatic side of the European integration process, the economic aspects have often been at the centre of European integration. In this connection Paolo Tedeschi's article deals with the activities developed by the Italian section of the "Ligue Européenne de coopération économique" (LECE) between the late 1940s and the Treaties of Rome. This pressure group was largely composed of leading industrialists, economic experts and politicians. Tedeschi's analysis, which is mainly based on the LECE's records, is of interest as it sheds light on the positive but cautious attitude nurtured by Italy's economic circles towards the early stages of the integration process. Tedeschi argues that, although those economic milieus were in favour of a united Europe, they never forgot Italy's economic weakness, as well as Italy's national interests.

Mauro Elli's contribution focuses on the role the nuclear issue played in shaping Britain's attitude towards European integration and Britain's applications to join the European Community in the 1960s. Elli argues persuasively that Britain's advanced know-how in the nuclear field was more of an obstacle than an asset in London's attempt to joining the Six. In this connection the author stresses the negative role played by the UK Atomic Energy Commission, as well as the influence exerted by inter-departmental rivalries in shaping Britain's European policy.

If during the 1960s Britain's technology and its link with the future of Europe's economy were traditionally regarded as positive factors in London's involvement in the integration process, it is not only Elli's article that offers a different interpretation. Frances Lynch and Lewis Johnman analyse the failed attempt at

developing a European aeroplane – the future Airbus – by means of a cooperative venture that would have involved Britain, France and West Germany. The authors stress how such an initiative was launched by British Prime minister, Harold Wilson and was a part of his scheme to create a European “community” based on technological research and high technology industry. The article, which is based on both French and British archival sources, sketches out the whole episode and singles out the main reasons that led Britain to abandon its involvement in the project. The authors argue that such a negative outcome was not only the consequence of political motives, but the consequence of several other factors, some of them linked to economic and technological considerations.

The last article by Giuliano Garavini confirms that, also owing to the growing availability of new archival sources, scholars are already beginning to deal with the European integration in the 1970s. This article stresses the increasing importance played from the late 1960s onwards by issues such as external relations and the international economy in shaping the character of the European community. Garavini, who has largely based his analysis on US and the EEC archives, deals with the EEC attitude towards the creation of the G-7; in particular he stresses the question of the relationship between the member-states - especially the leading ones – and the European Commission. He argues that, although the European Community was able to take part in the new international organisation, the main role there was still played by the national governments.

Although those articles appear to be different in their topics, the fact that most of them have been written by young scholars is evidence of the continuing interest in the history of the European integration. Furthermore the variety of approaches shows that the European integration was – and still is – a complex phenomenon that involves several historical dynamics and offers several opportunities for a better understanding of Europe’s international role in twentieth century history.

