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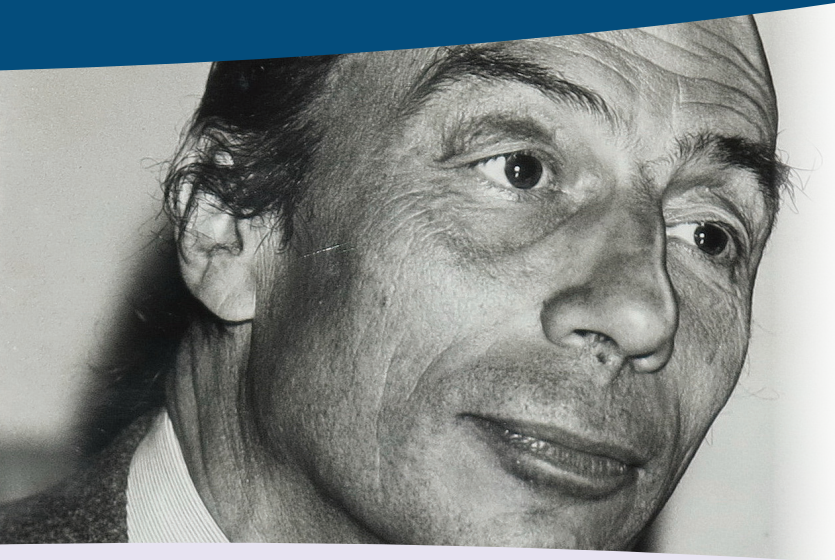
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The European Vision and the Churches

The Legacy of Marc Lenders

Win Burton



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Globethics.net
Head Office
150 route de Ferney
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Website:
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Email: *infoweb@globethics.net*

Conference of European Churches (CEC)
Ecumenical Centre
Rue Joseph II, 174
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Website *www.ceceurope.org*
Email: eeg@cec-kek.be

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FOREWORD

An overview of almost forty years' engagement on the European scene is quite some undertaking, since history never feels like history when you are living through it. But man is a history-making animal who can neither repeat his past nor leave it behind. The value of this book, written by Win Burton and Marc Lenders, is that it makes clear that if we want to understand today, we have to look back at yesterday. In actually doing this, the authors have opened up an important chapter in the passionate story of the Ecumenical movement in Europe. As they attempt to reconstruct scenes from history, revive their echoes and rekindle the urgency and drive of those former days, they show that humankind can never lie down on the tracks of history waiting for the train of the future to run over it. They do this by presenting more than a mere compilation of facts. The facts represent only the skeleton. They endow them with life, clothe them in the dress of the period, and enable them to rouse the sympathies of those following in successive generations.

In the introduction, there is an apologia for adopting a biographical perspective. But is it not a fact of life that there is really no history, only biography? Is history not the essence and accumulation of countless biographies?

At a moment in history where the European Ecumenical movement is setting out on a new track, this publication is particularly timely. It is all the more welcome as Lucian N. Leustean has already indicated in his book, "The Ecumenical Movement and the Making of the European Community" (OUP, 2014) that one of the most fascinating journeys among the responses of Churches to the evolution of the European

Community is that taken by the Ecumenical movement. Furthermore, many Churches only began to take European affairs seriously after the fall of Communism. A look at the past reminds us of how far we have come – yet in how short a time.

Voltaire – Marc is as French as he is Belgian and Dutch – asked in his Philosophical Dictionary: "What would constitute useful history?" His answer was "that which should teach us our duties and our rights, without appearing to teach them." Being a Protestant pastor, Marc Lenders knows very well that history is the open Bible: historians, like theologians, are not priests expounding an infallible perspective: their function is to teach people to read and reflect on history for themselves. We don't need a list of rights and wrongs, tables of "do's" and "don'ts" for the Ecumenical movement: we need books, time and silence.

At times I suspect Marc was in a very difficult position professionally, with an insecure financial situation and working in a highly political context: the authors do not shrink from describing such moments in their history realistically and very subtly, but they still hit you smack in the face. The history of the Ecumenical movement is never above the mêlée, but like a vast river, propels logs, vegetation, rafts and debris along its course. The authors describe a series of events, each with its own touch of pleasure or grimace. Meanwhile, everything is written in such a manner that it can be used for future Ecumenical work as a huge early warning system, and be more than a journalistic story just reporting yesterday's events. Their intention is to recover the past and introduce it to the present for the purposes of the future.

This book – the first one in a new series of CEC publications – must serve two masters, the past and the present. Let's take from the altars of the past as described with passion by Win Burton and Marc Lenders the fire – not the ashes. Then, remembering that Memoirs are the backstairs of history, we will also discover that the history of the Ecumenical movement is a kind of introduction to a host of more interesting people than we can possibly meet in our restricted lives; let us not neglect such opportunities.

Rev. Dr Guy Liagre,
General Secretary, CEC
31 October, 2014

EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

A brief word of editorial introduction to this narrative where the main aim is to let Marc "speak for himself".

The pages that follow have been formulated by Marc Lenders and me together – in occasional personal meetings or at a distance by correspondence – over several years since both of us retired and are looking back on those years from quite some distance. The chronological scaffold or bones of the narrative in chapters I - VI is reconstituted from archive material (reports, etc.) dug out of the basement of the Ecumenical Centre in Brussels; however multiple moves from building to building and attic to cellar, to say nothing of the occasional flood, compounded by staff shortages and pressures resulting in archive maintenance being well off the bottom of their priority list, mean that such research and use of resources is far from systematic or rigorous and makes no pretension to being complete and scientific or even entirely accurate; I myself left the ECCSEC staff in 1984. The interludes entitled "Institutions in Progress" are merely personal observations of my own.

The additional chapters (VII – IX) at the end may feel rather inorganically and clumsily appended – but their focus is so important to show the depth and breadth of content in the work being done, and some of the impact – in a way which the pure chronological sequence could not display so readily. (Obviously the full "fruit" of this work can be found in the reports themselves – in the archives.) Where the Churches might well have expressed doubts as to the relevance of associating with an "economic" organisation such as the EU, these chapters show at once whose are the human faces and concerns involved: this is not a story of

structures and constitutions however hard it was to keep them on the perimeter.

The flesh comes from Marc's comments and reminiscences - culled in the process of a series of interviews. Where Marc's words have been actually quoted (in translation) verbatim, they are recorded indented and in italics. Furthermore, a number of the papers Marc produced at particular key moments have been summarised (by boxing these passages in) – as this whole period is essentially one not of events and meetings but of thinking and questioning and challenging.

At best what has been produced may serve some future PhD student as a trampoline. Bonne chance! And given that the document makes no pretensions to scholarly accuracy, any comments, corrections and additional elements that those equally involved over those years might like to supply in response, would be most welcome and could possibly be included if there were a call for a revision and reprint. (winburton@hotmail.com). I repeat however that this is NOT a comprehensive history of the work done by Churches in Brussels up to 1999, but my rendering of Marc Lenders' thoughts and comments on his work and legacy.

We have both moved on to separate pastures and preoccupations new. For me however the period spent working alongside Marc was one of the most formative in my life; his was a professional influence, inspiration and insight that I cannot overestimate. It was an immense privilege and delight to be able to undertake this all too unsophisticated attempt to portray this period and I wish to record not only my admiration but also huge appreciation to my former colleague and also friend, both for the past years together and this more recent co-operation. As a major chapter in the life of the Churches' Church and Society commitment at European level comes to an end, I hope this will be in some way an appropriate manner of rounding it off, and saying, thank you Marc!

Win Burton
October, 2014

1

MARC LENDERS: WHO WAS (AND WHO IS) THIS MAN? THE FIRST STEPS

Marc Lenders – although raised in a French-speaking Brussels family – had, in accordance with his parents' convictions, attended first a Dutch language school, the Queen Juliana (Protestant) School, and then by contrast, Catteau, the hotbed of anti-clerical intellectual Belgian elitist youth (opposing pole to St Michel).

> *I had a teacher who was always swearing – but knowing that I was a Protestant would constantly apologise to me! I found that really touching, real respect! I was always aware of belonging to a minority – but I was respected. And what happens to someone in a minority situation is that you assert yourself – if not you get swallowed up by the rest. But that was OK – yet it doubtless explains certain things in me … On the wider front too, a religious minority tends to look beyond the frontiers in time and place, seek alliances, and adopt a prophetic stance ecclesiologically speaking. It also has much more freedom to react to changing circumstances than a large national Church: a feature incidentally which may serve them well (relative to some of the larger Churches) in the face of increasing secularisation and depleted membership.*

He had been brought up in the Reformed Protestant – Gereformeerde – Dutch-speaking tradition, as his grandfather on his father's side had been the first Belgian member of the Gereformeerde parish – with a strong Calvinist tradition - in Brussels.

Marc's first theological studies were at the Free University (V.U.) of Amsterdam in 1953-4, a foundation year and a logical step from this Calvinist background. After this (1954-8) he went on to the Free Faculty of Theology in Aix-en-Provence. The Free Faculty was set up in 1938 and was part of the Églises Réformées Évangéliques Indépendantes (EREI); the Free Faculty had been set up by the Églises Réformées Évangéliques Indépendantes after it had refused, for theological reasons, to stay in the Église Réformée de France in 1938. Its parishes were largely in the Midi and the Cévennes, that former region of the *"camisards"* who had fought for religious freedom at the beginning of the XVIII century: a strange but interesting mix of entrenched regionalism and neo-Calvinism.

What was it that made him such a convinced European – and ecumenist?

> *Although I had never felt constrained or deprived of freedom in any way, this experience opened whole new horizons. In my first letter home to my parents I wrote "quel beau pays: vraiment la Provence c'est un pays où il faudrait pouvoir terminer sa vie! » and I found this letter on their mantelpiece when I returned home!*
>
> *During the first 4 or 5 months as a new student one was considered as a « bizut » and expected to undergo a number of rites, such as reading out the menu to the older students before each meal beginning with the words « Vénérables candidats, exécrables bizuts, mes frères » - and any error would lead to one's belongings and room being turned upside down.*
>
> *One student who had a great influence on me was another Belgian, Marc Nelis – older than most of us, and he had been*

imprisoned during the war, but despite his age and life experience he was prepared to go along with all these student customs ! He was an eye-opener for me: he had read Karl Barth and introduced me to his theology, which was not at all the "official" theological discourse in the Faculty at that time. Another breakthrough in my mental universe was through involvement in the so-called Fédé – the French SCM. There were other faculties in Aix-en-Provence so I met students from them too. I also met my wife in these circles, and had the opportunity of listening to and learning from some "big shots" in the Protestant world who were invited to speak: I remember Paul Ricoeur, André Dumas, George Velten (an industrial chaplain who later became part of a working-group in the Ecumenical Centre).

Finally, the war with Algeria which had started in 1954 meant I was confronted with the importance of politics on a daily basis. My views were starting to change: earlier, in a large gathering of students moving to support independence for the former French colonies in Africa, I had voted against the proposed motion for independence. As a Belgian citizen I did not want to interfere in French politics; moreover I wanted to stay loyal to the colonial policy which Belgium was still exercising in the Congo. My brother Henri was supposed to go and work as a Belgian civil servant in the Congo though in fact he never actually went – and we talked about it a lot. The Belgian government at the time thought the Congo should be ready for independence in about thirty years (this was 1960!) and that it would be a mistake for the time being to provide education beyond primary level. There simply weren't any Africans in Belgium at the time. When some came over for the Exposition Universelle in 1958, they were put out of town in Tervuren – the "musée de l'Afrique"! But in the

> *south of France there were many Africans studying law, and the fact that many of my contemporaries were called to serve as "appelés du contingent" in Algeria led to hot debates in the seminary where they were put up, and I soon became involved. I remember one fellow student called Michel Sadorge, who would never be seen without a copy of "L'Express" under his arm, the paper of Jean-Jacques Servant-Schreiber and François Mauriac. I gradually became aware of the importance of politics for theological reflexion. The "journée anti-colonialiste" staged by the Fédé was a particularly memorable occasion. And I ended up becoming President of the Students' Union. By then there was such open opposition between students and teachers that the Dean of the Faculty stepped down.*

After 4 years in Aix, Marc returned to Holland in 1958, married to a French wife, started working on a doctorate, and from 1961-62 did his military service (during the Cuban crisis which was another element that had an influence), based in Antwerp but living at home in Brussels. He became an army chaplain, and during this time had a contact with a French Pastor working in The Hague – Jean de Watteville, of an old Bernese family. This pastor fell ill and asked Marc to take on some of his services in the Walloon (former Huguenot) parish in The Hague. Then, having now a family of three children he accepted the parish of the Waalse Begijnhofkerk in Haarlem (Netherlands) after his military service finished and while still working on his doctorate: a small but enthusiastic Walloon community.

It was here he came across a group that had a profound formative influence.

> *We are in the mid-sixties and Vatican II was in full swing! This group of pastors I joined met every Monday morning to work on the sermon for the following Sunday. Among the pastors from the Dutch Reformed Church (Hervormde Kerk) there was the*

pastor-poet Jan Wit and also a Mennonite pastor. Most of them worked together on the theological review "In de Waagschaal" which broadly followed the teaching of Hendrik Miskotte and Barth.

One summer Marc was holidaying in the region of Marseilles and attended Church, going on to drink a pastis with the pastor there – and told him that he had been sent to a parish in Haarlem while the other pastor said he was off to Sarcelles – « where there is literally nothing! ». This was Esposito Farese, and there and then they decided to twin the two parishes. They were totally different sociologically – in Haarlem many stemmed from Huguenot families that had come over in the XVIth and XVIIth centuries, (including the Enschede family who were responsible for producing Dutch bank notes), whereas Sarcelles in the Paris banlieux was the first of the « grands ensembles » housing experiments in a totally different and socially very difficult environment. Esposito had been in Marseilles before, where he ran a youth club for a very large group of youngsters, before accepting the challenge to move to Sarcelles and, in accordance with the ERF, set up a parish there and make it financially independent within ten years – which he managed to do! Alongside his pastoral work Esposito Farese was an artist, a painter, and strove to involve his parishioners, uprooted from their natural home environment, in cultural activities and happenings.[1] Over the years that followed, this twinning involved exchanges not only of youngsters but also the older parishioners. Marc took groups both of adults and young people from Haarlem to Sarcelles regularly in the fallow period between Christmas and New Year where they put on animations and activities for people there: quite some culture shock, and another foretaste of the diversity of Europe …

[1] The friendship continued after Marc returned to Brussels, and he remembers taking Espo to meet Carl Rabus and his wife, the painter of the picture still hanging today in the meeting room of the Ecumenical Centre donated by Helmut von Verschuer.

This – along with his time in France – was Marc's preparation for ecumenism and Europe.

Yet at that time nobody was talking about Europe – at least in the circles in which Marc was moving. When he announced his intention of moving to Brussels to the group of Pastors with whom he met regularly in Holland they reacted by saying, "what on earth for?" – they saw it almost as a betrayal. In people's minds Brussels meant NATO and there was a considerable degree of mistrust concerning NATO – seen as the Americans, military, what was Germany's role in it all….? There was a lot of talk too of the division of Germany in general, and Berlin in particular.

So it was, that these early formative years – first in Brussels, then in France and the Netherlands – came to an end in the summer of 1966. That year Marc moved back to Brussels at the request of a group of pastors and civil servants who from 1959 had been concerned about the needs of the many civil servants working in the European institutions. He found the city changed: it had taken on an international dimension. He arrived there like Candide coming to a practically unknown land. Before opting for Brussels Marc had been in contact with the French Protestant Federation over a French Protestant parish in Marrakech. But the President of the Federation wisely dissuaded him from applying for this job, which really required someone with considerable experience given the political tensions reigning there. There was also a vacancy in a Protestant parish in Liège which he enquired about from Jean Rey (whose father had been a pastor and who would become President of the European Commission). But in the end Marc opted for this project being launched by a group of pastors and civil servants with the backing of the Protestant Churches in the Netherlands, Germany, Great Britain, France and Belgium. Quite apart from the quality of this challenge, the job would permit schooling in French for his children and enable his wife to teach in the Lycée Français in Brussels. The move was initiated by the

Baron van Lynden, a Dutch member of the Katelijne parish in Brussels (later to become the Nieuwe Graanmarkt Kerk). Baron van Lynden was the Secretary General of the Benelux (that had existed before the European Commission came into existence, for Belgium, Holland and Luxembourg), which had done all the ground work on customs union.

> *For me, this European project presented an opportunity to set aside that feeling of fatality which cast its shadow over the history of the people of Europe. These people were constantly and inexorably in confrontation one with another and here were the first attempts to find a method for tackling conflicts of interest in a new way. As a child I had learned to fear the Germans. And here in Brussels I discovered that people from countries which had been at war, were looking for a way to overcome what seemed to be a recurrent and ever deadlier confrontation.*

The job was certainly not clearly defined – but that was part of its charm, and Marc was aware of its place in a broader, ecumenical and European project. There were three main expectations nonetheless: from Dr Emmen, General Secretary of the Netherlands Reformed Church (Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk, NHK) that he would preach from time to time at the Katelijne Kerk in Brussels; from Baron van Lynden (who at that time chaired the Board of the so-called *Groupe Oecuménique de Bruxelles)* that he would teach religious instruction in the European School (these two were his main paymasters); and that he would look after the Ecumenical Centre. His time was spent initially taking stock of what was going on locally. There were the monthly lectures taking place in the Rue Belliard church; there was a group of pastors that met – Quistorp, Regard, Bordier, Rocteur, Fagel, Nomen, Isherwood were some of the names.

On 25 August 1966 Marc wrote to the NHK accepting the post in Brussels – and was then informed that his installation would be held at

8pm on 25 September in the rue Belliard Church. Pastor Gilly preached the sermon. The initial contract from the Brussels side was for two years, starting on 1/9/66, as a « collaborateur permanent » with accommodation and heating paid by the Ecumenical Centre; he would be responsible for 6 hours of lessons a week at the European School.

2

IN THE BEGINNING

What had led up to this moment? In the fifties and early sixties dialogue and discussion were taking place among a variety of people in a variety of walks of professional life and a variety of largely unconnected circles (as will be described below) which were to come together by 1964 to constitute a *de facto* though totally unorganised platform, on which the foundations of work in what both as a building and a legal association came to be known as the "Ecumenical Centre", could be laid.

In 1957 Helmut von Verschuer[2] was in Geneva for three months along with representatives of the other five member states, for negotiations in the GATT agricultural committee of the agriculture chapter of a signed but still unratified EEC Treaty establishing the European Economic Community/EEC (Treaty of Rome). One afternoon he decided to take the initiative to go and see Visser 't Hooft at the World Council of Churches. This was at the instigation of his aunt, Sister Vera von Trott (of the Lutheran Community of Imshausen), who had always kept a special eye on this particular young relative since his

[2] At that stage working for the German government's Ministry of Agriculture; from 1958-1987 he worked in DG VI (Agriculture) of the European Commission in Brussels, and was after Baron van Lynden, Chairman of the Ecumenical Centre until 1984.

youth and war years, and now with his appointment to the new European project saw an opening for a different approach to reconciliation that had been born in the resistance movements during the war but had yet to find its true incarnation. With the fate of Adam von Trott (executed for his part in the plot to assassinate Hitler in 1944), and with Bruder Hans Eisenberg in the Imshausen Community having been a deserter before the end of the war, these were family matters of huge importance and with which Visser 't Hooft will have been familiar. Visser 't Hooft on this occasion informed Helmut of the existence of the CCREC, the Committee on the Christian Responsibility for European Co-operation[3], and invited him, from autumn 1958, to join.

In April 1950, a month before the signing of the Schuman Declaration, the CCIA and WCC Study Department had organised a conference in the Ecumenical Institute in Bossey on "The Church and International Law", during which talks had taken place between Visser 't Hooft and André Philip (then President of the Socialist Movement for the United States of Europe). Shortly after the Schuman Declaration the Ecumenical Commission on European Co-operation (ECEC)[4] was set up as a response, bringing together Protestant politicians and Churchmen; Paul Abrecht was made secretary. From the beginning politicians from Britain and Scandinavia were also present. In autumn 1950 an Executive Committee was set up with André Philip

[3] For a full description of the activities of this group see article by Lucian Leustean in the Journal of Church and State vol.53 no.3 pp.442-471 (2011), and for a full account of the early years from 1950 in both Catholic and Protestant camps, see the book by the same author, "The Ecumenical Movement and the Making of the European Community", OUP 2014.

[4] This first name was altered to CCREC in 1953 (Committee on the Christian Responsibility for European Co-operation) and subsequently in 1966 to CSGEU: the Christian Study Group for European Unity, or GECUE in French (Groupe d'Etudes Chrétien pour l'Unité Européenne). These changes of name, under pressure from the CCIA, were designed to indicate that this was merely a reflexion group and in no way officially representing the Churches – nor "competing" with the Conference of European Churches (CEC) which had meanwhile been set up.

as Chairman and Connie Patijn (a high-level civil servant in the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs) as Vice-Chairman, the other members being Max Kohnstamm, Gustav Heinemann, Kenneth Grubb (CCIA London), Denis de Rougemont and Pierre Mahillon[5]. At its first meeting in Paris on 13-14 September 1950, "all members were invited to share their personal views on what European co-operation meant for them"[6]. The first "official" meeting took place in Frankfurt from 13-14 January 1951. They agreed to meet every 4-5 months. Rearmament of West Germany had been a major issue of discussion in the group – though by no means supported by all: there were the "Atlanticists" such as the Dutch Max Kohnstamm (first Secretary of the European Coal and Steel Community), looking particularly to NATO, and there was even a young American (Ball) in the group who came over just for these meetings. Others like the French, including André Philip, insisted that the last thing they wanted was to think about another war. The other option for a post-World War II peace structure was the Coal and Steel Community (established in 1951) – which Britain did not want to join as it wanted to keep control of this sector: the dilemma was, is it too important for national self-image to pool resources such as coal and steel, or is this *the* basis for avoiding future conflict? Nevertheless, the failure to establish a European Defence Community in 1954 was a major disappointment to many members. The Western European Union was subsequently established with a different focus.

At around this time Paul Abrecht's increasing workload at the WCC (Evanston Assembly, 1954) led him to withdraw from active leadership of the group which subsequently became more familiarly known as the "Groupe Patijn"; he continued nonetheless as a member, and as

[5] Pierre Mahillon, an eminent Belgian lawyer, had represented the Federation of Belgian Protestant Churches at the WCC Assembly in 1948; he served for many years as a member of the Board of the Ecumenical Centre

[6] Lucian Leustean op cit.

rapporteur of the group. Occasionally this group organised weekend retreats – including on one occasion in the library of Windsor Castle! (It was in 1968 and Jean Rey commented how happy he was to meet and discuss with some young people in this Year of Youth Discontent …) Hans-Hermann Walz, General Secretary of the German Evangelical Kirchentag from 1954-81, was a German participant at this meeting, succeeding G. Heinemann.

There was also, contemporaneously, a "Paris group" of civil servants working in different international bodies based there – Noël Salter was one, Michael Franklin (OEEC – Organisation for European Economic Co-operation), John Stone (NATO), Henri Burgelin (Western European Union). This group also held occasional weekend retreats (the first being in May 1959) in Bièvre south of Paris for example.

Although there was no organic link between these groups and the Ecumenical Centre and the Consultative Commission of Churches established in 1964, many people such as Jean Rey, Noël Salter, Pierre Mahillon and Helmut von Verschuer were involved in more than one of them, and they used to invite the others to their events. The Patijn group played an active part in the lead up to the 1974 Roehampton conference (discussed later see pp. 59 ff.) (and *finally* in 1973 the entry of Great Britain into the EEC) and then felt it had finished its job – and ceased operating. By then it had also started working with other Roman Catholics such as OCIPE (led by Père Jean Weydert, a French Jesuit).

A meeting took place in Geneva (13-14 June 1964) between a number of members of the Patijn Group (including Connie Patijn, André Philip, Jean Rey, Kenneth Grubb and Kenneth Johnstone), representatives of key Churches (President Westphal and General Secretary Appel from France, General Secretary Emmen from the Netherlands, Bishop Wilson of Chichester, UK and Pastor Fagel of Belgium), representatives of Geneva organisations (Visser 't Hooft (WCC), Glen Garfield Williams (CEC), Allan Booth and Dr Slotemaker

de Bruine (CCIA)) plus Helmut von Verschuer (Ecumenical Group in Brussels) – in which the point was made that the new political institutions in Western Europe presented a new challenge to the Churches and it was proposed to set up a Consultative Committee of Churches for the European Communities, with a secretariat to support the various Brussels-based Christian groups. Helmut went on from Geneva to discuss this further with President Wischmann in the EKD Aussenamt. Helmut had previously (in 1962) already been invited by Visser 't Hooft and General Secretary Emmen of the NHK to attend the 3rd Assembly of the newly formed Conference of European Churches (CEC) in Nyborg, and then in 1964 was invited to the 4th Conference of the CEC on the boat MV Bornholm (at which the CEC was formally constituted), to present the project for this Consultative Committee in the plenary session.

Quite separately from this Baron van Lynden[7], as President of the Brussels Ecumenical Group ("Groupe Oecuménique Protestant"), announced on 14 October 1959 the setting up of two study groups:

- group 1 on "la position de l'homme dans les institutions européennes" directed by Pastors Fagel and Gilly ;
- group 2 on "L'Église et le chrétien dans l'Europe en voie d'unification économique et politique" led by Pastors Lannes and Steinmann.

The secretariat for these two groups was managed by Helmut von Verschuer. These were in fact the emanation of the regular worship

[7] It was Max Kohnstamm who had brought Baron van Lynden to Luxembourg to get involved in the Coal and Steel Community which was based there at the time – and thence he had moved to Brussels with the setting up of the BENELUX. Van Lynden had done a doctoral thesis during his time in the Resistance in Holland on international relations; Kohnstamm was in the Dutch Resistance at the same time and conversations on the future of Europe must have taken place between them. These elements emerged from a recent conversation Marc held with Baron van Lynden's widow in Veere.

services held on the second Wednesday of each month in the Protestant Church on the rue Belliard and celebrated by the different pastors (languages, denominations) in rotation, the so-called "groupe des pasteurs et fonctionnaires européens responsables de cultes oecuméniques européens", made up of 6 pastors and 10 lay people and reaching out to about 100 people at the time.[8] This group reported on its activities between 1959 and 1964 to the first meeting of the Commission consultative in November 1964 (recorded in a memo dated June 1964). The first meeting took place in November 1958 in the house of Baron van Lynden; subsequently they met in the rue Belliard Church: they presented each Church in turn to the group, held a discussion and then an act of worship using the liturgy of that particular Church. These people were fervent Europeans – but at the same time saw this closely linked to their Christian conviction (as Protestants and Anglicans). Contacts were also made with the Foyer Catholique Européen which brought EC civil servants together and held a weekly mass in Italian, and was responsible for religious teaching in the European School. The group also organised retreats – the fifth was held in 1965 in Maleizen, Overijse and led by Pastor Regard – the invitation being signed by Baron van Lynden, Pierre Mahillon, Helmut von Verschuer, Maria Thorne, Irene Eichert and Gerrit Lindijer.

On 22 July 1964 Helmut wrote[9] on behalf of the Groupe Oecuménique Protestant de Bruxelles to Pasteur Descamps (of the Federation of Protestant Churches in Belgium) asking him to convene

[8] The Pasteurs were MM Fagel, Gilly, Kaibel, Lindijer, Nagel and Quistorp; the lay-people were MM van Lynden, Colomb de Daunant, Greppi, Gressmann, Heringa, Jansen, van Duyn, von Hanstein, von Verschuer and Mlle Eichert.

[9] Based on a "note" written in July 1964 qv "[les discussions] ont abouti à la conclusion que la responsabilité commune des Églises dans les pays membres des Communautés européennes est engagée lorsqu'il s'agit de manifester la présence des Églises évangéliques dans une partie de l'Europe qui se réorganise et s'unifie sur le plan politique, économique et social et en particulier lorsqu'il s'agit d'intensifier la vie spirituelle des chrétiens qui collaborent activement à la construction des Communautés européennes".

the responsible people in the Churches of the Six plus Great Britain – at the suggestion of the WCC and the CCREC and after different discussions with these Churches[10]. He suggested a meeting if possible in November 1964, this being after the CEC Assembly, and so that things could then move further in 1965 (the meeting that was to be held on 10/3/1965). This was to be expressed (in full accord with Visser 't Hooft, General Secretary of the WCC[11]) by

- setting up a Consultative Commission of Churches for the European Communities
- designation of a person to intensify the work of the Groupe Oecuménique Protestant (soon to be renamed – at least for a short time - the "Centre Oecuménique Évangélique à Bruxelles"), with the Churches in Brussels, the Committee on the Christian Responsibility for European Co-operation and other Christian groups in Europe.

Thus it was that on 19th November 1964 a first meeting took place of people from the Protestant and Anglican Churches, styling themselves the "Commission consultative d'Églises pour les Communautés européennes". The meeting was chaired by Dr Emmen, the *scriba*

[10] The discussions between von Verschuer and Geneva on the one hand, and President Wischmann (Aussenamt der EKD) on the other, in June/July 1964 (referred to on p. 25 above) , are summarised in a note dated 21/7/64. There also exists a list of questions compiled by Ds Fagel looking at what brings us together as Christians in relation to the European Communities.

[11] Later on under Philip Potter, relations with the WCC became more strained – as on the one hand the influence of the Churches in Africa (and later the Caribbean and Asian Churches) made themselves felt with a swing towards the left (Programme to Combat Racism and support for the armed resistance against Portuguese colonialism and apartheid in South Africa), and on the other the European Community was seen in WCC circles (and also in the Churches - for example Britain) as "fortress Europe" with a less good press. At the outset however the German Churches in particular, and also the Dutch were fervently in favour of the European project (and prepared to put some money into it). Nationalism was seen as the no.1 enemy and here was a chance to make a new start after the horrors of WW II.

(General Secretary) of the NHK. Baron von Hanstein of the European Commission addressed the meeting on the European Communities and religious activity on the Brussels scene; as did Baron van Lynden speaking on the question of the European School; and the chief subject under discussion was how to keep the Churches informed of what was happening at European level, and how to represent them in the framework of the European Communities. It was apparent that there was quite some common ground between the Consultative Committee/Ecumenical Centre and the CCREC, and it was suggested they should seek to co-operate. The statutes of the Ecumenical Centre in Brussels aisbl were presented, being described as an emanation of the Groupe Oecuménique Protestant à Bruxelles.

The first Assemblée Générale of this Centre Oecuménique was held on 16/2/65. The need for a staff member was raised – who should also have some responsibilities in the European School (religious education). Helmut took it upon himself to make contact with a number of European Churches with a view to finding and funding a staff member to run the work. As for the future activity of this office, various working groups were set up to look at

- people active in different Brussels parishes interested in ecumenical activities
- preparation of the monthly lectures
- relations with Roman Catholics
- planning of themes for monthly lectures in 1966
- contact with different local parishes

On 28 January 1965 a Committee (consisting of Dr Emmen, President Wischmann, Noël Salter, Pasteur Descamps, Pierre Mahillon, Helmut von Verschuer and the Baron van Lynden) was set up to appoint a staff member. The name of Pastor Helmut Hochstetter of the EKD was mentioned, and on 10 March the second meeting of the Commission consultative interviewed Pastor Hochstetter and considered what should

be his job description. On 7 December of the same year the Commission consultative met for a third time and this time interviewed a Pastor Ruhfus. Fears were expressed that such an appointment might lead to a "para-communauté" which could threaten the life and membership of the existing German parish in Brussels – both candidates had probably expected to be in charge of a "European parish". Pastor Ruhfus nonetheless accepted the job and was in principle ready to take up his appointment on 1 May 1966: a job description was drawn up. This same meeting discussed a letter from the CCREC to the Churches (issued in October 1965) on the current "crisis" in European thinking. It was agreed that the points raised called for serious study and a possible conference to discuss where Christian responsibility lay in this field.

Obviously something happened early in 1966 which led in the end to Pierre Mahillon writing on 13/5/66 to offer the job instead to Marc Lenders. The BCC had asked to see Marc first, in London, as they were the only Church never to have met him, and he was invited over on 10 May: he stayed with Elizabeth and Noël Salter (who was the Secretary for International Affairs at the British Council of Churches in Eaton Square at that time) and also met Paul Oestreicher who was responsible for links with Eastern Europe. Noël Salter had previously worked for the W. European Union in Paris, and it was essentially thanks to him that the British Churches became actively involved with the Consultative Commission based in Brussels many years before British entry to the EEC in 1973. Marc was then invited to attend the second Assemblée Générale of the Centre Oecuménique on 20/6/66. Already he sensed something of a dilemma – he was to be employed by the Centre Oecuménique in legal terms, but feel responsible to the Churches (CCCEC): Noël Salter underlined his need to feel committed to serving the Churches.

In 1966 Marc Lenders was formally installed by his former boss, Dr Emmen of the Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk, in the church in rue Belliard, to be the staff member of the Ecumenical Centre in Brussels.

> *In retrospect I think the two German candidates for the job must have got cold feet because this was not a job with any clear parameters related to an existing job or relating to existing institutions (the German parish for example). There were expectations – from the local group on the one hand and from the Churches on the other – but there was no guidance, no roadmap.*
>
> *And the second major factor was that this European Community was basically a Common Market – and why on earth should Churches be concerned about a market? It would have been different if it had had responsibility for education or bioethical questions at that stage.*
>
> *So the Churches had to follow the lead of those already deeply involved in the project through their work in the Institutions: they were the ones who realised something important for the Churches was at stake here, they were flagging it up and this was a totally unique, unusual phenomenon. And it has proved an uphill battle ever since - and still is today – to persuade the Churches to listen to the message coming from those breaking new ground at European level and translate it into a new social reality rather than try to impose on this neologism the old wording and sentence structure well tried on the home front.*

3

THE EARLY YEARS 1966-1974

Until 1975 half of Marc's time was spent teaching in the European School. The rest of the time was spent initially seeing who were the potential partners for work in the Ecumenical Centre, and what inter-church contact already existed at European level. The Commission Consultative at its 4th meeting in the Salle Benelux on 26 September 1966, noted « on se déclare prêt à laisser le Pasteur Lenders disposer de toute la liberté requise pour l'exercise de ses activités » - a *carte blanche* if ever there were one !

Different people locally however had different ideas already about what such a person – and such an office - might do. Barbara Simons, later to become an MEP, and Elias Verploeg working in the personnel department of the European Commission were all too aware of the isolation that working in Brussels, however well paid, could bring with it. Guy Spitaels, a professor of sociology at the ULB (later to become a government minister) had been asked by Jean Rey (President of the European Commission) to conduct an enquiry into the morale of the Commission's staff, and Marc took part in this; Elias Verploeg was certainly aware of a degree of malaise, a disturbing record of depression and even suicide among the civil servants (though probably in reality no higher than average for such an administration). The Anglicans thought Marc should be patrolling the corridors of the Berlaymont in a dog collar ready to mete out pastoral care and spiritual advice at every turn. The Foyer Catholique run by the Jesuit Fathers was already working

much in this style – with activities and services for civil servants' families: that was very much the Catholic pastoral approach. Marc however did not feel comfortable with this. He felt there was something phoney about services where hymns in German alternate with prayers in English followed by a sermon in French: alright occasionally maybe for the symbolism of it but not as a basis for regular parish worship. More important than this aspect, was the need for these people – already uprooted from their home culture - to find a place to belong to as their own parish, with familiar cultural and linguistic roots and their own support network and pastoral care, much more down to earth than the ivory tower life as a « European » in the Berlaymont. And indeed there may well have been some explicit or perceived suspicion among the local parish priests from different national communities and denominations that a European Protestant parish could cream off some of their most active parishioners, so Marc did not go down that path. Should NATO move from France to Belgium, Marc was instructed to make contact with them too and foster dialogue.

One of the early groups Marc became involved with at the invitation of Dr Emmen at that 4th meeting of the Commission Consultative was the so-called Patijn group or GECUE mentioned earlier (pp. 23 ff). From 11-12 June 1966 and on a suggestion from Helmut, he attended a retreat organised by the so-called Paris Group CVICSD (Christian Vocation in International Civil Service and Diplomacy set up by Noël Salter, who had subsequently moved to a job with the BCC in London – p. 29 above) – to help through his person to bring this group and the Groupe Protestant Œcuménique together. The theme for discussion was « La vocation chrétienne dans la fonction publique internationale ». Hans-Hermann Walz, German member of the Patijn group, also participated in this meeting.

There were already a number of local initiatives within parishes and linking parishes ecumenically and even more widely, which Marc

gradually became involved with and which then became informally (though never structurally) linked with the work and activities of the Ecumenical Centre, often with an overlap of persons. One was the Groupe des familles chrétiennes du Fond'Roy in Uccle which had begun meeting in about 1963/4[12] at the instigation of the Protestant Pastor Westphal from Luxembourg. The key members were Philippe and Marie-Françoise Chevalier (RC – who lived in avenue Fond'Roy), Alexis and Mariette Komarewsky (he Russian Orthodox, she Belgian Catholic), Anne and Jacques Lombard (both Protestant), Sidney (Anglican, British) and Maria (Swiss, Reformed) Thorne and Helmut and Hanni von Verschuer (Protestant/RC). For a number of years they invited a series of theologians of different denominations to speak during the winter months, with the evening concluding with a service taken by the speaker according to his own tradition. Some notable speakers included Willem Visser 't Hooft, Roger Schütz (Community of Taizé), Prof Paul Evdovkimow (Orthodox Professor from Paris), and many others.[13] This was no mere cosy house group: around 300 people would attend on a regular basis; the Catholic priest of the Uccle parish provided a room they could use (which he named the Oikumene room in their honour) and the meetings were widely appreciated.

In 1967 the von Verschuers moved from Uccle to Waterloo where a small Catholic parish was in the process of formation under Abbé Charles Deman: mass on Sunday was held in the local school hall, until the architect Jean Cosse designed a small church. The core of the congregation was drawn from the existing bible-study group led by Abbé Charles and the (Swiss) Reformed Pastor Regard (from the rue Belliard church in Brussels), and when the latter moved back to

[12] I am deeply grateful to Helmut von Verschuer for much of the background here.

[13] Helmut recalls the Chief Rabbi of Belgium speaking one evening – and quite evidently very moved, he said it was the first time in his life he had addressed a Christian gathering. Vatican II was in full swing!

Switzerland, Marc was to take his place. The European Nuncio of the time – Eugene Cardinale, who was a personal friend of Noël Salter and Helmut – would officiate for solemn communion once a year.

A number of those involved in these two groups – including notably Philippe Chevalier and Marc Lenders – went on to set up the Comité interecclésial on the Brussels level in 1973: it has now marked over 40 years' existence (and the long service of both Marc and Philippe was commemorated at this celebration). This had emerged from a bible study group with people such as Père Marie-Joseph, Pierre Regard and others with a particular idea of supporting « mixed » (Protestant/Catholic) European marriages. This group finally established a base in the parish of Abbé Deman in Waterloo and Helmut and Hanni von Verschuer were regularly associated with it. Philippe Chevalier was also involved in another group that put on lectures in the Prince d'Orange district of Brussels (on the road going towards Waterloo) and in Uccle. They invited Visser 't Hooft to speak on one occasion. The *pastores loci* from this Committee were regularly invited to attend the meetings of the Commission Consultative (and its successor bodies) so as precisely to maintain the links with the local parishes in which European civil servants were worshipping. Contact was also made (again with Philippe Chevalier in tow) with the university parishes in Leuven (French and Flemish). An active figure there before the division of the University of Leuven (and creation of Louvain-la-Neuve) in 1968 was Pierre Parré (a University chaplain) who was actively involved in pursuing the so-called Malines conversations[14] with the Anglican Church in York: for the RC Church in Belgium, "ecumenism" meant essentially dialogue with the Anglicans! Pierre put Marc in touch with the Chanoine Dessain

[14] The Malines Conversations were a series of informal discussions exploring possible paths towards unity between the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of England. They took place in Malines in Belgium between 1921 and 1927, and were initiated by Cardinal Mercier of Belgium.

who himself had been directly involved in the Malines conversations, and through him he met Cardinal Suenens. During the meeting with the Cardinal, Marc took the opportunity to ask if there was any possibility for the Roman Catholic National Bishops' Conferences to set up a body consisting of representatives of the different Conferences of the countries that had become members of the European Community. Cardinal Suenens replied that Vatican II had given more space to the national Bishops' Conferences – which in itself was a step in the right direction – but that to speak about a European initiative was, in his view, premature. Marc used this opportunity to raise the question of the official recognition by the Belgian public authorities of the Orthodox Church. This latter suggestion apparently found its way through the ecclesiastical and political maze as some months later, the Orthodox Church was officially recognised. Links with Catholicism in Belgium were important to add weight to the project not least in the eyes of the Belgian state.

> *The Ecumenical Commission or ECCSEC – one of the later successor bodies to the Consultative Commission of Churches – had little or no contact with the Orthodox Churches other than with sporadic individuals, until 1981 when Greece joined the European Community.*
>
> *One of the members of the Ecumenical Centre was however an Orthodox priest; and the weekly prayers held in the European Commission's "salle de recueillement" in the Berlaymont building were greatly enhanced by Pierre Rosniansky, the son of Russian exiles in Belgium, an Orthodox and musician who would intone our liturgies. Another forum was the Comité Interecclésial de Bruxelles which was made up of representatives of the Anglican, Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant Churches.*

Once Greece had become a full member of the European Community, contacts were made with the Church of Greece, and the decision was taken to send two representatives to the ECCSEC Assemblies. These were the Bishops of Corinth and of Zakynthos. The two of them attended a number of ECCSEC Assembly meetings but were clearly puzzled by the way ECCSEC was relating to and working with the European institutions.

It is something I regret to this day that there was never any constructive response to the invitation extended directly by economist Harry de Lange, the representative of the Council of Churches in the Netherlands, to the Greek Orthodox delegates to set out more explicitly what was the Orthodox angle on questions of Church and Society.[15] *The Church of Greece withdrew its representatives immediately after this, and no explanation was ever given. What I learnt from this was that by opening up to Greece, the European Community was widening its cultural horizon quite considerably: the Byzantine and the Latin worlds were moving closer! This would raise questions of its own: in most existing member states society was becoming increasingly secular, and the Churches were having to rethink their place and behaviour in that society; Greece on the other hand was a society where Church and State were mutually complementary.*

Later in this paper it will emerge how the subsequent Ecumenical Commission – EECCS - and CEC had to show considerable flexibility of understanding in order to constitute a new joint entity where both could find their place. I personally am

[15] At the EECCS meeting in January 1985 Mr Papantoniou from the Church of Greece took the floor in answer to Harry de Lange, stating "it was important for the Church of Greece to participate in the work according to its own sensitivities, especially on the subject of the finality of the European Community and the human dimension of this finality. What man for what Europe?"

convinced that amongst the many difficulties encountered during this integration process, the society question – that is a Western European, for the most part secular world versus a world where state authorities and the Church are closely entangled – played a significant part just below the surface of all these discussions.
From what I have gathered from conversations with staff members of the Church and Society Commission of the CEC, this cultural difference has not prevented the working groups in which these different confessions are present from doing good work together. This gives me much satisfaction.

Another group which gave Marc many entries to the European Commission was called "Vie Nouvelle", a largely Catholic group which was part of the "Vie Nouvelle" network based in France, and primarily inspired by Emmanuel Mounier, known in France as the representative of the Christian school of thought called "personnalisme", of which Nicolas Berdyaev (a Russian Orthodox theologian) was a founder. Jacques Delors and some other European civil servants concurred with this approach and vision, which was trying mainly to overcome the dilemma of individualism versus collectivism – that was denounced as a European disease. In Brussels, the group "Vie Nouvelle" was ecumenically minded: Protestants were participating with their families in VN activities; almost all of them were European civil servants. Pierre van Stappen of the Foyer Catholique was also a member of the group – which in a way was a forerunner of the Opstal Community and the European village of La Viale in the Cévennes.

Fairly early on Marc also undertook a tour of the different Protestant Churches in the EEC member countries. In Paris Marc met Pasteur Nicolas, and was at once welcomed by Suzanne de Dietrich, well known in the WSCM and renowned for her biblical exegeses, who invited him forthwith to join a retreat for Parisians and some people from Brussels in Bièvre – including John Stone who worked for NATO (which at that

time was still based in Fontainebleau, until de Gaulle threw it out), and would later become a member of the Board of the Ecumenical Centre.

> *There I was, on a biblical retreat, and John Stone greeted me heartily, "I know Haarlem old chap, magnificent golf course there!"*

In Germany Marc visited the EKD Aussenamt in the Bockenheimer Landesstrasse: a first – and immediately excellent - contact with Adolf Wischmann. These were the Churches, along with the Fédération des Églises protestantes de Belgique (André van Aelbroek) that made up the early Commission Consultative.

Fairly early on too – in 1966/7 – Marc became aware of a certain number of Church organisations already operating at European level – in particular the European Contact Group on Church and Industry bringing together industrial mission pastors (at that time under Paul Loeffler) – and Marc saw the interest of working together with such groups that already had a European dynamic and structure to some extent, and for whose field of work the European institutions' initiatives were relevant (this is further developed below, p. 45). Paul Loeffler was one of the first visitors to Marc's home-cum-office in avenue Charles Thielemans. Interestingly, the Church offices Marc visited on his round of different member states never mentioned these Church organisations already working at a European – and often ecumenical level.

Another early visitor to av Charles Thielemans was Praeses Wischmann, head of the Aussenamt of the EKD in Frankfurt, bringing with him Heinrich Albertz who had been mayor of Berlin from 1966-7; and on another occasion Graf von Üzküll, on the staff of the CCIA in the WCC and a former member of the German resistance.

At the beginning it was also a question of sorting out the financial side of things. Pastor Lindijer ran the parents' association at the European School which paid for classes in religious education which

were not as such part of the core curriculum of that school but provided by outside teachers, largely clergy from the different national groups and denominations. The payment for this teaching did not go directly into Marc's pocket but was paid onto the account of the Ecumenical Centre from which Marc's salary was then paid, the whole being managed by the Conseil d'Administration or Board of the Ecumenical Centre, which was Marc's official employer. The financial side was looked after at this stage by Baron van Lynden. Other members of the Board of the Ecumenical Centre in these early days were Pierre Mahillon, Helmut von Verschuer, Irene Eichert, John Stone, Sidney and Maria Thorne.

Early on Marc was asked to write a first paper outlining his impression of the work and its potential after being there for a few months. He wrote about the theology of the Exodus – and produced a paper that was discussed at the fifth meeting on 31 May 1967 on "L'activité au sein de la Communauté européenne qui pourrait intéresser les Églises"; at the same meeting Jean Rey gave a presentation on "Nationalism is dead" leading to a discussion on "how nationalist" are the Churches. The new Treasurer Mr Luebbers presented a balance sheet.

A part of Marc's salary was also in the form of his family home in avenue Charles Thielemans and which served as office for the Ecumenical Centre in the early days.

> *I remember a meeting in 1968 in our house with Georges Kaibel – an extraordinary fellow! He came from a Jewish – Berlin – family with Baltic origins: in 1933 his parents ran a bookshop. He was a spartakist with Rosa Luxembourg. When Stalin began putting a number of key CP members – including many Jews – on trial in 1936, Kaibel felt it would be safer to leave Germany and managed to get himself appointed to the USSR trade delegation in Stockholm, but he was not comfortable there either so moved on to France and joined the Résistance during the war, in the*

> *Cévennes. There he heard Barth – met other Protestants – and became a Pastor and then teacher of religion! I last saw him about 3 or 4 years ago and he was still driving! And I remember at that meeting in our house in '68, when we were all saying, Watch out, things are starting to move … that he said, You people have absolutely no idea what a revolution really is! He was tough and implacable, fascinating.*

It was probably Barbara Simons - an active member of the German parish, interested in theology, and for whom Georges Kaibel was something of a mentor - who moved things on to the next stage.

We were in avenue Thielemans discussing the 1966 Church and Society Conference of the WCC in Uppsala, staged by Paul Abrecht – a real godsend for us as it was a conference for the laity, not for Church leaders. Jean Rey, André Philip and others had attended it. On this occasion, Barbara Simons and her husband, Georges Kaibel, Visser 't Hooft's son and others were there.

By now it was becoming clear that the Centre ought to have its own premises – and these were found very close to the EC headquarters. For this Barbara Simons was a great help. So it was that two rooms came to be rented in a house in av d'Auderghem. It was Barbara Simons – who later became an MEP - who bought those famous black armchairs which nobody could get up out of!

At this stage – and indeed until 1973 or so – there was just the kitchen and Marc's office on the ground floor, and another small office half-way up the stairs – rented from Dr and Mrs Themelin next door. But the location of 23 avenue d'Auderghem was ideal, a stone's throw from the Rond-Point Schuman and the European Commission's Berlaymont building.

From time to time there were sporadic contacts with Eastern Europe – but very little, this being very much the domain rather of the CEC. The Christian Peace Conference was a body to watch – launched in

1958 by the Czech theologian Jozef Hromadka after attending the second WCC Assembly in Evanston in 1954. It was made up of Christians (including Orthodox) who wanted to accompany in critical fashion the political developments taking place in Eastern Europe. Marc saw the CPC as something of a potential model, albeit in very different political circumstances, wondering whether the Churches in Western Europe could not position themselves in a similarly critical way in relation to the European Institutions. This CPC was in some ways to herald the Prague Spring. The BCC regularly attended its meetings, as did Georges Casalis from France. But soon after August 1968 (invasion of Prague) Marc received an invitation from the Patriarchate in Moscow inviting him to attend a CPC meeting in *Moscow*: this was apparently part of the "normalisation" process boasted by Khrushchev, people from elsewhere including Africa were also invited – but Marc wondered what was actually going on and contacted Georges Casalis and the BCC for advice. Georges was literally in tears on the phone, so tragic he saw developments there now – and he said that no-one invited from the West had been able to obtain a visa, this was the Soviet Union's way of demolishing the CPC. Marc declined the invitation. Jozef Hromadka died soon after – it was said this move killed him. The Russians subsequently took the CPC over and further attempts at contact between East and West were largely in vain.

There were formal reciprocal arrangements from the outset with the CEC, for staff members (Glen Garfield Williams for CEC and Marc for CCCEC) to attend each other's Assemblies (and Win Burton attended the 1979 Assembly in Crete). Marc recalls that G G Williams always spoke out on behalf of the minority Latin Churches – but otherwise the main line was to ensure that nothing happened to upset relations with Churches in the East, as the CEC was a lifeline for communication and mobility for their members.

I occasionally attended CEC consultations as well. I remember one in the DDR in Bukow near the Polish border in December 1976 – where the Reformed Church of Belgium[16] *as it still was then, had sent two delegates, Claude Gouzée and Roger Laurent, a lawyer, both actively committed members of that Church. My job was always to present what work we were doing in CCEC. I clearly recall one occasion when I did this, and a CEC delegate from Russia reacted quite violently, saying the EEC was a Western Capitalist venture, with all the usual diatribe. And then that evening he – I think his name was Sokolowsky – sought me out and asked me if I had children etc.: that was the Russians all over! A totally different man! Sadly he was killed in a plane crash over Prague a few years later. But you could feel that the Russians were holding all the reins at that time and everyone else in CEC had to march in step.*

I remember another conversation one evening with a Hungarian who was thirsty to follow all that was happening on the literary scene in the West – but generally speaking it felt like talking with people who internally were still living in the world they had known before.

And in the Churches themselves it was as if time had stood still altogether. I was hugely struck by the importance of the written word: everything one put in a report was scrutinised and the use of one term rather than another – proexistence rather than coexistence was one example – could make all the difference for whether a delegate could attend the next meeting or not. In such a context it was difficult to see CEC's work as a reality comparable to our own. Later it was different: after Vancouver (WCC) I went to the GDR with a delegation from the Raad van

[16] The ERB (Église Réformée de Belgique) was one of the founder members of the United Protestant Church in Belgium (EPUB) created in 1978.

Kerken (NL) and we were discussing nuclear rearmament with some very open people of the Council of Churches in Erfurt, where I renewed contact with Heino Falcke whom I had met in Vancouver. The main topic was disarmament and the role of the Churches. In the eighties this was a burning issue, and the Protestant Churches in the GDR had taken very courageous steps towards disarmament.[17]

There are other clear memories that pop up: of sitting with a pastor/journalist in Budapest during a CEC consultation. I'd ordered a beer and he a cup of tea – which never came. When he called the waiter over to ask why, the waiter said oh, the chap whose job it is to light the gas hasn't come in today, no hot water! And then I remember another occasion, staying in Pisek in Czechoslovakia: I walked round the village early in the morning and entered the Catholic Church in order to attend the service. I noticed that all the women, even the really young ones, put on black veils before going into the Catholic Church - possibly in order to look like old ladies and thus escape notice. The Church was packed. Then I went back to the Church where I was due to preach and there was a shiny black car parked at the curb side outside – all too apparent as there were very few other cars around at all. Did you see that, asked the pastor? They know you are here…

By 1968 two new names were appearing in the papers – those of Irmgard and Andreas Kees. Andreas, a civil servant in the European Commission and a member of the Conseil d'Administration of the Ecumenical Centre, prepared a paper in May 1968 on "L'intégration

[17] These developments were a direct and very welcome response to new initiatives launched in the late 70s in the Netherlands by the IKV (Inter-Church Peace Council) and the NHK against nuclear weapons. (I am indebted to Laurens Hogebrink for this and many other helpful comments. WB)

européenne et les Églises protestantes : confrontations et perspectives". At the 6th meeting of the Commission Consultative on 16 May 1968 a paper by Ernst Albrecht (Director General for Competition policy in the European Commission, later to be Ministerpräsident for Lower Saxony)[18], was also discussed: "Die von den Europäischen Gemeinschaften in ihrer Arbeit zu treffenden Entscheidungen, deren Kriterien und Folgen". At this meeting the question of making contact with Churches in Eastern Europe was discussed and anxiety expressed that there be no duplication (voiced by Bishop Sansbury, General Secretary of the BCC); also of contact with the Christian Peace Conference of Prague. It was suggested the Ecumenical Centre should discuss this with the General Secretary of CEC (G G Williams) if and when he should visit Brussels. An in-depth discussion took place on whether it was appropriate for *Churches* (as distinct from Christian individuals) to have a role in Europe in policy making. Major regrets were expressed by the Treasurer (Elias Verploeg) and by Helmut (on behalf of Präses Wischmann of the EKD Aussenamt) that at this stage the financial contribution was largely coming from the EKD alone – but other Churches were being urged to contribute in solidarity if possible in 1969, but by 1970 at the latest.

A new idea sprang up (put forward particularly by Andreas Kees and Mr Lyko – Director of Bad Segesberg Academy) to set up a European Evangelical Academy in Brussels – on the model of the Academies and Laity centres particularly to be found in Germany. Marc too had already come across these Academies and it seemed a wonderful idea to have a residential centre where conferences could take place and participants and speakers be accommodated. Marc took contact with M. Moreau in the European Commission to see whether there were any possibilities

[18] His daughter Ursula (von der Leyen) was then a student at the European School in Brussels – and went on to be Minister for Families in the CDU government and subsequently Minister of Defence!

for finding a building or financing it – but in the end the idea came to nothing, probably for lack of finance, and disappeared from the agenda.

The next move Marc made was to involve what came to be called the "European Church organisations" in the work of the Consultative Committee: these were organisations such as the Ecumenical Association of Academies and Laity Centres in Europe (just mentioned), the Committee for Migrant Workers which was part of the WCC in Geneva at that stage, ECG (European Contact Group on Church and Industry - Paul Loeffler – launched as Urban Industrial (and in some places Rural) mission by the WCC, a pan-European group). All these groups, focussing on one particular theme very relevant also to EEC policy at the time, were already working on a European scale although their structures and angles differed widely; ECG was indeed pan-European, with Czech and other members. Migration was a major issue with movement of Italian, Spanish and Portuguese labour within Western Europe (and a basic tenet of the European idea – freedom of movement of labour and skills), and return migration; the Church and Industry group was another matter as it was *a priori* suspicious of the European project as being considered too capitalistic. The ECG itself brought people together with differentiated approaches towards "Brussels". In France, the pastors working in industrial mission – often worker-priests - had a much more critical view of the Western economic model than the industrial chaplains of the UK, West Germany or the Netherlands. At this early stage anyway "social policy" was still very underdeveloped in European policy terms. The asset Marc saw could be gained from including these issue-oriented European Church organisations alongside the national Church representations at CCCEC meetings was to give a European momentum to work together. This Consultative Committee met twice a year – an onerous and expensive exercise though necessary in order to familiarise the Churches with the EEC's agenda – and it needed to gel, so there was also a didactic

element in bringing speakers from the European Commission to explain areas of policy and bring the representatives of the official Churches to see the import of what was evolving in Brussels.

At the 7th meeting of the CCCEC on 22nd May 1969, it was agreed that in order to maintain independence vis-à-vis the European institutions, applications would not be made for finance to the European Commission but funding should come principally from the Churches. At this meeting Marc underlined that the traditional Church/State relation with which one was familiar at national level could not be transposed to the European level – this was a new model and needed new forms of response and practice. Jean Rey – by then President of the European Commission – attended the meeting. Barbara Simons once again raised the need for pastoral concern for isolated civil servants – particularly secretaries – in the Commission. And there was a general discussion on what the Consultative Committee (and its staff) should be doing – was it a representation or a lobby? In any case, it was not a *national* representation. The importance of closer co-operation with a number of bodies was discussed: the Evangelical Academies (Mr Lyko), the European Contact Group for Church and Industry (ECG – Mr van der Wal), the Protestant Group on Agriculture (Mr de Loor); also the WCC, KEK and CETMI (Migrant Workers). It was also stressed that co-operation with OCIPE – the Brussels Jesuit office (Office Catholique d'Informations sur les Problèmes Européens) – should be more systematic. At this meeting Mr Alfred Mozer delivered a report on "Agriculture 1980" and the Mansholt Plan.

In the second meeting that year, on 14 November 1969 (still chaired by Dr Emmen) there was discussion of a document "relations between the Churches and the European Communities" – a preparatory document for a spring conference in 1970 on the Churches' presence vis à vis the European Communities. Another interesting point discussed was the use of the newly created prayer room in the basement of the Berlaymont

– which was *only* to be used for joint (ie ecumenical) services. It was at this meeting that it was officially agreed to rent the rooms in av d'Auderghem for the Centre's offices. Pasteur Nicolas raised the important point that the Commission Consultative should be aiming at critical thinking rather than making unanimous declarations – and that this body was therefore more a Board than a Nunciature. How then, they asked themselves, could such a structure still carry some authority? And it was at this point that the need was first expressed to extend the staff – to take on a "second man", who was miraculously to be competent to relay information to the Member Churches *while* having an economist's background *and* an inclination towards theology …

From 27-28 April 1970 a symposium took place on the "Relations between the Churches and the European Communities" leading to a first establishment of structures and priorities for work. Jean Rey was present, and said that the EEC had reached the end of its first transition period and must now push ahead with economic and monetary union. The decision was taken to set up a Church and Society office in close association with the existing Ecumenical Centre.

Consequently on 26-27 November 1970 a special meeting of the Consultative Committee of Churches for the European Communities in Brussels was called on "The Churches and the European Community". It resolved

- "there shall be formed a European Church Board *(Collège Ecclésial Européen)* to deal with the problems connected with Church and Society arising from European integration"
- a "Church and Society" office shall be set up in Brussels

and a mandate was defined for this body. The European Church Board had as its members the Churches and Federations of Churches in the EEC member countries and candidate countries, and from the beginning the following European Church organisations (which however

did *not* have a right to participate in votes leading to decisions of the Church Board):

- Ecumenical Association of Directors of Academies and Laity Centres
- European Contact Group on Church and Industry
- Churches' Committee for Migrant Workers in Western Europe
- Christian Study Group for European Unity
- Conference of Churches on the Rhine.

The CEC, WCC and Roman Catholic representatives were to be invited as guests and could take part in discussions but also not in decisions.[19]

The Church and Society office was to start functioning in 1971 with a full-time Director and a full-time secretary. This Church Board was to study the issues arising for the Churches out of the activities of the European Communities, discuss them – amongst themselves and with senior European civil servants responsible for those policies – and if possible, take position as Churches and convey these to their membership and beyond. Such positions were if possible to be agreed consensually. The members of this Board had not only to represent their Churches but also display technical competence in the policy areas being discussed (or be able to draw on the appropriate expert groups).

This would be serviced – i.e. "the questions arising for the Churches from the activities of the European institutions and from European integration in general" - by a "Church and Society office" (manned by a full-time Director and full-time secretary) and administered by the Board of the present Ecumenical Centre which would thus be renamed "Ecumenical Centre – Church and Society in Europe".

[19] Dr Emmen represented the CEC at this meeting and stated that it was not possible in the "état actuel des choses" for the CEC to have organised and direct contacts with any of these bodies, but emphasised that it was imperative that the CEC be kept informed.

The question then arose of course as to how to finance this Church and Society in Europe office as it would mean doubling the current budget the Churches were contributing towards the Ecumenical Centre.

Marc admits that from the outset it was the "Church and Society" approach – as launched by Paul Abrecht and the WCC in 1968 – that interested him most. In terms for example of how the EKD operated – and the German Church was at this stage by far the most actively involved (if not exclusively so) - it was more an Aussenamt approach than the office of Bishop Kunst in Bonn who was "representing" the Church to the Bundesregierung. And fairly soon those on the Conseil d'Administration came round to his point of view – Pasteur Regard and others – and saw his role more as what one could call "une pastorale thématisée" – that is concern for the *issues* with which the European civil servants were dealing in their daily work and offering them a way of looking at their work from the perspective of their Protestant faith.

The question of roles for staff and offices was a major preoccupation throughout 1971. Although the Conseil d'Administration managed both, and Marc (with a secretary, Mme van Adrichem) was the sole member of staff, the statutes that were drawn up at that time clearly differentiated between the tasks of "Église et Société" (which was an emanation of the Consultative Committee, monitoring EC policy), and the tasks of the Ecumenical Centre. Papers were written about how to proceed in future – should the two bodies (Consultative Committee and European Church Board) merge or continue as separate entities? Andreas Kees wrote an 11 page memo on the subject, Marc also wrote a paper, and on 29 March 1971, a joint meeting of the two bodies was held on the premises of the Economic and Social Committee. Stress was laid on the need for an information service to the Churches. There was much talk of the difference in mandate between the two bodies. Connie Patijn said, "The Consultative Committee of Churches is the official representative of the Churches. In contrast to this, the European Church Board is rather a

collegiate body of experts in European matters (with a significant lay element)". Irmgard Kees applied for the job of Director of the Church and Society office – but possibly her profile was not quite what was sought, and/or the budget was not fully forthcoming: she was appointed temporarily and in a half-time capacity to make a start on information work, pending the appointment of a Director, and working as a colleague with Marc. Marc himself was anxious not to be sidelined purely into "pastoral work" with civil servants and their families as was being done in the Foyer Catholique.

Also at this meeting in March 1971, Glen Garfield Williams of the CEC was present – and he stressed that North/South problems in Europe were much more pressing than East/West. Connie Patijn announced plans for a major conference in 1974 – the Roehampton Conference. There was also concern to co-ordinate existing work on thinking about Europe in Church circles – first contacts were made with the FEST (Forschungsstätte der Evangelischen Studiengemeinschaft) in Heidelberg and with certain Dutch action groups. The Ecumenical Association of Academies was already involved (represented by Mr Schmidt), and co-operation with the Roman Catholics through the office of Jean Weydert (OCIPE) continued.

The first proper meeting of the European Church Board was scheduled for autumn 1972: Churches were advised that they could send the same or different persons to represent their Churches/Federations of Churches (as this was a joint meeting of the Consultative Committee and the European Church Board) and that the topic for discussion would be "The enlarged EEC's responsibility in working together with developing countries".

Irmgard Kees started work half-time on 1st September 1971, pending the funding and appointment of a Director for the Church and Society office. The work of an information officer was clearly felt to be particularly necessary for the EKD, the prime funder of the time, to

show people in Germany what was being done for their money – but also to encourage other Churches to become involved, and so the series of Information Bulletins was launched (and published in some 1500 copies a time in French, German, English and Dutch; the cover picture representing a chalice was designed by Carl Rabus, the artist mentioned on p. 17). The relation between the Ecumenical Centre and the Church and Society office was unresolved – the two were hitherto autonomous and parallel, but there was an underlying tension ultimately around the question of whether the two offices were providing "information" to the Churches or also comments and guidelines – and if so whose ... Marc produced a paper in which he expressed clearly his feeling that as a theologian, he was also called upon to conduct the Church and Society work. On 24 April 1972 Marc pleaded for the future of the two and emphasised the need for an economist on the staff.

Relations between, and the respective mandates of the Consultative Committee and the European Church Board were also far from clear: the presence of Church organisations in the latter – which members of Churches/Federations of Churches were unused to working alongside - contributed a novel dimension.

At a joint meeting of the Commission Consultative des Églises and the Collège Ecclésial Européen on 3-4 November 1972 a significant text was produced entitled "Projet de décisions ayant recueilli un consensus général" which proceeded to set up two new entities:

- a Commission d'Églises auprès des Communautés Européennes (being the successor of what had hitherto been the Commission Consultative d'Églises PLUS the Collège ecclésial)
- a Centre Oecuménique pour Église et Société (being the successor of the Centre oecuménique hitherto and the Bureau Église et Société à Bruxelles)

This paper laid down the tasks and responsibilities of the future Commission of Churches – which would include setting guidelines for the Ecumenical Centre, financing it and being involved in choosing staff for it. It was explicitly left open at this stage whether the Church organisations present in the new Commission of Churches could participate in decision-making or not. The Ecumenical Centre would be staffed by three full-time persons: a theologian (pastor); a public relations/information person; a sociologist/economist.

A report of the activities of the Centre Oecuménique between November 1972 and June 1973 was prepared for the Commission d'Églises to consider at its meeting in June 1973. It notes

- increased activity – with the transition to the different structures and a new Executive Committee overseeing the work
- regular weekly worship services in the Lieu de Recueillement, prepared together with the Catholics (though relatively few Protestants actually attended)
- classes in the European School (in the final school year by now these were being taught according to theme and not split by confession: Marc notes he would never give "marks" for religious education – but this apparently passed unnoticed or at least, uncommented upon)
- work in the Comité Interecclésial in Brussels (such as la Semaine des travailleurs étrangers)
- work on a dossier on cocoa
- preparation of documents for the Roehampton conference
- the setting up of a working group on multinational corporations – and the ECG staged a consultation on this theme in Bruges in October 1973.
- The setting up of a working group on development education

- A working group with the Dutch economist Harry de Lange and some fonctionnaires on the WCC conference "Homme et Société dans le futur"
- Meeting in Heidelberg (FEST) on the relationship between the EKD and the Protestant Churches in South Africa and Namibia
- Participation in the steering committee of ERE (Ecumenical Research Exchange) in Rotterdam
- Weekend with a group of British Methodists (Owen Nankivell) on the relationship between Churches and the European Community

And Marc put the question: what place is there for theological reflexion in all this work?! A report was also given on the information work that had started.

At this meeting of 22 June 1973, it was proposed that a representative of the Conseil des Conférences episcopales européennes be invited to attend as an observer in parallel with the CEC. The text of "Projet de décisions" (see above) was adopted along with an accompanying letter for it to be sent out to the Churches – enlisting a financial contribution for the new structures.

On 9th November the new Executive Committee – the link now between the Ecumenical Centre for Church and Society and the Churches - met and adopted a new text entitled "Orientations et priorités" which looked at what were the priority issues to work on, and their theological underpinning. This was presented to the Commission d'Églises at its meeting on 14-15 December 1973 but was not discussed; however it was agreed that it should provisionally be applied already, and discussed in depth at the next meeting. Meanwhile at this meeting the paper "Projet de décisions" was formally ratified and the Churches had now nominated official representatives. The British Council of Churches announced that it had also contacted the Church of Scotland to move them to participate in their own right.

> *I remember visiting Edinburgh for the first time in 1968 as an "Ecumenical Guest". I was put up in a house owned at that time by the Board of Mission near the Botanical Gardens, and during the fortnight I was there I was taken all over Edinburgh. I was introduced to more Women's Guilds than I could ever have imagined existed! I remember the Church services up there – there would always be an enormous clock to remind the minister not to let his sermon go on too long! The Scottish Churches were interested very early on in the European project – not least as at that time they had no parliament of their own.*

Mgr Musty (Bishop of Namur) of the Comité Européen des Conférences episcopales announced at this meeting the possibility of setting up a group of representatives of the Bishops' Conferences in the EEC.

Institutions in Progress I: Christian Involvement in Europe as Individuals and as Churches

It is interesting at this point to step back and observe how the initial moves in a variety of small groups and by different prominent thinkers and individuals were gradually being cast into an institutional form; and also how the regular meetings between a particular group – a core group plus invited experts – of high-level European civil servants and representatives of the Churches were beginning to take shape.

The first Commission consultative met in 1964 – and here we are now ten years on, in 1974, with a Commission d'Églises auprès des Communautés européennes: the very changes in title are redolent of the increasing stature of this body. As Marc had said, much of the work in these early years had been to make the Churches aware of what was the significance of the European Communities, both in themselves and for the Churches. The culmination of this early phase was to be the Roehampton Conference – at which the Churches were going to "take over" in a way from the earlier movers and shakers (such as the Groupe Patijn, which would then feel it had "done its job", and close down, and the Ecumenical Centre which nonetheless continued a valuable job of bringing high-level civil servants into the discussions until that too was closed down in 2000), and at the same time begin to take an *active* interest: they did not simply want to be the paymasters of the operation but have their say. There was however to continue for quite some time to be an uneasy relationship between the members of this Commission – who frequently and quite naturally came from or at least accounted to

the Boards of Finance of their respective Churches, where there was not necessarily a strong European interest, and certainly not a specialist expertise in the themes and policies being tackled.

It is also interesting to note that we are in 1973, the year of the first enlargement to include Britain, Denmark and Ireland. Already the British Churches were seriously involved, in the form of the Church of England (the Bishop of Leicester, Ronald Williams, and Giles Ecclestone from the Board of Social Responsibility), the Baptist Union (Donald Black), the United Reformed Church (John Reardon) and the British Council of Churches (Hugh Wilcox and later Brian Duckworth) – separately. (By now Noël Salter had moved to Brussels with the first wave of British civil servants in 1973 and was working in the European Commission, as also were Michael Franklin and Guy Wilkinson; all became members of the Board of the Ecumenical Centre which had been chaired by Helmut von Verschuer from 1968 on. Noël was to die of cancer in 1974.)

The Church organisations existing at European level were also involved – at least in the discussions if not in the decision making (and later would come the question, why are they too not making a financial contribution?). They were relatively independent of the national Church offices and – as mentioned earlier - Marc saw their role as one of initiating the Churches, using their own European experience to encourage the Churches to acquire a European perspective on issues which were on the European Commission's agenda as well as their own. The Church organisations involved were focussing on migration, development, unemployment and agriculture which were all part of the Commission's mandate. Moreover they were closely in touch with the grass-roots, witnesses from the coal face with which Brussels civil servants had all too little face-to-face contact. This "mix", combined with the contacts the Ecumenical Centre had established with European civil servants gradually shaped the profile of the Churches' presence in

relation to the European institutions during this period. These European civil servants were extraordinarily ready in those early years to spend time, in evenings and at weekends, meeting with such people from the Churches and taking part in the kind of working groups that were being set up. Such encounters proved to be a win-win situation for both sides.

The World Council of Churches had been a partner – and major support from the outset. As could be seen above, the whole project, as with the WCC itself and indeed CEC, was a fruit of the Resistance movement during WW II. The WCC had been due to hold its first Assembly in Amsterdam in 1938 but the outbreak of war had postponed that to 1948. Visser 't Hooft was a key figure from the beginning within the Churches – just as Jean Rey was on the political front There were plenty of allies ready to work together to focus the challenge for the Churches in the right direction (and indeed thereby justify the work being done in Brussels) – in the form of people like Paul Abrecht who was a staunch ally right from the start. The entry of the Third World into the WCC dramatically with the New Delhi Assembly of 1961 had brought new challenges: the EEC's innovative "Lomé Convention" was prioritising the former British and French colonies and the Commonwealth over the rest of the developing world, and erecting new barriers of privilege which were indefensible, even if the guarantees it brought of fixed prices and regular income were commendable. So as time passed there was a degree of reticence if not outright hostility from Geneva as the EEC came to be seen as a rich Western club, "Fortress Europe". Bishop Kunst actually expressed this reticence – which was not only perceptible in the CEC and the WCC but in national Churches and Councils of Churches too – as a sense of "shame": in some way one was taking sides, West against East.

This increasing institutionalisation will evolve further as will be seen, another ten years on …

4

THE CONFERENCE OF ROEHAMPTON AND THE YEARS 1974-1982

From 16-20 April 1974 – over a whole week – a major conference took place in Roehampton in the UK, the parish of Barney Milligan (later to man the Strasbourg office). Its theme was "Christians and the European Community". It was the culmination of serious preparatory work by a Committee of the Ecumenical Centre, OCIPE and CCREC, and co-chaired by Connie Patijn, Father Jean Weydert and Helmut von Verschuer. Marc was largely responsible for the bulk of the work required by the secretariat, both before and after the event. It was however very definitely an ecumenical happening - indeed, the final meeting of the Preparatory Committee, held in the Brussels Hilton, was chaired by Marga Klompé (RC) from the Netherlands. There were a number of Catholics present in Roehampton too – the British journalist Peter Hebblethwaite, Jean Ladrière (University of Louvain-la-Neuve), and of course Jean Weydert of OCIPE and his assistant Mr Melchior. Father Tom Corbishley was one of the key organisers at the UK end. The participants' list included the Commission President Jean Rey, Max Kohnstamm, the Archbishop of Canterbury – and many other impressive names.

There was also a WCC representative in the person of the Indian M M Thomas. And while in the minds of some, this conference might have been seen as the culmination of a process which had led from the CCCEC to the Commission of Churches (and Britain's entry – for here

we were in Roehampton), M M Thomas (then Moderator of the Central Committee of the WCC) stood up in the final plenary after a nice general message of encouragement for future work had been passed, in rather a smug atmosphere of self-congratulation and contentment for a mission accomplished, and said the memorable words "What next?"!

> *You have to remember that this was 1974. In 1961 the Board of Missions had been integrated into the WCC at the Assembly meeting in New Delhi and one might say, the voice of the third world was starting to be heard. (At the same time the Orthodox Churches were brought in too. The nature of the WCC was changing.) These were significant times in the history of the ecumenical movement as well as within the European Community and M M Thomas' question was a challenge and wake-up call to what needed to be done.*

The Roehampton Conference did not provide an answer to this question – nor give precise directions for future work by the Churches at European level. Rather in its final message it was said "We earnestly recommend to the appropriate organisations, especially OCIPE and the Ecumenical Centre for Church and Society at Brussels, to pursue and deepen their activities and their common action with reference to the questions discussed at the Conference".

This was in some ways the mandate that Marc had been seeking – to work more on policy questions and less on pastoral matters among civil servants. Working relations with Jean Weydert and OCIPE were already close and in discussions following immediately on from the Roehampton Conference it was decided to set up two *joint* working groups, the so-called Joint Task Force on Development Issues (a title invented by Noël Salter) and the "Groupe Finalités" (defining the goals and objectives of the European Community, whither was it tending?). The secretariat for the JTF was located in the Ecumenical Centre but the

funding was raised independently of either the Centre or the Commission of Churches, by the development groups in both Protestant and Catholic churches. There were two main angles of concern: one the EC development policy, particularly with regard to the new Lomé Convention with the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries (this work being led by Marga Klompé and financed largely by the Catholic Justitia et Pax Commissions in the different countries), and the other on development education (led by John Reardon of the URC in Britain and financed by Protestant development agencies); a staff member was appointed – first of all the Quaker Jonathan Fryer, subsequently Ria de Vent (who had been Marc's secretary for many years), Marc Luyckx (1984-9, a former priest, who went on to join Jacques Delors' Forward Studies Unit in the European Commission), Peter Crossman (an American Mennonite), John Lucal (an American Jesuit) and at the end, briefly, Edy Korthals-Altes.[20] The work on Finalités was less specific and took the form of annual conferences on particular themes; Jean Weydert led the secretariat for this joint work and found the funding from the different Justice and Peace Commissions. Another area of discussion was Multinational Companies (TNCs) with UNIAPAC, UNICE and the ETUC (employers and trades unions at European level).

These discussions and developments of course also involved the Commission of Churches – which met in the wake of the Roehampton Conference on 19-20 June 1974. The Commission formally gave the Ecumenical Centre the task of following up the Roehampton Conference – particularly Section III as it was called, setting up a working party on

[20] This organisation then morphed under Marc Luyckx into EECOD and was soon to run out of money; meanwhile APRODEV had been set up in Brussels (with first Martin Bax and then, until early 2014, Rob van Drimmelen in charge) as a collective of WCC-related development agencies interested in the EU, and focussing initially more on the funding and working of actual development projects whereas EECOD was more involved with EU policy. In due course APRODEV also started to get involved in policy discussions with EU civil servants, and EECOD's importance dwindled and it was finally wound up.

the responsibility of the EEC towards developing countries, and on investigation of the goals or finalities of the EEC. Also at this meeting a text was presented on the problems of migrant workers in the EEC, and discussed during the meeting with Commissioner Hillary and his Director General in Social Affairs, Michael Shanks, as a result of which a working party was set up. This was the first "declaration" as such of the Churches in the Commission of Churches. There was also a discussion on the confused situation at the time in Portugal and relations with liberation movements. The Portuguese Churches were invited to become members of the Commission. The staff protested that with all this extra work a "third man" was needed – but no money was forthcoming.

At the second Commission of Churches meeting that year – on 6 December 1974 – it was Bishop Kunst of the EKD who was now in the Chair. A representative of the Church of Denmark attended for the first time as an observer. A memorandum on development policy had been prepared by Karl-Heinz Dejung (ERE), Harry de Lange and Marc and was discussed. It was agreed to set up a part-time post within the offices of the Ecumenical Centre on Migrant Workers, financed by the WCC, and Pasteur Mauro Sbolgi was appointed. (At this point it also became possible to extend the space available in the house at 23 av d'Auderghem so that there was a meeting room downstairs, and an office for Marc and the information officer on the first floor, and Mauro Sbolgi on the second floor.) The first meeting of the Joint Task Force was scheduled for 1 February 1975 and the Finalités group was to meet for the first time in March 1975. The Commission of Churches noted that Irmgard Kees had had to step down for health reasons and Winifred Hagenbuch (later Burton), who had been her secretary since March 1974, was asked to stay on full-time until the end of 1975, half-time for the secretariat and half-time for information work.

Another interesting new group had also meanwhile met twice, as the Executive Committee noted at this point: the EcoTheo group bringing together Economists and Theologians. The instigation for this group had probably come from Claude Gruson ("father" of the five-year Plans for the economy in France), a Protestant economist, actively associated with the Villemétrie Centre in Paris where they were doing prospective economic and social research for France, and working there too with Gerhard Markhoff who had come from E. Germany. In Britain they had linked up with Owen Nankivell (who had been Assistant Director of the Central Statistical Office and then took a senior job with Lucas Aerospace, but was also closely linked with the BCC) and Kenneth Wilson, both Methodists, and the Bishop of Durham, David Jenkins was also actively involved. Harry de Lange was brought in from the Instituut Normen en Waarden in Rotterdam, and Friedhelm Solms and Ernst-Albert Scharffenorth from the FEST in Heidelberg (Forschungsstätte der Evangelischen Studiengemeinschaft).

The Executive Committee also gave its consent to exploring the possibility of taking up a joint building for the Foyer Catholique (which was planning to move from the av de Tervuren) and the Ecumenical Centre – provided that the two entities remained clearly distinct. But for practical (and no doubt financial) reasons this was taken no further. The Executive Committee met again on 20 February 1975 and heard reports on the setting up of the JTF and the organisation of the first finalities consultation. Jacques Chauvin of the French Protestant Federation was elected to chair the Commission of Churches for 1975.

The Commission of Churches meeting on 3 June 1975 heard of the increased structuring and responsibility within the Board (Conseil d'Administration) of the Ecumenical Centre with the designation of a President, Treasurer, people specially responsible for following social

policy, development policy, NATO…[21] There was a certain tension in relation to the Commission of Churches – and within it. The Bishop of Leicester for example was less keen on there being a series of Commission meetings spent looking at development policy ("we are not development experts"), but would have preferred broader, more general exchanges on such subjects as the future of Christendom in Europe (Turkey), current moral problems (euthanasia and abortion), comparative ethics. Marc pointed out that while the specialist issues could be delegated to specialist church agencies (CETMI, JTF), it was important that the buck pass at some stage to the Commission of Churches (also in order to help them both understand and take more responsibility for these areas through first-hand involvement); it was the policies where the Member States had delegated right of EEC-wide initiative to the European Commission that the Churches meeting in Brussels needed to focus on. It was decided that in future one subject would be treated in depth per meeting for an hour and a half.[22]

On 6 February 1976 Jan van Veen (responsible for public affairs and Church and Society work in the NHK) could be found in the Chair of the Commission of Churches. A discussion took place on the relations between the Ecumenical Centre and the Member Churches – where was the initiative to come from? The complementarity between the Commission of Churches and the CEC was discussed (even though at this time pressure from the East and Cold War tension meant that the

[21] The Board of the Ecumenical Centre was represented both on the Executive Committee and the Commission of Churches itself.

[22] Already by now the staff was under great pressure. In August 1975 Bishop Kunst wrote a sharp letter protesting that he had been asked to send an EKD delegate to a meeting to discuss a paper on development policy for Nairobi at a week's notice: he said the EKD was being badly treated, himself in particular, feeling like "das fünfte Rad am Wagen" and he made an urgent plea for a German staff member to fill the gap left by Irmgard Kees.

CEC could not officially work with the Commission of Churches).[23] The BCC reported rumours of a wish for there to be an "Ecumenical Council of Churches at Western European level".

At this stage the following were attending meetings of the Commission of Churches

- BCC
- Church of England
- EKD
- Fédération protestante de France
- Fédération des Églises protestantes de Belgique
- NHK
- Ok Faellesrad i Danmark
- CETMI (with Jan van Veen as delegate at the same time as being Chair of the Commission of Churches)
- ECG
- ERE
- CEC
- CCEE (Mgr J Hengen, Bishop of Luxembourg)
- Local Churches
- European Commission

At this time the basic reference paper was the constitutional paper of the Commission of Churches adopted by mutual consensus at the joint meeting of the Consultative Commission of Churches and the European Church Board in Brussels on 3-4 November 1972. While still issuing the Information Bulletins, Win Hagenbuch started the "Early Warning System".

[23] The 1975 Helsinki Accords did in fact recognise the status quo in Europe, and European institutions subsequently engaged in diplomatic relations with East European states. (I am grateful to L Leustean for this clarification. WB)

Marc took part in a summer school in Figueira da Foz and Lisbon, with Georges Crespy, on the sequels to the "Carnation Revolution". In September 1976 a delegation of the SWAPO (South-West African People's Organisation, the Namibian Liberation Movement) came to Brussels and the Ecumenical Centre was instrumental in obtaining a meeting for them with Commissioner Claude Cheysson.

When the Executive Committee met on 1 October 1976 under the Presidency of Jacques Chauvin it was regional policy that was the main theme being discussed. Klaus Kremkau (EKD Aussenamt) called on the other Churches to contribute more robustly as the current imbalance in the budget, with a vastly disproportionate EKD contribution, was unhealthy. There was growing support for the idea of a German staff member to be appointed. Klaus Kremkau also called for an evaluation of the Commission of Churches ten years on. It had got bigger and bigger but how committed were its members? What was the role of all these Church organisations who were free-wheeling and taking no financial responsibility? Bishop Kunst defended the "Unruhe-Gruppen" as providing a healthy tension within any institution and quite normal within Churches. The EKD nonetheless asked that the 1973 paper "Projet de décisions" be revisited and the current state of work evaluated. Bishop Kunst wanted further clarity on the role of the JTF – which came not under the Commission of Churches but under the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Centre. The members of the JTF did not commit their Churches.

At around this time the WCC decided that instead of funding Mauro Sbolgi within the Ecumenical Centre as well as Chantal Scheidecker in Geneva to work on the issue of migrant workers – which at this time was largely seen to be an intra-European problem – the CETMI should move its seat to Brussels (with Sbolgi in charge). Once they had become consultative members of the Commission of Churches there was reciprocity of contact – so Marc would attend their meetings in return,

and it gradually became clear that their voices needed to be heard above all in Brussels. (Hence also the declaration on migrant workers the Commission of Churches had just issued.) However, like the JTF, they retained their financial autonomy, but were housed in the Ecumenical Centre. This body eventually became the CCMWE and then the CCME (Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe).

On 29 October the Commission of Churches met, and heard of the arrest of the South African anti-apartheid activist Revd Beyers Naudé. A letter was dispatched to the Belgian Embassy in South Africa. The Migrant Workers' Project under Sbolgi held a major consultation in Bruges (with the CICARWS). There was a discussion on EEC Regional Policy.

On 1 March 1977 Brian Duckworth was elected President of the Executive Committee and Commission of Churches, and Präses Binder succeeded Bishop Kunst as representative of the EKD/Bonn. The installation of the CCMW in Brussels (see above) was discussed, and it was agreed that the Ecumenical Centre would offer its secretariat facilities as it did to the Commission of Churches, but the two bodies would be independent. The Executive Committee met again on 30 June and reciprocal non-voting members were agreed on the respective boards of CCMW and CCEC. André Appel (Conference of Rhine Churches) reported on a meeting in Klingenthal (Alsace) where the idea had been mooted of a Church presence in Strasbourg alongside the institutions there – European Parliament and Council of Europe. The French Protestant Federation (FPF) reported that it tended to leave European issues for the Strasbourg Churches (ERAL and ECAAL) to deal with. The question again arose of a "third man" being appointed – who might be seconded to Strasbourg or rotate between Brussels and Strasbourg …

The agenda for the Commission meeting that followed on 30 June and 1 July 1977 focussed on a possible European anti-terrorist Convention – and it was decided the Finalités group should look into this. Telegrams were sent to the Anglican Church in Uganda. The agreement on new relations between the CCEC and the CCMW was adopted. The question arose of contacts with the Orthodox Church and minority Protestant churches in Spain and Portugal (and so possible contact with the Conference of Protestant Churches in the Latin countries - CEPPLE) *and* Catholic Churches in these countries. On the budgetary front, questions were raised over apportionment of staff time: the Commission of Churches was paying the staff salaries, but how much of their time was spent servicing the Ecumenical Centre and the CCMW and the JTF? The view was expressed that the Commission should be tackling more fundamental issues, and issuing official statements as the Roman Catholic Church was now doing – for example on the first direct elections to the European Parliament due in 1979, possibly issuing a publication on the subject.[24] The Executive Committee met again on 20 October 1977 (with the JTF meeting that night – both the Lomé group and the development education group. Both groups together were planning a seminar on industrial co-operation to be held in October 1978, supported by ERE.)

> *Little by little we realised that if we were going to work effectively in Brussels and in relation to the EEC, our approach needed to be very flexible and – just as did the EEC itself, which was sui generis – constantly reinventing itself in relation to changing circumstances. There was a constant process of enlargement – of competences, of membership, of procedures … And we came to realise that there was a very subtle game and*

[24] Marc did in fact prepare a report (Oct 1978) entitled "The Churches and the Direct Elections to the European Parliament" which was distributed to the Churches, and is reprinted as an annexe in L.Leustean's book op.cit. pp.236 ff.

balance of power between the different political institutions: the Commission, the Council of Ministers, the Parliament, the EcoSoc. In fact at that point, the Parliament's role was negligible; it was called the Parliamentary Assembly and hardly impinged on the public consciousness but then people started saying, why are you not working through the Assembly, alongside the Members? We had such a small staff it was hardly feasible however – the Assembly was based in Strasbourg. Nevertheless I went once a month to Strasbourg: Jean Weydert (OCIPE) and I would meet with MEPs in the Orangerie during Parliamentary sessions. There was moreover the Conférence des Églises riveraines du Rhin which met in the Liebfrauenberg just outside Strasbourg – and I used to attend on a regular basis (and they sent an observer to the CCEC, usually André Appel) but they were as much a touristic (and gastronomic!) gathering as anything political – although it did also claim financial support from the Churches in Alsace, Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland.

Brian Duckworth chaired the meeting of the CCEC of 9 June 1978 at which for the first time, the Netherlands sent a four-person delegation from the Council of Churches in the NL (as distinct from separate delegates from each Church as previously). Generous donations from three German Churches had made it possible to redecorate the av d'Auderghem offices. CCMW had now moved to Brussels and discussions were shortly to open with them. The Executive Committee had received a request from a group of Chilean political refugees who had recently begun a hunger strike in protest against the Chilean government's refusal to supply information about people who had disappeared without trace – and the Board of the Ecumenical Centre was to follow this up. A consultation had taken part on 8 June on what involvement there should be relative to the EP elections, and it was

agreed that a dossier should be produced now for the Churches. The German Churches (Klaus Kremkau) expressed their concern that the distinction between the CCEC and the Centre be clarified. OCIPE was going to be organising a consultation on human rights in Strasbourg in November. Jonathan Fryer presented the programme of the JTF. The Conference of Rhine Churches was proposing to mandate the two Protestant Churches of Alsace to relate more closely to the European institutions (EEC and Council of Europe) in Strasbourg and Luxembourg.

In December 1978, Marc attended the celebrations in Berlin to mark Gollwitzer's 80th birthday – along with i.a. Georges Casalis. Earlier in the year Marc had in fact been invited by Piet Bouman (most probably) to apply for the job of Europe Secretary with the CICARWS (WCC), but in February 1980 Jean Fischer wrote to say the job would instead be given to Uffe Gjerding – and in retrospect Marc realised the job would not have particularly interested him. He was more interested when in the early nineties Ninan Koshy (Director of the CCIA) invited him to apply for Weingärtner's job of Europe Secretary in the WCC's CCIA, but there the political quotas kicked in and it was Elizabeth Salter, Noël's widow, who got the job.

The CCEC met on 21/22 June 1979 – and passed a moment in silence in memory of the Bishop of Leicester who had just died. Jean Rey, former President of the Commission, attended the meeting. Discussions centred on the draft constitution and enlargement of staff, who would pay for that and under whose authority would they then be working. Jean Joseph Schwed from the European Commission talked about the importance of the forthcoming direct elections to the EP; there was also discussion of future enlargement – to include Greece as the 10th EEC member in 1981, and to bring in Spain and Portugal. Marga Klompé requested that a document be distributed from the NL on the forthcoming Olympic Games in Moscow (1980).

Standing orders were drawn up to govern co-operation between the CCEC and the Ecumenical Centre

The CCEC met on 29/30 November 1979, working on the draft constitution for the new Ecumenical Commission for Church and Society in the European Communities (ECCSEC) to replace the CCEC, and on EEC enlargement, and with information from Pastor Heitz on the Conference of Rhine Churches' project on the Council of Europe.[25]

On 29 March 1980 Marc took part in a consultation in Stockholm organised by the WCC's Programme to Combat Racism (Baldwin Sjollema) – with Manas Buthelezi, Paul Oestreicher and Archbishop Sundby.

The ECCSEC met in Brussels on 13 June 1980 with Brian Duckworth in the chair. Mention was made of a new Catholic Information Office (Conférence des Episcopats de la Communauté Européenne - COMECE) being set up in Brussels, with as its President Mgr Huot Pleuroux. The meeting was attended by the new Executive Secretary of the CCMWE, Pieter Muller. Reports were made on the consultation held on Enlargement of the European Community. Marc Lenders was asked to try and arrange longer and more in-depth meetings with European Parliamentarians in Strasbourg insofar as his timetable allowed – already overstretched given that no additional staff member/Executive Secretary had yet been appointed

On 23 August 1980 a meeting took place in Geneva on how to take in the reality of Strasbourg and Luxembourg with the European institutions as well as Brussels. Marc had written a document "Présence des Églises", justifying the presence of the Churches in relation to the European institutions. The Ecumenical Commission met in November

[25] Jean-Jacques Heitz was a full-time Pastor in Strasbourg (St Thomas) from 1948-55 and again from 1981-6. In May 1979, André Appel, President of the "Directoire", offered him a change of responsibility in the form of a part-time presence relating to the European institutions in Strasbourg coupled with part-time parish work nearby. (I am grateful to Richard Fischer, CSC Strasbourg, for this clarification. WB). He was succeeded in this post by Gérard Merminod.

1980 with Jan van Veen in the Chair to discuss it. The constitution setting up the ECCSEC was adopted by all the Churches (except Italy). A new Executive Secretary from Germany was appointed – Werner Lichtwark (although it was some time before he actually started work in the office). Work was being done on the next round of Enlargement of the EEC (to include Greece etc), and a paper by Harry de Lange was discussed "Towards an economy of enough".

ECCSEC met on 13-14 November 1980 and decreed that the new constitution come into force on 1 January 1981, pending the process of establishing it legally. With it was a declaration of intent making it possible for Churches/Councils of Churches in non-Community member states to request associate membership of ECCSEC; and in time, for the Commission's membership to be extended both geographically and institutionally (Council of Europe).

Meanwhile, already in advance of the (Interlaken) consultation to be organised in 1983 under the aegis of the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches, Rev Jean-Jacques Heitz was to be involved in the work of the Executive Committee in order to link the Churches' presence in Strasbourg and Luxembourg with what was going on in the Council of Europe.

Werner Lichtwark would be given a contract starting on 1 December 1981 (for a minimum of three years) giving him time to complete a French course beforehand.

The number of votes for national delegations was agreed on (under the constitution) but the decision was explicitly noted "to endeavour as a general rule, to reach consensus in the voting process. This would mean in practice, that the Commission would not proceed to a vote on any subject to which a strong minority was opposed".

Major attention was to be given over the coming months and years in the ECCSEC to the next wave of Enlargement of the European Communities.

On the information side, while continuing with the Early Warning System, an ECCSEC Newsbrief would be published twice a year preceded by a "Handbook" edition detailing the make-up of ECCSEC and the groups with which it worked.

A new Executive Committee was voted in from 1 January 1981, with Prelate Binder in the Chair, Brian Duckworth as Vice-Chair and Jan van Veen Treasurer: hitherto Elias Verploeg, a member of the Board of the Ecumenical Centre, had still been Treasurer overall.

In February 1981 Philip Potter (WCC) made a visit to the European Commission to discuss with M Nicora (DG VIII – development issues) the question of a South African oil embargo.

By 1981 a Network had been set up between the different ecumenical organisations working at European level – ECCSEC, ERE, the Academies, and CCMWE. Although W Lichtwark had not yet arrived, a new secretary had been taken on (Irene Bouman, née Smith). At this point the accounts of the ECCSEC and the Ecumenical Centre were separated – Elias Verploeg was thanked for the many long years of work, and Jan van Veen was appointed Treasurer of ECCSEC. David de Beer (a South African anti-apartheid activist) made a presentation on Namibia and Zimbabwe.

By 11/12 June 1981 at the ECCSEC Assembly meeting the Italian Churches had approved the constitution and therefore become members. The constitution was thus now officially *adopted* and this was the constitutive Assembly of the ECCSEC. ECCSEC had co-sponsored a Western European Regional Consultation on TNCs with the WCC. A first meeting had taken place with MEPs. A first paper on Enlargement was presented – plus an ECCSEC/ERE dossier – and there was some questioning as to whether the Churches (being so "nationally" oriented) would actually be interested in this subject. Discussions took place on Microprocessor technology; also on S/Southern Africa with Mr Cao and Kaye Whiteman of the European Commission, and a presentation by

David de Beer; there was also a discussion on European Political Co-operation with Hermann de Fonseca Wollheim from the European Commission.

In November 1981 there was a visit by Archbishop Runcie.

> *On this occasion, I was invited to a reception in the British Embassy – overlooking the Parc Royal de Bruxelles – and found myself in conversation with Archbishop Runcie and the Minister from the Brussels Church of Scotland parish at the time. And there and then, they discovered that – without realising it at the time – they had both been members of the same regiment that had liberated Brussels in September 1944. The Church of Scotland Minister had been an army doctor; the future Archbishop of Canterbury had been on a tank, and they proceeded down the chaussée de Waterloo into Brussels, where I was standing to watch them as an excited 10 year old boy, never imagining that I would be standing talking to them both 37 years later in such a very different context!*

The ECCSEC Assembly meeting of 3-4 December 1981 was looking ahead to Interlaken – a conference being held at the instigation of the French and Swiss Churches on "The future of democracy in view of the changes in Western European society" – partly because the RC Church was developing a very specific vision on this which it seemed to be imposing on the nine EEC member countries. Discussions also took place on unemployment and European Security; the JTF had held conferences in October 1981 on EEC Trade Policies.

From 7-9 June 1982 there was a visit of WCC staff to the European Commission (André Jacques, Erich Weingärtner, Ulrich Becher, Leopoldo Nilius, Hans Schmocker, Janosz Pastor).

The Church of Greece attended an ECCSEC meeting for the first time as a member on 10/11 June 1982. Bishop Hengen of the European

Bishops' Conferences was also there. The International Federation for Inner Mission and Christian Social Work was admitted to consultative membership. A debate took place on the current ECCSEC priority issue: unemployment, with an introduction by M Draperie of DG V in the European Commission – responsible for its anti-poverty programme.

> *This was a new phenomenon being highlighted at European level for the first time and which took time to gain credence, ground – and funding. Structural poverty was provoked especially by the gradual demise of coal and steel production and a new attitude to work – where productivity and streamlined efficiency of the workforce rather than labour relations and social contact had priority. Many jobs – such as the man who brushed away the coal dust in the yard – were deemed superfluous and people were laid off. Changes of this kind were for a large part the result of the neo-liberalist ideology politically projected by President Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. But it was to be the French – M. Draperie and later Delors himself – who highlighted the social consequences of this shift in economic priorities. In ECCSEC we then took this up very seriously and held at least two major conferences on Poverty with the European Commission.*

A presentation on European Security Policy and European Political Co-operation was made by Herr Chrobog (German Permanent Representation) and Bob Shotton (General Secretariat of the European Commission). A joint ECCSEC/OCIPE consultation on "European Political Co-operation" is being prepared. In July 1982 Marc was sent on a WCC fact-finding mission to Israel with Werner Lottje of Brot für die Welt in the wake of an attack on Kafr Yassif, a village of Christian Arabs, by a nearby Druze village.

Institutions in Progress II: Keeping Pace with Developments within the EEC

Political changes were occurring during these years of course which are documented in other places – but most importantly perhaps for this narrative, besides the first direct elections to the European Parliament in 1979, the move towards the Maastricht Treaty and the creation of a Single Market. This was a wakeup call to all sorts of people in the member states who realised the growing impact of this European Community on their lives back home. The Ecumenical Commission indeed produced a paper for the Churches on this subject.

And so as the Churches and Federations of Churches in the EEC member states became increasingly informed over these years – and involved through meetings and working groups and statements in what was being worked and decided on in the European Commission - and (not least) as they were being asked to provide ever-growing sums of money each year for the budget of the Ecumenical Centre and its staff, there was a call for increasing formalisation of structures. In the late 1970s work began on drawing up a constitution, led by Klaus Kremkau of the Aussenamt of the EKD (who had found himself increasingly under pressure in meetings of the EKD Synod when Brussels was raised and queried). This led to the CCEC being transformed into a legal entity (under Belgian law) called the Ecumenical Commission for Church and Society in the European Communities (ECCSEC). As mentioned above, it took over legal and financial responsibility from the Ecumenical Centre, which was henceforth only responsible for local Brussels activities with the civil servants and local parishes, and for the

"thematic" link through key civil servants with European policy areas which were the focus of the Churches' concern.

The Declaration of Intent accompanying the Constitution adumbrated the future Enlargement of the EEC and the discussions that were already taking place with the Swiss Churches to cover the work both of EEC institutions in Luxembourg and Strasbourg and the Council of Europe. The Interlaken Conference of 1982 would bring together the leaders of Churches in Western Europe to take this forward.

The work of drafting the constitution was all-absorbing and painful – over 12 versions were considered before a final one was passed (and although it did pass, by a large majority, Klaus Kremkau abstained!).

> *While it was obvious that this evolution, this progressive takeover of the work by the Churches, was not only inevitable but sought after, part of the hope and intent from the outset, it was regrettable that the Ecumenical Centre (or Association – AOES – as it came to be called, to distinguish it from the building at 23 Av. d'Auderghem and subsequently 174 rue Joseph II housing the offices) increasingly then faded into insignificance despite its rich potential as a pool of resources within the European institutions.*

With it came closer surveillance of who was on the staff – and what they were doing. Marc had been there since the beginning – a beginning which is described in the first pages of this publication and which was in its way, very *ad hoc* as any pioneering experiment only can be. For some – in Germany and Britain particularly – his style was rather too left-wing (and possibly too "French" – old prejudices die hard!) – perhaps because of his earlier involvement with the anti-apartheid movement in Southern Africa alongside the World Council of Churches. Moreover he depended heavily for back-up input to the work – research, study papers – on the Ecumenical Research Exchange in Rotterdam

(ERE), which was not considered either by some as an officially controlled body. The appointment of a second full-time colleague was therefore not only intended to ease the work load but correct the balance to some extent. (Win Hagenbuch's - now Burton - information work was only half-time.)

Marc wrote in his own diary in early June 1980,

> *"The days and weeks go by and last week's 'big meetings' leave me with a lot of unanswered questions. What is clear is that priorities have to be set – and things have to be put in order such that a new colleague can join the secretariat and take over."*

At the same time another development was mooted which initially caused a lot of uneasiness in the office: the EKD wanted to set up its own office in Brussels. At first the resistance was great: the whole idea on the European Brussels scene was that the institutions were interested to discuss with *European* organisations, and it was strongly felt that the place for national bodies was in their respective member states, lobbying their national governments. Furthermore the Ecumenical Centre and subsequently Commission had prided itself on the fact that precisely unlike other "lobby groups" which were beginning to proliferate in Brussels, it was un-self-interested and that this only enhanced its credibility and the strength of its message. But the EKD was not only a national Church office, it had a particular concern of its own: changes in legislation particularly in the area of financial and ultimately possibly fiscal policy, could affect their levying of Church taxes which was a peculiarity in the German system. The EKD had huge responsibilities back home as an employer, and felt the need not only for a German representative on the spot, but a legal expert at that (and this did not fit into the staff pattern of the ECCSEC).

And so it came about that an EKD office was set up independently of the Ecumenical Centre in 1990 – and manned initially by Hans-Joachim

Kiderlen (a jurist and senior civil servant in the BRD Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Bonn – and today Lutheran Bishop of Tbilisi). However from the outset care was taken that there be close ties of co-operation between him and Marc so that both internally, and in the eyes of the European Commission there should not be any inconsistency or apparent rivalry; Hans-Joachim Kiderlen became an associate staff member of ECCSEC, and as the years passed the two offices moved into physical proximity and there was daily intermingling between staff at all levels (at coffee breaks!), and the EKD executive staff formed part of the overall staff Collegium (which subsequently included the Strasbourg staff, and then the overall CEC staff including Geneva). [26]

Marc was also aware that there were serious questions being raised in the ECCSEC Executive Committee as to whether he should continue on the staff – which even the French (FPF) under Pastor Schweitzer voiced. Brian Duckworth actually tipped him off that he would do well to start looking for a new job (though the main pressure was probably coming from the EKD). A very unpleasant Executive Committee meeting took place in Paris shortly before the Interlaken conference in 1982 from which Marc was excluded while his situation was discussed, strongly defended by Harry de Lange and Antoinette Panhuis (Belgian, representative of the EPUB/UPCB on the Executive Committee of ECCSEC);[27] and again in September 1983 when the Executive Committee met at the height of the "Werner Lichtwark crisis", Klaus Kremkau and Paul Oestreicher had lunch with Marc and suggested that he should think of "moving on" elsewhere.

[26] In time, the staff of the EKD office came to be more numerous than the collective CEC/CSC offices together.

[27] When Marc retired in 1999, Klaus Kremkau wrote a very gracious personal letter – admitting that at one stage he had had doubts whether Marc should continue in the job but he had subsequently come greatly to admire and appreciate him.

Nothing was ever explicitly said to Marc at this or any other time, other than the hint that he had perhaps been in the job too long. It shook him sufficiently however to prompt him to undertake a considerable degree of soul-searching – or at the very least, a mid-term stock-taking.

With hindsight, Marc sees as a personal disappointment that the weak point in the evolution (not to use a term as strong as "failure") was not to have managed to press for the setting up of some form of Church and Society office within each national Church or Federation of Churches which would have served as link and relay with the Brussels office and a means of reaching out to actual parishes – this had proved a major problem with the information work too: which desks should information from Brussels be sent to? (This weakness was prefigured from an early stage – see comment under the first comments on institutions in progress on pp. 55-6) The moment to do this would probably have been in the immediate aftermath of Roehampton, but it took some time for everyone to realise that M M Thomas' challenge had effectively represented a passing of the baton from ad hoc groups to the Member Churches of ECCSEC individually and collectively, and this collective responsibility entailed organisational and procedural rethinking too, not a continuation of ad hoc working. The Network of European ecumenical Church organisations – formally integrated in the ECCSEC structures – was intended to serve this purpose of providing European momentum to Commission meetings and thinking but did not sufficiently fulfil the relay function back in the member Churches, for they themselves were somewhat on the fringe of the institutional set-up, and fragile and dependent financially on the member Churches which accordingly diminished their clout. That having been said, others, notably those in the member Church offices concerned, may have perceived things quite differently.

There was no template for this work: just as the European project was *sui generis*, constantly evolving with increasing enlargement to

include new countries and new competences for policy areas – including some that had previously been covered more by the Council of Europe - so too the Churches, just like the EEC member states themselves, had to try to adapt constantly – with more or less success. This was not therefore ECCSEC trying to take over from CEC – but attempting to adapt to the new reality in Brussels, matters that were not just being treated (and needed to be treated) in the Commission but also being included in successive Treaties. The whole concept of "European citizenship" first surfaced under the Spanish Presidency, and with the Charta of Fundamental Rights one could see that the European Commission was wanting in some way to create some distance from the over-economist image, and make an effort in other areas – such as setting up Erasmus. The Churches had to adapt both structures and thematic emphases, but they were not easy to convince nor was it obvious how to keep altering the framework of reference and action and reflect that in the Churches' structures at European level. Initially all the focus had been on economic policy and agriculture – then came questions such as Regional Policy. The Churches needed well-thought information to keep them abreast and on board: the Early Warning System newssheets went some way to help but were probably too specialist for many in the Churches.

Gradually however things *were* moving forward: in the following chapter it will be seen how by 1988, the European Ecumenical Commission for Church and Society was even taking the lead in seeking discussion with European Commissioners over matters like South(ern) Africa and the Common Agricultural Policy.

5

THE CONFERENCE OF INTERLAKEN AND THE YEARS 1982-1990

A Consultation of Western European Churches entitled "The Task of the Churches in Western Europe" took place in Interlaken from 8-12 October 1982 (with a preparatory conference in Klingenthal attended by Werner Lichtwark on behalf of ECCSEC). The drive and focus behind this ecumenical conference was André Appel, who by then had become President of the CEC (position he held from 1974-86) as well as being as involved as ever with the Conference of Rhine Churches. The thematic focus was more on the Council of Europe – bringing in the Churches from Switzerland (FEPS) and Scandinavia that had an interest in this orbit.

It emerged clearly from this Conference (of which a detailed evaluation was made) that the Churches throughout Western Europe were still woefully uninformed about the mandate and scope of the different institutions at European level, whether European Community or Council of Europe. This lack of awareness had made it difficult to go into sufficient depth on the actual issues on the agenda (such as the search for a concept of Europe and a better expression of the Churches' presence at European level). It also brought out clear differences between Churches: where the Protestant Churches had many questions – even reservations – of an ecclesiological and theological nature in relation to Europe, the Anglican and Orthodox traditions did not share

this preoccupation. It was felt too that the stance of the Roman Catholic Church to Europe under Jean-Paul II merited further examination in this respect. Should the non-Roman Churches be seeking to define and make explicit a very different approach?

It seemed clear that the focus of future work should be on "the responsibility of the Churches vis à vis the problems of society which are transnational in nature" (report by President Binder to the Executive Committee). And although the inclusion of Churches from the Nordic countries, Austria and Switzerland would provide a welcome new dynamic it was agreed that Church and Society issues – as they arise in relation to European political institutions – remain the priority subject. So we are not, writes President Binder, dealing "with the internal life of Churches but with their response to questions at the level of society" – which may also mean henceforth, covering legal and cultural developments as arising in the Council of Europe. However in both the Conference and the earlier discussions of the constitution, it was clear that the Churches were not just defining a "style of presence" vis à vis political institutions – for, unlike the Roman Catholic way of proceeding, many Protestant Churches were uncomfortable with this not least because they stem from such different national situations with regard to government and those in power.

It was agreed there should be three major and interdependent lines of emphasis from now on:

- On research and diffusing its results
- On raising awareness in Churches of the transnational dimension of socio-ethical problems
- On elaborating a Church presence in relation to European institutions in a spirit of "critical solidarity".

One concrete decision was that the five organisations already working at European level (CCMWE, ECCSEC, ERE, JTF and the

Strasbourg office) should meet to discuss how together to further these aims in better co-ordination (including financial). These five organisations all had a staff; the others which did not to the same extent (ECG, Academies, WSCF/Europe) would be linked in through the informal "Network" in which they already operated. Initially this resulted in meetings of the Network and publication of a "Handbook" and small leaflet, "Network News", designed to clarify the acronyms, roles and scopes of these different organisations for the member Churches.

The Interlaken Conference had a number of direct consequences. One was to set up an office in Strasbourg, partly financed by the Churches in Alsace, whose job it would be to monitor more closely the work of the European Parliament *but also* of the Council of Europe – which for some it was felt was of more direct relevance for the Churches, being largely of a cultural nature (plus human rights) rather than economic. To some extent this latter body had been somewhat neglected or even discounted – for its work is in no way compelling in law as is the outcome of EEC deliberation, but it rather makes recommendations; it has no decision-making power – purely mandatory – and is an inter-governmental organisation.

The ECCSEC meeting of 20/21 January 1983 debated the ethical questions raised by the problems of unemployment. A report was made on the conference of West European Churches in Interlaken, and a letter had been sent from this conference to ECCSEC and this was debated:

- enlargement of the mandate of ECCSEC to include the Council of Europe – welcomed
- extension of ECCSEC membership to all member states of the Council of Europe – welcomed
- an ECCSEC office to be set up in Strasbourg – but should this be an institutional representation, or what model and form of office?

- Competition with CEC should be avoided – any extension of the work should support CEC

In 1983 Marc represented ECCSEC at the WCC Vancouver Assembly, as Jan van Veen thought it important that ECCSEC be seen there and therefore found funding. Marc was struck to see how this organisation brought together two major but very different concerns at global level: the East/West tensions with all the questions of the arms race and nuclear disarmament; and the North/South divide where many Church-related NGOs were actively involved. The focus at this Assembly was on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation (JPIC) with a memorable moment when a small delegation of men and women from the Caledonian Islands, Fiji, spoke of the dangers of the nuclear experiments France was conducting on their islands: these people from a tiny local Church spoke up and told them of the sickness these experiments were causing for their people. This had a big impact and it was the beginning, Marc recalls, of a change in approach to world problems: instead of the analytical, compartmentalised approach (East/West being tackled by completely different groups from those concerned with North/South) it was understood that no problem could be resolved without taking into account the implications of and for all the others; the whole environmental and ecological element came into the picture as part of the whole. For him this was an eye-opener at this time – the way everything was interrelated, one thing affected another directly or indirectly, and therefore a convergent approach was required. This was so radical compared with the way the European Commission was still functioning in a very segmented way – with an economic policy that had nothing to do with social policy, a trade policy which took no account of development policy. Although already in groups like the Ecumenical Centre's EcoTheo group for example, in the late seventies, this combined thinking had started amongst both the Church experts and Commission civil servants brought together. Helmut von

Verschuer was saying much the same about the link between EEC agricultural policy and European rural and regional development and the impact on developing countries' economy and their imports/exports. One has to be constantly aware that solving one person's problem is likely to create a new problem for someone else: the balancing act of solidarity is almost impossibly hard to achieve. But this is where the "values" of the Churches' involvement even with an ostensibly "economic" (in the case of the European Community) project come into play constantly.

> *Here is where the Churches have a role to play. The role the Churches* can *play. It goes back to the famous slogan of the World Council of Churches when it spoke of the "voiceless" – speaking up for those who have no voice. This is the Church's vicarious role in politics – if it needed defining that would be the way to do so. Normally the political world should be solving problems of that nature.*

On 16-17 June 1983 the Ecumenical Commission met with Präses Binder (EKD Bonn) in the Chair. A discussion took place with G G Williams about working with the CEC and the WCC. The Protestant Federation of Education (Church and School) was admitted as a new associate member to ECCSEC. The decision was formally taken to enlarge ECCSEC to cover the whole of Western Europe as in the Council of Europe and Finland – for which an additional secretariat would be set up in Strasbourg: the Churches of Alsace would second a staff member and offices from 1985 on. Whether ECCSEC should be transformed into an Ecumenical Commission in Western Europe – including ERE – was discussed. A document was presented on security policy and political co-operation in Europe by Jaap Houtman (a senior civil servant in DG VI and successor to Helmut von Verschuer as President of the Board of the AOES). A new Executive Committee was

appointed – with Pierre Chrétien (FPF) as President of ECCSEC, Paul Oestreicher Vice-President and Klaus Kremkau Treasurer – as from 1984. The CCMWE noted that it would review its relationship with ECCSEC as the current pressures on the staff and the budgetary restraints meant that the secretarial and information work that were part of its contract with the AOES were not being fulfilled adequately. It was discussed whether "time limits" should be set for the periods of service of senior staff. After this meeting the Interlaken Committee was wound up, its job having been done.

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the impetus for this move came above all from André Appel whose interest besides involving the Swiss and Nordic Churches derived perhaps also from his perception of the limits of what could be done in the CEC during the Cold War – but that is another story, not to be written by us! – and where he saw in the Council of Europe, of which Russia and other Eastern European countries were also to become members in the 1990s, a possibility for more latitude in action and dialogue. The Russian Orthodox Church – and other Churches – had been involved in the work of the World Council of Churches for some time although it was largely felt that this was merely a means of giving certain persons a ticket to come out of the USSR from time to time, and few people had illusions as to their real participation in the work of the WCC (or of CEC), indeed it was well known that they were closely watched and reported back on all the time.

Another significant impetus however came from the entry of the Swiss Protestant Federation in ECCSEC. The Swiss Churches – with the redoubtable Dolf Trüb, who subsequently took over from Klaus Kremkau as Treasurer of ECCSEC – were enthusiastic supporters of work in Strasbourg (also earlier through the Conference of Rhine Churches) and were now ready to contribute more extensively, even to the work of ECCSEC despite the fact that Switzerland was not an EEC

member. Clearly the economic space of this part of Western Europe affected Switzerland as much as any other country in all policy areas, and it was an enlightened approach. Although the work done in Strasbourg has not had the same impact and publicity as what ECCSEC was doing in Brussels and CEC in Geneva, the geostrategic importance of Strasbourg, where the Council of Europe and the European Parliament met, and the Churches of Alsace-Lorraine and the person of André Appel (President of CEC) were centred (with particular financial and personnel resources) should not be underestimated in the course of this particular history and what was to come, as will be developed further below (p. 97).

And so it came about that as a result of an initiative from the Conference of Rhine Churches, underpinned by André Appel in his capacity of President of the ECAAL, the Churches came to acknowledge structurally the importance of Strasbourg – as seat of the Council of Europe and the European Court of Human Rights, and the venue for the European (EEC) Parliament's monthly sessions. The setting up of an EECCS office in Strasbourg would effectively widen the perimeters of its mandate. The fact that André Appel was simultaneously President of the Conference of European Churches was also going to prove highly significant in view of the changes that would come about in Europe at the end of the eighties and the effect of these changes both for EECCS (the successor body to ECCSEC) and CEC.

One of the main subjects of discussion at and after the Interlaken conference was the role and work of the Church organisations and their integration and role in the ECCSEC. Three of these organisations had attended Interlaken: EECOD (which had formerly been the Joint Task Force), CCMWE (Committee of Migrant Workers - now CCME) and ERE (Ecumenical Research Exchange). With this growing officialisation of structures since the passing of the constitution setting up the ECCSEC, it was proving difficult to explain to member Churches

that *in addition*, there were certain Church organisations (which also needed financial support). This was not a major problem for the CCMWE and for EECOD – which had their own statutes and their own sources of finance, while still being linked in thematically to the work being done at European level through ECCSEC.

ERE was another matter. It was a truly ecumenical foundation, largely supported by the Dutch Churches (Instituut voor Normen en Waarden) and the German Churches (Forschungsstätte der Evangelischen Studiengemeinschaft) but also with French and Belgian input (Institut de Sociologie des Religions UCL/LLN). It had been born out of the bombing of Rotterdam: in the post-war process of reconciliation it was realised (and the FEST in particular) that public opinion in the Netherlands remained very hostile towards Germany. The Instituut voor Normen en Waarden in Rotterdam, where Paul Kraemer and Harry de Lange worked, provided premises, and ERE maintained close working links all the time with the FEST in Heidelberg, the Instituut voor Normen en Warden in Rotterdam, François Houtart's Centre de recherches socio-religieuses in Louvain-la-Neuve and the Irish School of Ecumenics, Dublin. Marc had from the outset been very dependent on ERE to supplement the study and research work which he could barely sustain along with all the other work in CCEC and later ECCSEC. Then when Gerta Scharffenorth of the FEST became President of ERE she invited Marc to join ERE's Board – specifically at the time because ERE's research was then focussed on the relations between the European Community and South/Southern Africa, and the role of the Churches, and this in turn was particularly helpful for Marc within CCEC, the subject being a very delicate one which needed careful handling based on sound research, but nonetheless liable to rouse strong emotions in the member Churches.

By 1983 however Catholic financial support was falling off. Since Interlaken much discussion had taken place on clarifying the

relationship between the ECCSEC and ERE, and talks had even taken place in various quarters and at different times about merging the two into a single body, where ERE would be a kind of centre of meta-research for the Churches at European level (despite the fact that ERE had hitherto been an independent research agency with Catholic participation in both management and staff) – and Marc comments that although these talks were not enthusiastically pursued by all, he personally would have been very much in favour of such a move, not just to save ERE in its current funding difficulties but in order to strengthen the research input he still so badly needed. In the first months of 1984 a draft agreement was drawn up to facilitate co-operation on a contract basis; this was reported on at the June 1984 ECCSEC meeting but not voted on.

At the ECCSEC Assembly meeting of 19/20 January 1984, Pierre Chrétien took over the chair from Prelate Binder. An ECCSEC/Conference of Rhine Churches meeting in December 1983 had discussed the possibility of setting up a post in Strasbourg. André Appel stipulated that further discussion was needed to take into account the reality of the CEC – and talks should be held with them.

Jean-Jacques Heitz described his work in Strasbourg hitherto in a modest Ecumenical Secretariat. A post there would not be just a presence – but require analysis and involvement (e.g. with Council of Europe issues). There would however be considerable financial implications – and potential "new" member churches which might as a result of this enlargement come in (e.g. Sweden, Finland, Switzerland, Austria) did not want to be welcomed merely as funders. It was agreed that this post could probably only be a half-time post.

A first discussion took place on the document "Unemployment and the Future of Work" – to be continued. A brochure had been produced for the European Elections.

Win Burton resigned as Information Officer for family reasons – and this raised the question of the continuity of the Early Warning System and how the Churches were to be kept informed in future. (In due course Anna Lubinska, a journalist, was taken on as Information Officer.) The prior themes for EWS bulletins were narrowed down to

- work/unemployment
- food and agriculture
- migration
- EP elections

(though a wish was expressed that the office might continue to cover Southern Africa, peace and security, and ecology). There was also a need for more general information to Member Churches perhaps through the Network of Church Organisations that had been created in the wake of Interlaken (see p. 85 above) – but this would require a professional staff member.

A request was made that for the June 1984 meeting a document be produced on the functioning of ECCSEC.

The Peace and Security document which had been adopted in June 1983 should lead to a one-day conference in 1985.

The consultation on poverty held in November 1983 was to lead to a second consultation jointly with OCIPE.

The Working Group on Racism was no longer to come directly under the mandate of ECCSEC – but rather under CCMWE, although Marc would continue as a member.

CEC (Glen Garfield Williams) had indicated that ECCSEC's moves to enlargement were creating misunderstandings within the CEC, which needed to be clarified in both W and E Europe.

The relations with ERE were on the agenda: were ECCSEC to assume more direct responsibility, what would be the implication for the current RC involvement? That needed further examination.

Staff changes were announced: Werner Lichtwark's (Executive Secretary) contract had been terminated at the end of 1983 and Marc was now doing his work; Win Burton would finish at the end of June 1984; Anne Deblander would cease responsibility for the secretariat and administration from 1 January 1984 (being replaced in this function by Carol Gabus) but continue servicing the Ecumenical Association and running the house, making it more than just a set of offices but really a "Centre"; Irene Bouman, who had been taken on as W. Lichtwark's secretary, would take over responsibility for accounts.

It was reported that a first "official level" meeting between ECCSEC – so Church leaders - and the Commission of the European Communities had taken place in June 1983 – discussing enlargement, development policy, peace and security, and European elections. It was hoped that a second such meeting could focus on Social Policy (and poverty) and peace and security, now that ECCSEC had completed and published work on these questions.

The minutes of the Executive Committee meeting on 30 March 1984 are – strangely – headed "Ecumenical Commission for Church and Society in Western Europe" (ECCSWE) – though there are no records of this title being discussed or officially adopted at any point: on the contrary, it is proposed to put to the Commission at its June meeting a change of title to "European Ecumenical Commission for Church and Society" (EECCS). Paul Oestreicher, in his report as Vice-Chairman to the Commission in June, said that the title of the Commission, with its explicit reference to the European Communities, was a major obstacle to good relations and understanding with the CEC and needed to be clarified, if possible in a meeting with the CEC Praesidium.

It was reported at this meeting that the Church of Scotland had applied for membership.

When EECCS met on 21/22 June 1984, Anna Lubinska was the new Information Officer (replacing Win Burton) on a one-year contract.

Umberto Stefani attended from the General Secretariat of the European Commission: this was probably a tail-ender in his Commission career but significant as being the first time the Commission more or less explicitly designated a reference person for religious communities, in particular the Churches.

The AOES had prepared a paper following up the document "Peace and Security in Europe" which had been accepted in June 1983; and ERE had drafted a three-year research project. However it was clear that no funds were available to support that at present.

A budget was going to be needed for the refurbishing of the offices in 23 Av. d'Auderghem, on which a further nine-year lease had just been signed. However there was not enough money for a Strasbourg office or for a new full-time Executive Secretary plus a half-time administrative secretary, so these posts were provisionally put on hold.

Discussion took place on the relative financial contributions from the different Churches, according to the "wealth" of each. Klaus Kremkau had tried to establish criteria. According to these criteria neither Spain nor Portugal should make any contribution at all, but the Federal Republic of Germany and Great Britain would continue to pay a contribution of 41% each.

The subject of poverty – or "the poor" (and "the rich") – in Europe was discussed – in relation to two consultations organised jointly with OCIPE in November 1983 and July 1984 at the request of the European Commission. These meetings and the ensuing reports presented to the Commission, led to the European Commission setting up a European Programme to Combat Poverty in which Church-related bodies would co-operate.

A discussion took place on the working methods of EECCS – should there not better be one rather than two meetings a year; over 3 days, with in-depth thematic discussion and not just administration (which could be delegated more to the Executive Committee); problem of "ownership"

by Member Churches between infrequent meetings – the need for a turnover of working groups involving more people. This would require further discussion.

The new name *European Ecumenical Commission for Church and Society (EECCS)* was voted and the constitution was modified accordingly.

The Salvation Army was granted consultative membership.

It was agreed the next meeting should focus on the relationships between the European Community and South Africa and Namibia. The Ecumenical Association was asked to prepare contacts with the European institutions to this end.

Discussions took place on the question of the Family and Religious Freedom – in relation to the EP "Cottrell resolution" aimed at protecting young people from pressure from sects by setting up a code of conduct for religious movements.

> *I remember remarking the difference that emerged in this debate between majority and minority Churches. The French Churches for example were strongly opposed to any form of legislation to limit the activities of sects – a legacy from their history as a Protestant minority.*

The Assembly meeting of 25/26 September 1984 dwelt on the regrettable prospect that ERE might have to close down. There was some feeling that although ERE was not EECCS, financial responsibility and some decisions had been taken at a meeting in June earlier in the year, and before that in Interlaken, in a not entirely transparent way. The word "conspiracy" was even used. To some extent, Marc thinks it paid the price for its strong support of the WCC's Programme to Combat Racism.

A discussion took place on the Common Agricultural Policy with Commissioner Andriessen. The AOES had drafted a working paper on

the role of agriculture and the future of rural society. At the same time the European Commission had produced a Green Paper on reform of the CAP. Both would be followed up by an AOES multi-disciplinary working group chaired by Helmut von Verschuer.

Recent events in Southern Africa meant there was now an urgent need to consider economic sanctions – also in response to a request from the SACC. It proved difficult for the EKD representative to vote in favour of this Resolution: the question was raised whether he could do so in the context of EECCS as a separate responsible body. It was voted in the end with some abstentions and agreed that a top-level meeting should be arranged between the Ecumenical Commission and the European Commission.

Note in addition

- this was Marc Luyckx's first attendance at a meeting as new secretary of the JTF
- this was Jan van Veen's last meeting
- the Ecumenical Commission had published a paper "unemployment and the future of work" (at the request of and financed by the European Commission)

In January 1985 a report was given by the Chairman of the Executive Committee (Pierre Chrétien) on work done since June 1984 which included

- closer co-operation with the Nordic Churches
- the question of setting up an office in Strasbourg
- the relationship between the EEC and S Africa (document by ERE)
- a document being prepared on unemployment
- working group within AOES on the "future of rural society"

- contact with the Christian Peace Conference to invite observers from E Europe (and accept the CPC invitation to send an observer to their General Assemblies)
- a co-operation agreement with ERE agreed by the Executive Committee

On this point it emerged that if EECCS were to take over ERE's deficit, it would mean an overall EECCS deficit of almost BF 4m in 1986 which was untenable. ERE had a budgetary shortfall of BF 1m for 1985, and if this could not be covered it was clear it was going to have to close down in September 1985. Klaus Kremkau noted that "the ecumenical nature of ERE made any more direct relationships with the EECCS impossible". At the same time he noted that as far as the ordinary budget of ERE was concerned, there was no longer a contribution from the Roman Catholic side. It was concluded that the co-operation agreement should be signed as agreed, "on condition that the financial problems be solved".

A discussion took place on whether the Commission should meet henceforth once or twice a year (on the basis of a working paper, "ECCSEC – mode de fonctionnement"). And in accordance with the new statutes, it was decided henceforth to use the new title "Commission Oecuménique Européenne pour Église et Société" or European Ecumenical Commission for Church and Society (EECCS) – no longer mentioning the European Community *nor* as had in fact been proposed instead, Western Europe.

> *Meanwhile, things were moving elsewhere too. André Appel in Strasbourg began to see the importance for Churches not only of the European Parliament (meeting in Strasbourg) but also of the Council of Europe, and then quite logically, to look more closely at which countries were members of the Council of Europe and what Churches might therefore potentially be interested (with his*

eye on the CEC constituency). There was in fact talk of an Interlaken II – which might take place in Scandinavia with a view to getting the Nordic Churches (Finland, Sweden) more involved and linking up with the Nordic Ecumenical Centre; Austria too. And of course all this had potential financial implications. It was something of a strategic triumph to have brought the Swiss Churches in after Interlaken I (no second conference was in fact held in the end[28]) and to have benefitted from Dolf Trüb as Treasurer: more than once he said, "this is Strasbourg money keeping Brussels afloat".

But really this was the first sign of CEC looking to see specifically what was going on in Western Europe, and indeed they applied for NGO observer status at the Council of Europe. Jean-Jacques Heitz was already present there for EECCS – and it was agreed he could represent CEC too. This was a very significant move. And then the realisation that both CEC and EECCS were working on certain key issues in common – though not together – like Human Rights (post Helsinki): this issue had acquired additional importance since the signature in 1975 by 35 states of the Helsinki Final Act. Though it has to be said that the EEC human rights competence was still minimal – Daniela de Napoli in the General Secretariat of the Commission (with Umberto Stefani) had this portfolio on her desk, and there were the first moves towards European citizenship being discussed but little else.

In the Executive Committee meeting prior to the January 1985 Commission meeting, key questions were raised especially in the light

[28] A consultation between representatives of CEC, EECCS and the Nordic Churches however took place in Sigtuna in February 1985. From this it emerged that there was more interest in the work of the Council of Europe and distinctly less for that of the European Community.

of the chronic understaffing. Marc was being expected to act both as Executive Secretary and Study Secretary; the work done by AOES – which nourished and to some extent oriented the focus of EECCS – required his critical theological input if it was not to become a mere bureaucratic reflection of European Commission policy. The Information service was key in making the link with the Churches for the next stage – but was not really achieving its goal in enabling each Church or Federation of Churches to take the issues on board. Anna Lubinska (Information Officer) was invited by Klaus Kremkau to visit the epd office in Frankfurt (expenses paid) and he suggested other Churches follow suite. In any case, the machinery of EECCS turned very slowly – and there were times when a relatively rapid response or comment was called for. In some cases it was felt the secretariat needed the freedom to act "leaving room for dignified 'disavowal' by the Ecumenical Commission if need be".

So it would not be overstating the case to say that in 1985 EECCS was in crisis – or in more of a crisis than usual. Helmut asked the EECCS Assembly at its meeting on 24/25 January "Do the restricted means available not reflect the Churches' degree of involvement?" The whole chicken/egg situation of the information and communication problem was highlighted. Should moreover EECCS take over ERE's financial deficit? Where was the commitment to reach agreement over these difficult matters?

As with so many other organisations, finance was an ongoing problem and it had come to a head at this point with so many claims on both human and financial resources:

- The offices in the avenue d'Auderghem urgently needed both renovation and re-equipping
- There was the question of setting up a new office in Strasbourg with a half-time staff member and half-time secretary

- ERE was in financial difficulties (its funding coming mainly from the same sources as EECCS') and there was now a question of its survival at all, possibly through either closer structural inter-relation with or even take over by EECCS.
- The staffing level was down to a minimum with Marc virtually on his own, and therefore very dependent on the additional support of both the AOES and ERE for study work and preparation of documents. The balance and priority between lobby, study and research work had to be carefully weighed.
- There was the financing of Anne Deblander to consider in her new ¼ time role as responsible for the running of the Centre and servicing the AOES – a task that would partly be financed by the AOES

These problems were considerably exacerbated by the fact that a number of Churches paid their annual contributions very late.

Helmut's question was all too pertinent. Pierre Chrétien had also reported on a meeting with the AOES where members had expressed their serious disappointment at the slowness or total lack of follow-up in any Churches to the very concrete suggestions made on the report on "Peace and Security in Europe". This follow-up also had financial implications for ERE and EECCS which would be responsible for a major part of it, and the Churches had been asked to contribute to this on top of their regular contributions, but not a single response had been forthcoming. Pierre Chrétien concluded with the question "how credible is the Commission?", stating that he could not believe this lack of support was merely a question of finance. However it should also be realised, he said, that "the Ecumenical Commission had over-estimated its financial capacities as far as its programme of activities was concerned".

Much discussion took place of the modalities of setting up the post in Strasbourg – the Swiss Churches being particularly interested in this.

The solution of sharing the post between the Anglican Parish and EECCS Secretariat in Strasbourg was put forward. The Archbishop of Canterbury would be in a position to decide on this in March after a visit to Strasbourg – but a good candidate was already in the pipeline. This solution would be implemented if nothing was first proposed by the Conference of Rhine Churches.

A discussion also took place on Southern Africa, in the presence of Maurice Foley from the European Commission, leading to a decision to ask AOES to organise a meeting, write a memorandum and show the way to embarking on economic disengagement.

The Nordic Ecumenical Institute was accepted as a consultative member; it had been reported to the Executive Committee that the Church of Scotland was still being represented within the BCC delegation.

When the Commission met again in September that year, the Executive Committee could report that a working group had met to discuss the outcome of the debate on South(ern) Africa and prepared a report that was now ready to be debated between Church representatives and the European institutions. Meanwhile the political situation had deteriorated violently over the summer and a delegation from EECCS and the SACC (South African Council of Churches) to Willy de Clercq (European Commissioner responsible for External Relations) had led to a first public stance by the European Commission in July.

On another topic, AOES and EECCS work was proving equally timely: the European Commission had published in July a Green Paper on reorientation of the CAP and without pre-empting the ongoing work in the AOES working group, a small group of experts from the Churches had already met in July. At this meeting the European Commissioner responsible – Mr Andriessen – would hear the results of AOES and EECCS work and discuss further.

Meanwhile the Conference of Rhine Churches had agreed to finance a half-time post in Strasbourg for three years, starting normally in 1986. This post could be filled by Barney Milligan (Canon of St Albans) – who would spend the other half of his time serving the Anglican community in Strasbourg. The work would be regularly monitored by a "Beirat" set up by André Appel that would report back regularly to Brussels. EECCS had applied for consultative status with the Council of Europe.

Since January, the financial guarantees needed for the survival of ERE had not materialised from the different sponsors and EECCS with its own financial difficulties was not in a position to step in. If as seemed likely, ERE was therefore going to have to close, EECCS would nonetheless be hard pressed for research back-up from now on. However the Churches' current financial support for ERE could be used to finance an EECCS study secretary. An informal meeting had taken place in Geneva on 19 June 1985 outside the EECCS structures but bringing together heads of Churches/Councils of Churches (from France, Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands and the UK, and representatives of ERE and CCMWE) to discuss the commitments of these Churches in relation to the European institutions (against the backcloth of the financial difficulties of EECCS). Subsequently there was considerable unhappiness among Churches not invited to this meeting (Nordic Churches, Churches of Southern Europe) that decisions were being taken behind their backs and this was deemed to be an abuse of power.

In response to criticism voiced openly at the Commission meeting on 25-26 September – whether "the Ecumenical Commission had not gone beyond the limits of its responsibilities" in regard to ERE and its future (Jan van Veen), the Chairman reminded the Commission "that it was not up to EECCS to decide ERE's future". "The meeting of June 19 was held to have a clearer view of ERE's financial situation. It was in no

way a conspiracy[29]. Since the aim was to find a financial solution for ERE, the Geneva meeting brought together the Churches which were in a position to help ERE financially."

In these conditions, it was reported that notice was being given to ERE's staff from 30 November 1985, and the office would no longer exist physically – though still legally.

At the September 1985 meeting EECCS also heard that Marc had been sent as an observer to the 7th General Assembly of the CPC in Prague in July 1985, and it was important to arrange in future for participants from Eastern European Churches to attend EECCS meetings. Marc was to make contacts on the basis of the "Peace and Security" document – but also make clear to the Churches in Eastern Europe what was the specificity of EECCS' work and dispel the reigning suspicions.

The paper on "Unemployment and the future of work" was now completed and available in English and French for distribution in the Churches, and reaction. It was to be hoped as a result in due course that the Ecumenical Commission itself would take a position on the issue and present it to the European institutions.

Anna Lubinska proposed to start issuing an "Annual Review".

It was agreed that given the major issues being worked on and up for debate in EECCS at the moment (South(ern) Africa and the CAP), the question of Transnational Corporations should be temporarily shelved for later work.

Carole Gabus at this stage was given a full-time contract, and Irene Smith agreed to take over the book-keeping work. Marc was asked to take over responsibility for staff co-ordination as this could not be done by the Executive Committee.

Meanwhile a job description for a new Executive Secretary was being prepared.

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[29] As had been implied at the Assembly meeting a year earlier – see p. 95 above

The status and contribution of others round the EECCS table were also critically reviewed at this stage (in the Executive Committee). Whereas it was clear that neither the WCC nor the CEC nor the CEPPLE would be contributing financially to the EECCS budget (and they were consequently in the new constitution – which no longer recognised the status of associate members – given observer status), there was also the question of the issue-oriented bodies. The Treasurer stated he would expect them to pay financial contributions to the 1986 budget. This led to a detailed discussion of the particular case of the CCMWE which – as in the case of ERE and AOES – was governed by an agreement with EECCS which was not entirely being fulfilled.

The EECCS Assembly of 11-13 June 1986 was chaired by Pierre Chrétien. Serious questions were raised between Paul Oestreicher and Klaus Kremkau about the tasks facing the staff, Churches' expectations and the current staffing. The financial situation was also difficult and salaries were not being paid regularly.

The Nordic Churches stated that they still gave priority to their work with CEC.

Barney Milligan was introduced as candidate for the EECCS Executive Secretary in Strasbourg, half-time working for EECCS and half-time for the Anglican parish in Strasbourg, building on the work in Strasbourg already started by Jean-Jacques Heitz, especially at the chaplaincy level.

There was a presentation of the EECCS document "Unemployment and the future of work". It provoked some strong reactions. The European Commission representative for links with the Churches, Umberto Stefani, also present, reacted as well. The EECCS working group and the EcoTheo group would follow it up.

A working group was set up on New Media (under Hans-Wolfgang Hessler, epd). A debate took place on South Africa, which led to a letter being sent to the SACC and the President of the Council of Ministers.

(Several hours after the end of the meeting the Ecumenical Commission was informed of a state of emergency throughout South African territory.)

A discussion took place on a European Convention against Torture – at the request of the FEPS (Fédération des Églises protestantes de Suisse).

The Strasbourg office was opened officially in November 1986.

At the EECCS Assembly of 10-12 June 1987 a discussion took place on sanctions in relation to the apartheid régime in South Africa; also a discussion on the Single European Act (which had been signed in Luxembourg and the Hague in 1986). The Assembly heard a report from the working group on TNCs (Harry de Lange). Jaap Houtman (President of the AOES) presented a proposal for an "Ecumenical Unit for Policy Research": OCIPE was interested in participating but so far no money had been found to finance it.

Also at this time, there is a Churches' working-group (EECCS and Ecumenical Association) on the Common Agricultural Policy, under the chairmanship of LKR Herbert Rösener of the EKD. At around this time in 1987, an American activist named Mark Ritchie involved in an NGO of family farmers in the Mid-West sought to make contact with the Directorate General for Agriculture (VI) in the European Commission with a view to organising a common front of US farmers, *campesinos* in Brazil and small farmers in Europe, and he chose the Ecumenical Association as his intermediary. In the winter of 1988 Marc went with Marc Luyckx to meet farmers in Desmoines (Iowa) in this connection.

In June 1988 the "Core Group Europe 1992" was set up under Michael Smart – particularly to look at the process which had led to the Single European Act (1987) and was to culminate in the Maastricht Treaty (1993).

The EECCS General Assembly met in Strasbourg from 2-4 June (chaired by Elizabeth Salter). Note that those present included

- Keith Jenkins representing the BCC
- A representative of the Welsh Council of Churches
- John Nurser representing the WCC
- Mgr Huot-Pleuroux as General Secretary of COMECE (which had been launched in 1980)
- Helmut von Verschuer as a member of the EKD delegation
- Klaus Kremkau also representing CEC

Regrets were expressed that there were still no participants coming from E. Europe.

The Church of Greece had decided to withdraw from membership of the EECCS.

EECOD (formerly known as Joint Task Force) was accepted as a consultative member and observer like CCME.

CCME was granted the right to participate as an observer at ExCom meetings.

The question of responsibility for supervising Protestant religion in the European Schools, put to EECCS by Pastor Lindijer, was delegated to the AOES.

Jérôme Vignon (Cabinet of J Delors) gave a presentation on the Single European Act: (1987): the EECCS secretariat had produced a document on the question for the Churches; and an address was given by Philip Lowe (interdepartmental Co-ordinating Group of the European Commission).

A debate took place on Human Rights in the setting of the Council of Europe, and on biogenetics.

From September 1988 until March 1989 Marc took a sabbatical as an associate staff member of a programme of the National Council of Churches in the USA. This spell in Washington gave him the opportunity to observe the way these Churches worked in relation to State institutions. During his leave of absence, Gérard Markhoff (Villemétrie, Paris) stepped in.

From 15-21 May 1989 the first Ecumenical Assembly took place in Basel. Marc introduced a workshop on "culture, ethics and new technologies in Europe".

> Much of the programme of this Assembly is devoted to the impact of new technologies. These may well give us tools for the present, but can also contain potential threats for our future together. How can we reconcile the tension between our cultures, traditions, and these new technologies? And remain faithful to what the Gospel tells us?
>
> As Churches in Europe this is a challenge for us: we are part of these cultures and traditions; and have a responsibility for the future, as the guardians of creation and of our brother men. Moreover the Churches – as do these new technologies – stretch beyond regional and national frontiers; they have a universality.
>
> One might define culture as the point where man and nature meet: not in the Cartesian sense perhaps of subject and object, but more – as the British philosopher and sinologist Needham described, in the Chinese manner of dialogue between the *tao* of all living things. The west has relied more on the notion of dominance than dialogue – of master and slave – and on scientific progress.
>
> Then came the shock of discoveries in the field of nuclear physics – and the realisation that the euphoria of progress was just as much its catastrophe. But this is a false alternative. A new tension has to be found between culture and technology – rather than considering them on parallel tracks that never meet. Culture is not purely one's past heritage; the future is not purely one for technological development.
>
> What then is culture? All the instruments available to a group of men and women enabling them to recognise their given environment as their own and familiar – presupposing the handing on of accumulated wisdom within a tradition that enables them to maintain and transform this environment. It also implies some idea of an end, a goal, an aim, and a degree of critical appreciation. New forms of technology on the

other hand have no such pretensions – they are what they are, one-off, means to ends and not ends in themselves.

To take the image from Deuteronomy, the path to life and the path to death cross over each other. What criteria do we apply to our choices? Do we rely on reason and apparent efficiency or is it the dancing fool of the Middle Ages that is left to exorcise the reality of the devil?

The Churches need crucially to help men and women today to come to a better understanding of the complex world in which they live and move.

The Basel Assembly was an event of real significance both ecumenically and for Europe. Although Europe was still divided both geographically and politically, the participants were aware that we were on the eve of something about to happen, we were at the very forefront of history in the making. The pilgrimage organised in the course of the Assembly where we actually walked together, people from the East with people from the West, across the borders of Switzerland, France and Germany, was an experience I'll never forget. I am quite sure that as we walked, we were conscious on the pilgrimage that the next step would be momentous even if at that moment we didn't know when or what it would be.

On 27th June a meeting was held in the Berlaymont (European Commission), with Jacques Delors and his wife present, to discuss the Basel Assembly. On 30 November the Basel document was officially presented to Jérôme Vignon in the Cellule de Prospective.

This was a crucial moment historically in so many ways – and yet not the turning point it could have been. Having Delors as President, who was genuinely interested in working with faith communities – and his Cellule de Prospective (Forward Studies Unit) working round him for once building Scenarios for 10, 25,

> *50 years ahead beyond the short-term political deadlines of national electorates, and manned by people like Marc Luyckx and Jérôme Vignon – gave us a surge of energy as if that uphill battle I described at the outset (p. 30) was on the way to being won. The White Paper which was to become the Maastricht Treaty was on our desks and it seemed as if all the work done up till now fell into place, made sense: the Churches were there, and the President of the European Commission turned to them.*
>
> *And then – DOWN CAME THE WALL…. Don't get me wrong, it was wonderful, but the agenda changed overnight and we were almost starting from scratch in a completely new set-up where there was once again no blueprint, no point in being visionary, and where very quickly the economic agenda took over.*

At the EECCS Assembly meeting of 27/28 September 1989, Jean Fischer gave an evaluation of the First European Ecumenical Assembly (CEC/CCEE) which had taken place in Basel in May. It had been the first ecumenical encounter where "Europe" had really featured on the agenda. There were tensions nonetheless between participants from East and West, reflected in the difficulties of preparing the final document.

It was reported that the decision had been taken in February 1989 *not* to renew Barney Milligan's contract with EECCS and the Conference of Rhine Churches, but he had been able to work a further six months, and in fact stayed on for a further three years in Strasbourg as Anglican representative, working closely with his successor Gérard Merminod (who was officially instated in 1991).

A loan had been taken out to purchase new office space – a house in rue Joseph II - together with CCME and EECOD.

The meeting welcomed a delegation from South Africa led by the pastor Beyers Naudé: they presented the situation in their country.

The General Assembly adopted a resolution regretting that the situation of apartheid remained unchanged. It reiterated the request made in Basel that a "minimum programme of action" affecting diplomatic and economic links be embarked on (such as a coal embargo, no new loans and a ban on direct airlinks). A letter was sent to the President of the European Commission asking him to press member governments to "adopt the measures urged by the South African Council of Churches and the Southern African Bishops' Conference" (in 1985 – see p. 227).

Two AOES papers were discussed with European Commission representatives present:

- "Looking for a new world order" (Helmut von Verschuer)
- "Paper in view of a discussion on the environment" (Marc Lenders)

After Interlaken an EECCS post in Strasbourg had been created and the FEPS had joined EECCS. But the Nordic Churches had not yet joined, and financial reinforcement of ERE had not been forthcoming. Moreover the information post in the Brussels staff had been vacant for a year. A meeting had been held in Paris to discuss these challenges, and it was estimated that a 32% rise in contributions for Brussels and 46% for Strasbourg would be necessary.

Klaus Kremkau told of the EKD's intention to set up a 3-person EKD delegation in Brussels to be responsible only to the EKD – but who would also collaborate with the EECCS staff, and this in no way meant "that the EKD's commitment to EECCS would be in any way diminished".

It was agreed to try and increase funding to cover two full-time executive posts in Brussels and one in Strasbourg.

Klaus Kremkau was elected President.

Jean Fischer asked for the floor. The CEC/EECCS relationship had had its highs and lows – Interlaken had been a difficult moment, though collaboration had grown since. However an increase in EECCS' staff might be seen as a threat to CEC member Churches (the CEC staff being very small); moreover CEC member Churches were asking it to raise more and more questions with the European Communities.

This was not to be the end of the story!

Then came the momentous events of the autumn of 1989 and a completely new light was thrown from one moment to the next on all activity.

> *Some days before the Berlin Wall fell, I was as it happened in Halle, where a certain Pastor Marcus Meckel (who some weeks later was to become the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the GDR) had invited me to discuss the political changes that everyone felt were in the air – and how this might change the EEC. I shall never forget it – seeing a Professor of Mathematics from the Humboldt University in East Berlin there, bashing out a constitution for a new E German Socialist Party on an old typewriter that night! That night I also met Walter Romberg, who had been in contact with the Imshausen community which I had visited several times when guest of the von Verschuer family in Hessen. Some years later Walter Romberg visited the Ecumenical Centre as he wanted to set up a group of Protestant politicians interested in the construction of Europe, on the model of the former so-called "Patijn group" (CSGEU). Unfortunately this idea never came to fruition. In the early months after the fall of the Berlin Wall nobody was imagining that most of the former Comecon countries would become members. In fact there was talk more of a Federation of Visegrad States or something of that nature. At that time indeed I could hardly imagine the member Churches of CEC in those central and eastern European*

> *countries being involved in the kind of work we were doing. Their objectives – apart from ensuring that the platforms and corridors for E/W dialogue remained open – revolved around picking up themes compatible with the Churches' "vocation"; ours was directly linked into the EEC agenda and was driven by the need to produce results.*

In the first instance, the momentous event of November 1989 prompted more questions than anything else – and indeed Marc in his paper dated 1990, "Les changements en Europe: questions aux Églises. À l'est rien de nouveau?", warned against rushing to find answers.

> The last forty years had led people to feel frozen in an inertia where they could only look on, not act: the Cold War, balance of terror. In the West, the momentum of inspiration in reconciliation that had led to the creation of the European Community seemed to have settled for being a market and little more, with a technocratic structure and no political backbone. The means of achieving a better future had become ends in themselves – and pretty dogmatic ones at that. The East had seen dreams of something new better and different disappear into grey dreariness punctuated by lies and disappointments: the ideology was hollow, the Emperor was naked. When M M Thomas asked at the end of the 1974 Roehampton Conference "What is the finality of this European Community" there was an embarrassed silence from European officials and Churches alike. And as a Russian colleague in the Churches had asked Marc, "Can the West offer us anything other than more chains – of fast food?"
>
> Then last November, not only a country but a whole continent started looking for a new identity. But as Vaclav Havel had said when asked if he could have written a play about the Velvet Revolution – no, it would have been impossible even for Shakespeare; we are only actors on the current stage – the directors are somewhere else. For neither

politicians nor economists had really foreseen what would happen last November and the roots could well lie elsewhere:

Where then?

The West needs to be wary of proposing solutions for "the others"

Even if market forces at play in the world – not least in Reagan's very liberal capitalist America – have played a significant part there is also a strong desire of these countries to re-establish their own identity, their new leaders are close to their historical culture and display this, and must not be swept under the carpet.

Can the West resist the temptation to flood them with promises of a new material "prosperity" and listen to what they are seeking and needing – for ultimately it is the whole European continent which has to question and redefine itself. History is giving us this chance to step aside from the inexorability of ever more production and consumption where *homo europeus* is either *homo economicus* or relegated to the poor fringe. We didn't get it right in relation the countries of the southern hemisphere when they were liberated from the yoke of colonialism; can we do better now or will the same happen again as we come with our ready-made, one-size-fits-all solutions?

People in the Churches are bound to feel concerned by what is happening – not just because so many of them were involved in the years leading up to what has happened. But neither must *they* come with their own solution – certainly not in terms of a return to a "Christian European" past, judging the end of the Socialist experiment as marking the end of an era of history ushered in by the Renaissance and Age of Enlightenment. This is not where Europe's "soul" can be found.

Do the Protestant Churches – specifically – have a particular role here? They must look for the human faces behind the events and understand their need to rediscover their culture and traditions from the past before they can come to terms with an alien "Europe": indeed their first instinct may be more in terms of a "national" Church.

Yet there is a sense of urgency to forge ahead with the push to set up the Single Market. How can the European Community be prevented from being little more than the sum of the collective drive for hegemony of so many constituent member states? Surely the respect for every individual human being is more fundamental still and the Churches' critical eye needs to put this in the foreground? It is not so much a "spiritual dimension" as a spiritual struggle against the odds of those who have lost sight of this priority, and who are seeing this opportunity not as a liberation but as a closing of the ranks, ever more inward-looking, self-serving rather than generous. Here lies the challenge.

Institutions in Progress III:
Take a Deep Breath

Totally unforeseen circumstances that were to throw everybody off track

The huge changes in Europe post-1989 – which were to have significant repercussions also on the way the Churches related to institutions in Europe – came at the end of another era, when Helmut von Verschuer, who had been such a key figure in the history described thus far, retired from his job in the European Commission in 1986 and from being chair of the Ecumenical Association. Although he and Hanni soon returned to their family home in Hessen – on a road which quite soon after would no longer end abruptly at a point broken by the frontier with East Germany – he has remained actively in touch. The paper Marc wrote as a contribution to the Festschrift[30] marking Helmut's retirement – entitled "les Églises et l'Europe" - constitutes something of a stocktaking of that moment against that background: it is at once a tribute to the very person of Helmut and the part he played, and a challenge for how the Churches and their existing European structures might face up to the future. As such it is more than relevant to summarise that article here.

> Back in the Middle Ages, the words Europe and Christianity might have been almost synonymous – but that was soon set to change and little sign of it remains. Europe became polycultural and broke up into nation states. The Church went through first Schism then Reform, and

[30] This Festschrift, entitled "Rencontres", was edited by Antoinette Panhuis and published by the AOES in 1991, with a preface by Commissioner Frans Andriessen.

despite obvious common ground – and yearnings for unity – they now cling to the particularities which have since built up their heritage.

For the apparent unity in both quarters – Europe on the one hand and the Church on the other - covered a diversity and richness which did not harbour the seeds for survival. Indeed, neither "Europe" nor "the Churches" can be defined as such – and that says it all.

I Europe

The breakdown of the politico-economic system in E/C Europe has put an end to an ideological division but new tensions are surfacing. Did the changes stem from the economic system breaking down or from a desire for more political freedom? The result is a new instability – even if the process has been achieved largely without bloodshed to date. A major factor in the background is the frustration felt by ordinary citizens at having no say in the ruling project – and they are going to need time to forge instruments with which to express their identity in political terms.

This in itself is a challenge for the Churches, which are very much part of the national cultural terrain and legacy. There are already signs of potential conflict arising in Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. But meanwhile the whole context has changed – and Europe's role in the world of global but interdependent poles of power is a very different one. What is the new place, and style, of national identity?

While Eastern Europe's centralising force is breaking down, Western Europe has sought a new unification process in a novel model which while ostensibly economic and market-based, is also political on the world stage even if the national identity of the countries concerned is preserved. This aspect has increased since 1985 with the Single European Act – a realisation that new instruments are needed to make this European project in the making apt for a dynamic and stronger purpose on the current world stage – to lead to a Single Market in the

early nineties. This "market" has a clear political dimension: there may be no unanimity yet over a common foreign policy, a common defence policy, a possibly more federal structure, representation of the regions within nations, but these are now on the table and no longer taboo. One could say this is the end of the "Monnet" phase – which consisted of gradual economic integration building up a political situation that could not be reversed or overturned. But the resulting weaknesses carried forward are a failure to convince public opinion and carry the people along in the process, and too great a link between the economic and the political. The Churches have an important place in the ethical discussions implied by both.

And on top of this come the recent – largely unforeseen events within Europe. Western Europe can no longer ignore C/E Europe as it has largely done so far. Yet they are in very different places with very different undercurrents and horizons. The EC role and responsibility within Europe have changed overnight – as seen already with the reunification of Germany and its role in relation to Hungary and Poland (PHARE programme) and the conflict in Yugoslavia (from where representatives are demonstrating noisily outside the Berlaymont as I write these very words). However dire may be the economic needs of these countries, political solutions have to be found to prevent new dictatorships setting up and to give the people hope for a different future. The same was true for Greece, Spain and Portugal who saw Community membership as the one sure way of securing a democratic future. What the EEC signifies currently as an economic, juridical and political entity is far greater than the geographical surface area it covers.

II The Churches

The *Churches* however have found it less easy to take this reality on board. It is true to say that whereas international institutions of all kinds abound, the EEC is a totally different creature insofar as it shares none

of their rigidity but by definition, reacts and adapts to economic and political developments as they arise. Much scope is therefore given to potential initiative. Moreover, a gradual transfer away from the national sphere is taking place in many policy areas: unlike what is happening in most Protestant Churches where the national or in some cases regional context largely defines and drives their action.

But the new reality of "Brussels" cannot be ignored by the Churches and therefore also requires evolving a novel way of working in order to handle it, a pluridisciplinary approach with new partners in a spirit of mutual trust and dialogue. On top of this, every Protestant Church involved has its own – different – approach and interest depending on its national situation and past history. Here the smaller churches seem to find it easier – their minority position has always driven them to seek allies over the border and adapt where necessary. The major Churches have much more difficulty: their ties with national economic and political structures are stronger, and they have often played a key role in building up that national identity historically and see their own image and power integrally bound up with it. They are therefore torn in their desire to step outside the purely national context – but also encourage in solidarity new expressions of aspirations in the C/E European context where cultural and confessional identity are closely bound up.

The Churches need a clear vision. Nationalism can contain seeds of violence, which can exclude and can kill. Faith moreover is not to be confused with history or cultural heritage. The EC project is far from perfect: it has failed to lead to a more just world order; there is no policy on migration or social matters; the repercussions of the accepted economic growth model on the ecosystem are not being discussed; the decision-making process is not sufficiently transparent or democratically controlled.

Where does the scope then lie for the Churches? They need to

- Inventarise the leading questions

- Find models for working together and sharing that can adapt flexibly to a new context. This is a "kairos" moment for the Churches in Europe – as could already be perceived in the intensity of the Basel Ecumenical gathering of 1989. A spirit of "critical fraternity" (Visser 't Hooft) is called for.
- The dimension of Church and Society work needs to be built on in the Churches of C/E Europe through training seminars: these Churches no longer need to be on the defensive and political diaconia can be developed
- Churches in W. Europe need to encourage society to open up to new products and new workers coming from elsewhere in Europe
- This is an opportunity for Churches in W. Europe to take a critical look at the way they behave and participate in society – both in relation to key social issues and in relation to state authority. The very different national contexts call for consensus on a new, original approach in relation to the transnational European institutions. The EEC is inviting participation, and the decision-making process gives scope for this to be proactive and not merely reactive. This calls for competent ethical analysis work alongside the European Commission – measuring proposals on the table not so much in technical terms as to foresee what effect they will have on society, in a global context, and in relation to proposals in other related sectors.

Hardly surprising that the Churches have been reticent to take this on, and without the encouragement of convinced lay people working within these European institutions they would probably never have done so. But the result of this has also been an *expectation* on the part of those in the institutions that this type of broader and deeper debate take place.

Another challenge for the Churches lies in revisiting the concept of the nation state. Already some Churches are reviewing their Church-state relations. What will be the Protestant response? Very different in

> France from in Germany, yet the Protestant tradition has never been a fixed one of immobility and has always reacted to a context. And what of the wider, ecumenical context: relations with the Roman Catholic Church? The tensions between nostalgia for a Christian Europe, the driving forces of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, and the polemical reaction of the secularists? The Protestant Church is caught up in the very throng of all this, and has endeavoured throughout to keep the channels for dialogue open in new contexts underpinned by new translations of the Gospel – and can do so in the current crises both of "modernity" and of renewed evangelism in a way which even the EEC may not be equipped alone, institutionally speaking, to do.

In an intervention given in Strasbourg in March 1991 on how the Community institutions and religious institutions have marked European construction, Marc said:

> The watershed of 1986-92, ironically, is strengthening the position of the EEC in the greater Europe and driving it towards being a more political as well as economic and administrative phenomenon which ordinary citizens can no longer ignore or say does not concern them.
>
> The Churches too have begun to take notice in a new way. The staff in both Brussels and Strasbourg has been significantly strengthened. Whereas the Centre has been used to welcoming parish groups from all over Europe, it is now official delegations of Church leaders (Protestant in particular) that are starting to visit – and even asking to meet the members of the European Commission. Such a recent visit, and the Commission's open reaction, proved to be surprising: here was a genuine wish to dialogue on the goals of European integration. The Single European Act had marked the moment when this project emerged from being a technocratic and specialist area to one of general interest and concern.

How is this evolution to be interpreted? The Churches are *reacting* (somewhat defensively) to the way the Community is moving – aware that it may affect their own place in national society. They are unlikely to react in unison, but according to their national situation. There is an apparent tension between the countries represented in EECCS by a Council or Federation of Churches and those with a national Church: both the EKD and the Church of England have reacted by wanting to set up their own Brussels or Strasbourg offices or representations. (The Church of Scotland however has opted for seconding a person to join the EECCS staff.) Yet these offices may not be ideally suited to relating to the very novel, even indefinable "no-man's-land" of the EC policy and decision-making process, where economic and political power are not clearly distinct.

There are both risks and opportunities here. The progressive transfer of power to the European level may subvert democracy and threaten national sovereignty. The Churches should be fighting this by calling on their members to question and debate what are the real goals of the European integration process. But the interplay of institutions means that by working with those in the Commission responsible for initiating and proposing new policies – *before* the decisions are made by national ministers (with national interests) in the Council - the Churches can exert some influence in making clear the ethical (Christian) choices that are available.

Such work has to be pluridisciplinary in nature and flexible enough to exploit the Community deadlines. This is how many Councils and Federations of Churches are already operating at national level, in an anticipatory style – whereas the national or member Churches may be more reactive and defensive. Such tension can be found now too within EECCS.

The areas where the Churches should show particular vigilance at European level include:

- New ways of conflict resolution between states, and the rise of new forms of virulent nationalism
- The place of local, regional, federal interests alongside the national ones often legitimised by the Churches in the past
- The transnationalisation of economic power
- The predominance of market economy concerns and the results for social fabric and environment, and N/S justice.
- Foreign and security policy – with implications both for N/S relations and relations with C/E Europe

The present EEC institutional set-up is not geared to dealing with the potential dangers in these areas that are on the horizon: it calls for a multi-angled vision of which the Churches are capable. The way in which rural development was picked up by the Commission *(see elsewhere in this work – p. 87)* is a good illustration of what can be done.

6

EECCS AND CEC 1990-1999

The first major meeting at which the new configuration of Europe was discussed among the Churches was a joint meeting of the staffs of CEC and EECCS on 16 April 1990 in Geneva, with the President of CEC - Patriarch Alexy – chairing. It was followed by a meeting of the CEC Presidium and EECCS in Santa Severa (Italy) in May making a first reassessment of CEC/EECCS relationships and broaching the difficult question: should EECCS become CEC's Church and Society Commission? In June of the same year the General Assembly of EECCS explored future possibilities of a structural liaison between EECCS and CEC.

The EECCS General Assembly meeting of 22-28 June 1990 was the first since the fall of the wall – and this was accordingly the theme of the Assembly: "New problems for the European Community in the light of the changes in Europe", introduced by Jaroslav Ondra from Prague and Edy Korthals-Altes (Den Haag). Marc produced a paper "Propositions aux Églises dans le contexte des changements en Europe 1990", making points which are startlingly relevant 25 years on.

Proposition 1

The change in attitude of the Soviet Union (Gorbatchev) represents a shift from geostrategic military thinking to a focus on economic supremacy – thus emphasising more strongly this side of the European

Community's raison d'être (increasingly at the price almost of all else). The Churches have to be wary of the potentially aggressive evolution of this trend and the values underlying it, with

- Acquisitiveness becoming a driving force for consumption and production
- Selectivity leading to increased marginalisation
- Violence to the eco-system and draining of natural resources henceforth unavailable for future generations
- The compulsive push for ever more technological innovation – beyond the natural balances of the "market", with men serving technology rather than the other way round

Proposition 2

Europe has enormous diversity of a cultural, ethnic and religious nature – and the new opening of frontiers to the east and fundamental EEC principle of free movement of citizens are going to augment this still further. Yet some cling to a personal identity linked to a nation state, others to a concept of a "Christian Europe". These two tendencies will increasingly conflict and give rise to nationalist reactions. Protestants have a history of surviving as minorities in such harsh climates and accommodating to cultural plurality – a role they can exercise now helpfully with respect to others.

Proposition 3

In terms of the transnational institutions that have evolved since the war, the EEC is by far more radical in its approach – by requiring a degree of abdication of national sovereignty and in favour of decision-making in the interests of the greater good of the region as a whole, the weak as much as the strong. This is far more significant than the inter-governmental types of institution such as the Council of Europe and the

OSCE. As a way to strengthen peace and security between states and peoples, the Churches should support such endeavours.

Proposition 4

Europe – and the Churches in Europe – have to be aware of the new significance of their location between East and West, between the new dynamic developing between the US and the Soviet Union; but also between North and South from which attention has now been diverted. The Churches need as ever to urge both vision and policies that go beyond the short term: this is not just a question of stepping up aid to developing countries but bringing the Churches in the South alongside to rethink entirely the relations between a new North and South.

Proposition 5

A whole new debate is needed on the goals of our society – in a climate of a new set of unknowns. Subjects such as peace and security, human and democratic rights, relationship between politics and economics, balance of economy and environment may appear to be matters for the experts but ordinary citizens must be brought in directly. This means

- Churches drawing on a variety of experiences within parishes
- Churches using to the full structures within parishes for information and debate at every level
- Such dialogue must not remain within Church walls but draw in, or permeate out into the entire local community in the spirit of a new dimension of "Volkskirche"

A resolution was drafted.

A series of C/E European countries were by this stage already applying to join the European Community.

The CEC/EECCS relationship was discussed. It had also been a subject for discussion at the Interlaken consultation back in 1982. There were clear differences between the organisations – EECCS being focussed on Church and Society issues insofar as they were being dealt with in the EC institutions. There was to be *no* move towards setting up a Western European Council of Churches. It was decided

- to develop further the co-operation with CEC especially on the staff level
- to ensure that the monitoring by CEC of the developments in the European institutions be done in close co-operation with the EECCS offices in Brussels and Strasbourg
- to follow up the developments in the Council of Europe and the European Community within Europe as a whole, in order to explore future possibilities of a structural liaison between CEC and EECCS.

At the end of 1990, Marc notes in his diary a first meeting with Umberto Stefani who had been given the role of link person between the European Commission and the Churches. He also notes "adieux Marc Luyckx" - who at this point was leaving EECOD to join the staff of the FAST (Forecast and Assessment in the Field of Science and Technology, led by Riccardo Petrella) in the European Commission, which later morphed into President Jacques Delors' Forward Studies Unit (Cellule de Prospective), where Luyckx continued to work.

In the same period Marc was closely involved in the preparations for the (later to be seen as historic) meeting on 5 November 1990 of Church leaders with the European Commission, culminating in the encounter with EC President Jacques Delors in which he appealed to the Churches to contribute to the 'heart and soul' of Europe. This preparatory work

was done in close collaboration with Jérôme Vignon of the FSU, with whom Marc also had a good personal contact. In the EECCS ExCom of Sept 17/18, Marc introduced the programme planned for the visit. He emphasized that the political dimension was to be stressed to help the Churches in looking at a wider vision of the Community rather than a narrow technocratic view. (Indeed, during the meeting itself on 5 Nov this proved to be one of Delors' main concerns.) One of the papers to be sent to the Church leaders in advance of the visit was a declaration from the June 1990 EECCS Assembly about the new challenges for the EC after the revolutionary changes in C. and E. Europe. Among the proposals in this paper was: "As the countries of the European Community move towards closer political relationships, other European countries must be involved in this process." [31]

In September 1990 Marc attended a meeting of National Councils of Churches in Stockholm, mandated by Keith Jenkins (who was to begin work officially in the Ecumenical Centre as General Secretary of EECCS on 1/1/1991) to draw up with Jean Fischer an agenda for a second CEC-EECCS meeting in January 1991. This meeting agreed that the staff on both sides also needed to give thought to the future, and be involved in a working group on the matter with the CEC and EECCS Churches. The EECCS Executive Committee meeting on 29-31 January 1991 then adopted "lignes de conduite" for relations between EECCS and CEC.

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[31] As already mentioned, I am immensely grateful to Laurens Hogebrink for additional comments here and elsewhere in the text, especially on the subject of the increasingly institutionalised dialogue that was beginning to be set up with the European Commission (FSU). Although my "scaffolding" is largely constituted from the official minutes and reports contained in the EECCS archives, other participants had of course their own notes and memories – which in Laurens' case are to be written up in turn in his own publication in due course.

A further joint staff meeting was scheduled for March 1991 at which two suggestions were formulated:

- either the existing structures would continue as separate entities, taking always into account their respective mandates
- or the two would fuse.

If the second path were followed there were again two options

- either EECCS could be assimilated into CEC
- or EECCS would become a Commission of CEC thereby safeguarding its own functions, diversity and mandate

"The overall responsibility of such a body was not discussed in detail but it would either be to the member Churches of the CEC as a whole, or those member Churches of CEC which chose to have a direct relationship to EECCS so constituted, to have the overall responsibility and accountability" (ML notes). It was recommended that a joint group be set up with two members of the governing boards and the two General Secretaries or delegated staff. During the process the member Churches of the CEC and the member bodies of EECCS would be consulted. A definite programme would then be presented to the 1992 Assemblies of both bodies. The paper produced at this meeting (13/3/91) spoke of the "search for a common home". It was further recalled that at the meeting of the CEC Presidium and Consultative Committee in Nyborg in October 1989, it had been urged that developments in the European institutions be monitored in close co-operation with EECCS.

> *Something very important emerged from the 1991 Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Canberra, Australia. In one of the reports there was for the first time mention of "a call for a new mission for Churches in relation to international institutions". This had never been spelt out and acknowledged at*

> *this level before. I mentioned earlier that when the Centre started up back in the 1960s, it was relating to National Churches and Councils of Churches over questions which had sometimes never featured on their agendas before, but were core issues for the EEC; it was moreover involving lay people in the Churches in the discussions of such issues as much as leaders – this was something the Catholic Church and to some extent the Orthodox Church (coming into the WCC in 1961) have had much more difficulty with; and the other major new feature – finally explicitly recognised in this WCC Assembly report – was that Churches had something to say not only to national governments but also to international institutions.*

In April 1991 Gérard Merminod was installed in Strasbourg.

From 17-21 July 1991 the Malvern Conference took place to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the earlier Malvern Conference chaired by William Temple – on the theme of "The life of the Church and the order of society". A certain number of Christians from Churches in Eastern Europe attended this meeting, and were keen to put forward the idea of a "Common European home" as proposed by Gorbachev (speech to the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, July 1989 – and often repeated on other occasions). Some of them declared that with the end of the Cold War, the existing institutions in both West and East had become obsolete, and that one should look to create new institutions.

In the late summer of 1991 EECCS staged a consultation on "new "questions for Churches arising from developments within the European Community" – a meeting that had been planned since 1988 to look at the achievements of the Single Market through the filter of ethical criteria inspired by the Gospel, and Marc reported as follows in an article for the Austrian Churches dated July 1992.

The preparatory group for this consultation – the so-called Core Group (see page 105 above) - had been looking ahead to the forthcoming enlargement to include Austria and others, the requisite Treaty changes and planned Maastricht conference of 1991. The themes singled out for particular study were European citizenship, agricultural trade in the context of N/S, questions linked to the future of democracy, environment and the conclusion of the Single Market. But only one major speaker was on the programme: Professor Bob Goudzwaard, who as an economist, stressed the need to give ecological and social considerations their due place. The aim was to leave time and space largely for discussion among the participants nominated by the Churches and Church organisations – and it transpired that what was most needed was a fundamental debate on the meaning and purpose of where the European Community was tending. The themes on the agenda – and regularly on the agenda of the Churches – were no less important in themselves but something deeper than purely practical responses seemed to be being called for.

For example: when discussing European citizenship and democracy, it is no longer enough to talk in terms of strengthening the EP, increasing the transparency of the decision-making procedure. This is not a structural issue so much as a questioning of why the social fabric is disintegrating in our societies. When discussing environment it is not only a question of taking more measures to protect the environment but looking at the compatibility (incompatibility) between the current economic model and the needs of the ecosystem. When discussing N/S trade in agricultural products, the legacy of old relationships stemming from former colonial links and post-war super-power agreements such as Bretton Woods and GATT no longer apply in an era of globalised international relations.

When we celebrated justice, peace and the integrity of creation at the Ecumenical Assembly in Basel in 1989 it might have sounded utopian,

> idealistic to some – but it is indeed the sole way forward the Gospel can guide us.
>
> Marc concludes: "The events occurring in Europe present a terrific challenge to all the Churches today. How are they going to respond? By retreating into a confessional and/or nationalist shell? Or by discovering in 1992 – 500 years after Christopher Columbus – that a changing world is unfurling on our very own shores, beneath our very eyes where we need to stand up, be there and witness in a new manner?"

For the EECCS General Assembly meeting in September 1991, Marc prepared a paper entitled « Quels sont aujourd'hui les défis que les changements en cours dans cette partie de l'Europe appelée Communauté adressent aux Églises? ». It constitutes a useful half-way landmark of where things now stood.

> No analysis of this kind can dissociate the current position from the past. The original intent of the founding fathers – Robert Schuman and Jean Monnet – was Political Union; the means however to attain such a radical and probably unpalatable end were to be economic, the "Monnet method", creating ever stronger interdependence; and the tools of the time – in an era of post-war economic recovery – were those of the liberal market economy such as being implemented by the "plan français". The means however acquired more prominence in the popular mind than the ends so that a BCC publication of 1967 was titled "Christians and the Common Market". And probably none of the key countries was going to take a lead politically.
>
> The seventies emphasised this trend – with high unemployment and renationalisation in Western Europe, neoliberalism in Reagan's America and Japanese exports flooding the market. The response was the Single European Act to "shore up" the internal market. Scientific and technological research was to be harnessed to the interests of international competitivity, and internal barriers, frontiers were

abolished for workers, goods, services and capital. Growth at any price was the panacea with no alternative menu on the table.

It should not be forgotten however that with the accession of Greece, Spain and Portugal had come a new concept of economic and social cohesion with significant funding for these poorer countries – and other Mediterranean regions.

And there *was* also some political reinforcement taking place, e.g.

- qualified majority voting in certain policy areas (right of veto abandoned)
- European co-operation over foreign policy with a dedicated secretariat

How have the Churches seen this?

EECCS was formally set up at the end of the seventies, and the COMECE a few years later on the Catholic side. This had been preceded by a long incubation period where committed lay people working in the European institutions had been key, as had a group of Church-rooted issue-oriented bodies working at European level. Why had it taken so long for the Churches themselves to engage?

- They felt ill at ease becoming involved with a political and economic enterprise – for different reasons in different national traditions
- Many Protestant and Anglican Churches had a strongly national identity
- It was not immediately obvious which "department" of any Church's offices should be "relating" to Brussels.

With the Single European Act of 1986, a change has come about – and a new understanding. The European Commission is reaching out beyond its mercantile and technocratic image to speak to citizens, whether affected by this new mobility and opening of frontiers directly or indirectly. The Churches have suddenly become aware of implications

for them too – and not limited just to current member states but beyond to the former EFTA and C/E European countries too. The EC may or may not be an economic Eden – but at least offers the hope of democratic stability. The Conference of European Churches is looking to see what goes on here.

The future is open and if we are not merely to "react" then Churches need to be vigilant to key questions:

- How can institutional mechanisms be devised and strengthened – and granted power to operate – in order to further obviate conflict?
- At the same time, how can the principle of subsidiarity be reinforced – giving sense and identity to regions within nations; how can Churches reflect this need for democracy with community and interdependency?
- How can a new balance between politics and economics be found ethically at a world level?
- Capitalism may have proved more effective than communism, but its social and ecological shortfalls call for serious criticism and questioning
- The dangers are there of buttressing fortress Europe when open windows of solidarity are what is called for – openness towards developing countries, immigrants from elsewhere, equal human rights for all.

This EECCS General Assembly meeting in September 1991 was also given an extensive report[32] on the visit of European Church leaders to the Commission of the EC that had taken place on 5/11/1990, and discussed the follow-up.

[32] The narration on this and the next page also includes some detail supplied by Laurens Hogebrink.

This meeting[33] included a discussion with Commissioner and Vice-President Frans Andriessen (External Affairs), Commissioner Bruce Millan (Regional Policy), David Williamson (Secretary General of the Commission), Dieter Frisch (DG Development), Jean Degimbe (DG Social Affairs), Paola Fasella (DG Science) and other senior staff. It ended with a meeting with EC President Jacques Delors in which he made his famous appeal to the Churches to contribute to "the heart and soul of Europe" and invited the Churches to continue dialogue. It had been arranged by Jérôme Vignon, Director of the Forward Studies Unit, together with Marc.

On the evening before the visit, the Church delegates received an extensive briefing. EECCS President Klaus Kremkau explained that the visit was the result of an initiative by German Protestant Bishop Martin Kruse and the Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury. The Commission was interested in meeting Protestant and Anglican leaders, because the 'unity in diversity' they represented was more in accordance with the European reality than the rather monolithic Roman Catholic view of Europe. Marc, in his own briefing, added that Delors was aware of a moral vacuum as a result of the new developments. The Commission wanted to get rid of the 'market' image and stress the political union.

[33] Participants from the Churches were: Revd Martin Beukenhorst (President of the Synodal Council of the United Protestant Church of Belgium); Revd Enrique Capo (Evangelical Church of Spain); Revd Manuel Cardoso (Secretary General of the Portuguese Council of Christian Churches); Revd Luciana Deodato (member of the Council of the Italian Protestant Federation); Dr W. H. Douma (President of Internal Affairs of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands); the Most Revd John Habgood (Archbishop of York); Drs Laurens Hogebrink (Secretary of the Council for Social and Public Affairs of the Netherlands Reformed Church); Bishop Dr Martin Kruse (President of the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany); Revd Dick Mulder (President of the Council of Churches of the Netherlands); Revd Heinrich Rusterholz (President of the Swiss Protestant Federation); Revd Jacques Stewart (President of the French Protestant Federation); Revd Professor James Whyte (Former Moderator of the Church of Scotland). Plus Revd Klaus Kremkau and Mrs Ploni Robbers-van Berkel for EECCS, and EECCS staff Keith Jenkins, Marc Lenders and Barney Milligan.

And after introducing all the topics on the programme, Marc added that the theme 'Community membership and national identity' had been proposed by Delors himself. How to strengthen the 'Europe of the citizens'?

The visit lasted the whole day. The wish was expressed on more than one occasion that the Commission wanted now to establish a process of regular consultation with the Churches on an informal basis. It was President Delors himself who, at the end of the meeting, committed the Commission to organising regular informal meetings with the Churches, for which civil servants would be made available. (In practice, this resulted in a process of bi-annual Dialogue Meetings, prepared by the FSU, EECCS and soon after also COMECE. This practice continues up to this day.)

This was the first time on the Churches' side that a visit at such a representative and high level and with such a broad composition had been organised.

Significant areas covered were external relations; 'deepening' vs 'widening' of the integration process (opening the European Community to the countries from Central and Eastern Europe was strongly advocated by most of the Church delegates, but not all with equal enthusiasm); monetary union and political union; ethical questions in the field of science and the environment; the social dimension; development policy; a new 'sense of belonging' and European citizenship.

At the ExCom meeting of 28-30 November 1990 Marc was thanked for his contribution to the success of the visit. Marc had already drafted a list of topics to be discussed with Jérôme Vignon. These were: the issue of belonging to the Community and the questions of national sovereignty; the relation between the Europe of the Twelve and other European countries; the North-South dialogue; the social dimension; the relation between economics and environment; the ethical questions raised by new technologies; the future of rural regions.

In the report Marc prepared for the EECCS General Assembly of 2-3 September 1991, Marc also summarised the meeting with Jacques Delors. The Commission President had reflected on the huge changes now facing them all. The report of the meeting notes, "Most saw a triumph of democracy in the changes … In spite of the attractions which our way of life and our democracy held for our 'eastern brothers' however, it was necessary to be aware that our democracy was 'flabby'. There was a spiritual message coming to us from the Eastern European countries." As for the future, the two motors behind forming the Community (the "never again", and the desire to "make Europe" through economic growth) needed closer definition to give content to their validity for the future: while it was clear that war had been rejected, it was not certain what was positively desired; and while there was a new self-confidence in Europe, it remained technocratic and elitist as an idea. It was not yet an "affectio societatis": for this, dialogue with people of science, culture, the Churches was needed on the direction and significance of European construction. He concluded by saying "we need to recognise that what the European Community lacks is a heart and a soul".

In answer to questions, Delors spoke of the further enlargement of Europe to take in more countries of Eastern Europe – not yet, and not without a will for considerable sacrifices and sharing on the part of the existing 12. He spoke of interdependence: "National identity was our past, our history; the sense of belonging is our future, the acceptance of entering a collective adventure … The signs awaited from the Community should be strong enough to prevent falling back into nationalism in the bad sense of the word. We have become interdependent. When the 12 meet at ministerial level they have learnt that to reach a result, they cannot ignore each other." He spoke of national sovereignty: "Does this lead to acting in isolation or sharing with those who respect the same values? … Today's patriotism means

an initiative with others. The day Great Britain makes that gesture, the battle will be won for the whole of Europe". Here the status of the regions of Europe and their identity – as an intermediate point where subsidiarity operates optimally - is most important. On the question of poverty, he replied that the (Welfare) State could not solve all problems: what was needed was a caring community (that had been lost in individualism) to which people felt they belonged.

When the Church leaders evaluated this key meeting they observed

- their own view of Europe was always wider than just the EC; the respective responsibilities of EECCS and CEC in this respect could be clarified at the forthcoming GA of CEC in Prague (September 1992)
- many questions – such as environment, democratisation of institutions, defence and security - are obviously still very much in gestation and the answers were open if not unsatisfactory.
- It was important for the Churches to make a commitment to the future of Europe in the shape of the 12 as a "European Peace order".
- It was felt the Community's social policy was under-developed and the Churches were being delegated (and limited to) the "caring" role in society
- On the enlargement of the European Community, the Churches should continue to emphasise that a clear signal should be given of the openness to new member states
- Generally it was felt the role the Churches had been assigned needed to be strengthened – allowing them to question and contribute not only in content, but also in form (i.e. being given recognised channels for dialogue and consultation and not just informal contact).

Marc also reported that already several weeks after the visit, the Commission (through the FSU) had proposed the formula of arranging, on an informal basis, regular discussions with representatives of the Churches, to be held every six months, preceding the meetings of the European Council. They would however be more on the level of experts (on a particular policy area) on both sides. A first such meeting already took place in June 1991 centring on questions of political union, relations with the countries of Eastern Europe, and immigration.[34] The second such meeting (November 1991) would focus on political union and agricultural policy. A consultative structure was correspondingly set up by EECCS to allow all EECCS Churches to contribute whether or not their representatives (experts and multipliers) could attend such a meeting; the Ecumenical Association was also involved in preparing briefing papers on the chosen topic for the Churches. In due course it was felt a further meeting with the European Commission at the Church leader level might need to be sought.

> *The end of the '80s heralded a new chapter in the EECCS story. It could hardly have been otherwise after the Wall came down, changing for ever the relations between Churches in East and West and bringing about a new relationship for which neither had been prepared.*
>
> *Just when this happened, EECCS – after long years of trial and error – was more or less set on course. With the advent of Jacques Delors in 1985, the relationship with the European Commission had been put on a somewhat more formal footing, but more importantly EECCS had been recognised as a partner in dialogue – and this dialogue was placed alongside the others which the Commission under Jacques Delors was seeking to set up with civil society.*

[34] This was the first in a series of meetings which from the third meeting on (22 May 1992) would come to be known as the Dialogue Meetings.

The long-awaited staff increase finally came about in the early nineties. Keith Jenkins – a lawyer by training, member of the Methodist Church and lay preacher long involved in the work of the British Council of Churches, and with a particular interest in what was going on in Europe, was given the job of General Secretary. With the consequent new sharing out of responsibilities, I was the one to produce the "papers" that would underpin the dialogue developing between the members of EECCS and the European institutions. Shortly after we were joined by Alastair Hulbert, a colleague already familiar from his spell with the WSCF (World Student Christian Federation) in Geneva. He represented the Church of Scotland – the Kirk – which was opting for seconding a staff person to join our team rather than setting up an office of its own in Brussels. Alastair's job was to travel round the various Church of Scotland communities on the continent so as to give as much input as possible to relations between the Church of Scotland and the work of EECCS relating to the European institutions. Within the office he also had responsibility for running the Ecumenical Association (AOES) and in due course also took on the co-ordination and secretariat of the "Soul for Europe" initiative launched by Jacques Delors in the early 1990s, which while involving other confessions and indeed religions, had its legal and administrative seat in the Ecumenical Centre.

The team was further completed by Gérard Merminod in the Strasbourg office, a pastor from the ERF and a very dear friend and colleague whom we lost too soon: his job was to follow relations with the Council of Europe and the European Parliament.

We four made up a "Collegium" which would meet regularly to consider jointly, the full gamut of our work. Hans-Joachim

> *Kiderlen who manned the EKD office in Brussels was termed an associate staff member and also took part in Collegium meetings. Looking back, I'd say we were very fortunate. Each of us had our pretty well-defined characters and very different backgrounds and experience and potential – but working together in these comparatively halcyon years was a true pleasure. Véronique Dessart, Charlotte Van der Borght and Marie-Madeleine Linck not only put up with this all-male quartet but gave us the fullest of support despite the fact that we were always asking for that bit more on top.*
>
> *And our daily coffee break ensured that everyone in the house had a chance to learn what was going on and share their own preoccupations and ideas.*

Also at the EECCS General Assembly meeting of 2-3 September 1991, consultative membership was approved for the World Alliance of Reformed Churches' Europe Group, and for the Ecumenical Forum of European Christian Women.

Alastair Hulbert's secondment by the Church of Scotland onto the staff of EECCS took effect from 1 September 1991. The Core Group reported back to this Assembly, and plans were made for a consultation on "The contribution of the Churches in helping to bring about the Single Market". One of the priorities of this group was to teach the Churches to "think European".

At this meeting a discussion took place on the basis of a paper which Marc had presented to the Executive Committee in readiness for the 10th CEC Assembly (to be held in Prague ("Dieu unit en Christ une nouvelle création"). This paper drew attention to the fact that the latest paper from the CEC granted little importance to the international institutions of Europe, though did mention specifically the need to support the CSCE. (The Vienna Conference was seen to have been an important stage: CEC had been influential in the outcome of this

conference which paid a great deal of attention to the "human dimension" in relationships between countries, a field in which the CEC had acquired a degree of experience.) The Council of Europe was not mentioned at all, and there was only a passing – "very incomplete" – reference to the EC. It was suggested that were this paper to be revised, it should mention

1. The political aim of the project
2. The quest for a balance between individual liberty and social responsibility
3. That Community law took precedence over national law
4. That economic integration is the motor for fuller political integration
5. That the EC institutions are based on a dynamic into which is built a degree of openness and flexibility which can adapt constantly to the changing context round about

As the first meetings started to be held in a process which would result – as described in detail in the coming pages – in EECCS becoming part of the CEC, EECCS itself continued to work on the consequences of reunification in Europe, which would lead to a 46 page document being published in three languages in 1997 entitled "Towards a continent reconciled with itself" (see p. 176).

The joint CEC-EECCS working group decided on at the meeting of the Joint staff working-group in March 1991 (see p. 128 above) met on 26/27 September, and the staff was asked to produce a working paper on the basis of three notes written by Klaus Kremkau and Torgny Erling, Jean Fischer and David Bleakley and Sergio Ribet. Keith then wrote a paper for the EECCS Executive Committee meeting on 17-19 November 1991, which highlighted the following points:

- EECCS cherished its ability to react flexibly and rapidly to changing circumstances, which required a degree of independence
- There was no longer talk of EECCS being absorbed into CEC as it had been conceded "there was a need to preserve EECCS' particular way of working"
- The model of being "associated organisations" would preserve the autonomy of EECCS both internally and externally but would involve mutual cross-representation within structures; the alternative model was for EECCS to become a Commission of CEC, which would involve EECCS giving up its external autonomy but would preserve its internal autonomy in the sense that it would retain its own constitution, budget and staff.

That having been said, "the impression was that some of the CEC representatives wished to argue at least for a lesser degree of internal autonomy or even for the absorption model". Moreover, Robin Gurney had intimated that EECCS had been established to fill a vacuum arising from CEC's inability to take on the European institutions. Keith wrote back to RG saying, "EECCS was established partly to fill the vacuum and partly because the Churches and National Councils of Churches and Federations of Churches which created it believed that it was important that they were represented at the EC and CoE institutions". Marc at the time felt that the term "vacuum" used by Keith in his reply to Robin Gurney was too neutral, and not taking account notably of the political dimension of the EU institutions; he therefore pleaded for saying instead, "political vacuum".

Keith wrote to EECCS members on 22 November asking them to send comments on the document to the CEC-EECCS working group by 13 March 1992 for submission to the EECCS Executive Committee meeting on 1-3 April and then to the EECCS GA taking place in June

1992; after this the EECCS position would be presented to the CEC GA in Prague in September 1992.

The draft document was amended after discussion between EECCS and CEC and presented to the Joint CEC/EECCS working group on 12/13 December. Point 2 of this document then states, "because of the combined implications of the Cold War and of having a pan-European constituency, CEC was restricted in what it could do regarding institutions which were purely Western European".

In it there was also a mention of points of divergence between CEC and EECCS, notably "CEC would need to consider whether this model would create a precedent for it in relation to other ecumenical organisations, but such a model would recognise that EECCS is the only organisation to which the Churches have given a task of relating to the EC and Council of Europe institutions on the whole range of Church and Society questions". CEC however asked for this sentence to be replaced by "This model would create a precedent for CEC which would have far-reaching implications for many other partner ecumenical organisations in Europe". In addition, the document stated, CEC and EECCS would enter into a formal agreement establishing methods of collaboration between the two organisations with particular reference to those secretariats of CEC which deal with Church and Society matters. EECCS would become a specialised agency (or commission) under the general umbrella of CEC. EECCS would thus retain its name, membership and internal autonomy in order to be able to continue its present work.

> *There were many issues at stake here – some of which were explicitly on the table, but others lurking in the foreground or background of the minds of different players around the table. Hence the reference to "internal" and "external" autonomy, for example. Obviously, to allow EECCS to have a special, possibly self-governing/financing status within CEC and alongside the*

other commissions already existing there, could be problematic and cause internal tensions. However it was already extremely significant that EECCS was for the first time, really, being acknowledged by some as a reality on the European scene.

People were nonetheless aware that any model of inclusion under the CEC structural umbrella could also have implications for other "Church organisations" – especially the single-theme oriented ones – working both at W European and pan-European levels. Whilst on the one hand many of these might also have welcomed greater status, recognition and wider resonance for their work through some form of new relation to the official Church representations at European level, the very different (more cumbersome) governance structures of CEC might interfere with the degree of flexibility and freedom in their working style and agenda hitherto; this could also affect the latitude EECCS had in the whole field of Church and Society matters where these Church organisations were also operating, and so change the nature of the partnerships that had been in operation previously.

The very names of the different CEC governing bodies – Presidium, Central Committee etc. – were Soviet-sounding and it was obvious that they were taking decisions about matters which they had little first-hand knowledge of or perhaps even interest for – and on the EECCS side this meant we had to make allowances too. The CEC structures were, relative to ours, rigid, hierarchical, lacking transparency, set inflexibly in stone and it made us realise within EECCS how lucky we were to be in a close working relationship with our Executive Committee, knowing that more or less, if Klaus Kremkau agreed, then the Churches would fall in behind him and we could move ahead with our work. We also had a spirit and a tradition of consensus

working – reflecting if you like the very basis of solidarity within the EC decision-making structures – whereby we knew not only that we had to reach a decision together but that it would be possible. This was absolutely not the style of working of the Orthodox Church within a Communist system – and that would sometimes have nothing whatsoever to do with the actual subject being worked upon. Jean Fischer, himself a layman, had a huge task here to bring all these complex strands together and it was not surprising that the weave did not work out right straight away, hence the need to set up a new working group to re-look structures at the CEC's Lyon Assembly in 2009, ten years after the merger finally took place in 1999.

Nonetheless there was really no choice about it: this was the direction we all had to go in. Don't forget that at the same time, the German Churches were reuniting – with all that *was going to imply in terms of budgetary commitments. And the time was to come when the EKD and the Church of England simply got together and said, we are now going to sort things out our way. But that was not what* we *wanted from the viewpoint of continuing and building the very particular work between the full and very diverse range of Churches, and closely linking it to the EU decision-making process.*

The discussion in the Joint EECCS/CEC working group of 12-13 Dec 1991 at this point was so crucial that the notes taken merit reproducing in full:

2 Basic Principles

2.1 Different mandates

The mandates and goals of CEC and EECCS are of a different nature and not compatible (*these last 3 words were subsequently crossed out).* CEC is a pan-European ecumenical fellowship of Churches with a comprehensive mandate to help the European Churches to renew their spiritual life, strengthen

them in their common witness and service and to promote the unity of the church and peace in the world. EECCS serves as an instrument of the Churches in the member countries of the European Community and of the Council of Europe in order to monitor the European institutions especially with regard to social and ethical questions.

2.2 Mutual Recognition

While EECCS recognises the role of CEC and is ready to pay/make its specific contribution within the specific mandate of CEC, CEC recognises that the specific role of EECCS should be maintained.

These principles would require that any structural implementation of these principles would imply that the work of EECCS is done in harmony with the general strategy developed by CEC on the one hand, and on the other hand that the identity, experience and expertise of EECCS should be used in its efficient organisation.

3 Structural Options

3.1 The associated organisation model

On the basis of art.1(6) of the draft CEC constitution and of para 2(3) of the draft bye-laws, CEC could confer the status of an associated organisation on EECCS. Then under para. 2(4) of the draft bye-laws, the CEC Central Committee (CC) could invite EECCS to nominate a representative, who shall take part in the CC's meetings with the right to speak and may be elected to the committees appointed by the CC with the right to vote. EECCS could amend its constitution to the effect that CEC shall appoint four members of the EECCS Assembly and one member of the EECCS Ex.Com. with the right to vote. In addition, both CEC and EECCS could enter into a formal agreement establishing ways of collaboration between the CEC secretariats related to issues of Church and Society and the EECCS secretariats in Brussels and Strasbourg.

3.2 The commission model

On the basis of article 1(5) of the draft CEC constitution and para.1 of the draft CEC bye-laws EECCS could become a CEC commission, with a special status. Such a special status could be arranged by an agreement based on para.2(1) of the draft bye-laws according to which the CEC CC shall in each specific case decide how the CEC will develop relations or cooperate with the organisations mentioned in art.1(5). This agreement

> would imply that the present constitution of EECCS will remain in force and be adapted in its preamble only, thus changing the status of EECCS from an independent organisation into that of a CEC commission. This would allow EECCS to keep its name, to maintain its present membership base and its internal autonomy in order to be able to continue and develop its present work. It could also be agreed between CEC and EECCS that the mutual representation between CEC and EECCS within the governing bodies of the organisations as mentioned under model 3.1 will be implemented. This model could give a wider support base to the monitoring and advocacy work of the European churches in Brussels and Strasbourg. It would also provide a structural basis for a further assimilation of the two organisations in accordance with future developments. The monitoring of any new European institutions (ie the CSCE) would have to be continued with the overall programmes of CEC.

At this meeting of the CEC-EECCS Joint Working group on 12-13 December 1991 (for which Marc wrote the minutes), EECCS proposed to set up a working group to follow the socio-political aspects of the changes occurring in relations between the countries of E Europe and the EC: this proposal was well received but it was felt it would be difficult to proceed before the GA of CEC; Robin Gurney moreover suggested that Romania, Bulgaria and the new Russian states should also be involved – and what about the RC Church?! Klaus Kremkau insisted that EECCS had put this proposal on the table and CEC should respond.

The draft document was then discussed, with KK listing the observations made by EECCS:

- There is insufficient detail as to the respective mandates
- Little is said on what changes would be necessary within CEC
- What is the meaning of the phrase “internal autonomy”

KK reported that a degree of disappointment had been felt on both sides; moreover CEC had been surprised that the proposed models for

consideration had been reduced in number from four to two. Ploni Robbers gave her opinion that CEC had still not grasped what was the specific task of EECCS. Keith asked for confirmation of the news that the Ecumenical Patriarchate (Orthodox) was planning to set up an office in Brussels.

David Bleakley felt that discussions had largely carried on hitherto between the two staffs, and the CEC Presidium was unclear as to what strategy to adopt. Torgny Erling observed that the European institutions were demonstrating that in this instance, the politicians were displaying more courage than the Churches.

It was decided that EECCS would prepare an annexe to describe what was meant by "style of working"; a substantial discussion broke out over the concept of a "Common European Home" (Gorbachev); Robin Gurney and David Bleakley insisted that the sentence 5.1 in the document be maintained, which read "The options below are formulated so that ultimately a single ecumenical structure bringing EECCS and CEC together could be established". They felt this was "crucial for the ongoing dialogue"- and it was apparent that they had in their backs the whole weight of the church apparatus of CEC, whereas EECCS had much more freedom to manoeuvre at that stage.

Klaus Kremkau said that at its GA in June 1990, EECCS had demanded an explanation of the term "internal autonomy" if the Churches are to make a properly informed choice; however Robin Gurney said the question had already been discussed in September and there was now insufficient time before the CEC GA to reach a detailed agreement on the matter.

Klaus Kremkau recalled that the Geneva paper had gone into more detail on what was referred to as the "commission model". Keith said he had tried to persuade Geneva colleagues to change their mind over this but they had refused. In the end it was decided that more detail

would need to be provided over what was implied by "internal autonomy" (in the point 5.5.3 of the document).

During the lunch break KK declared that the lack of trust (on CEC's side) perceptible in this discussion led him to ask for a separate conferral amongst the EECCS delegation, and KK then made the following declaration:

- The EECCS delegation shared the view expressed by the Chair that there were difficulties in coming together
- The delegation could not accept the interpretation that this was due to a lack of trust
- The delegation wanted more precision on the content of the relationship
- There was a feeling that the CEC representatives had not fully understood what EECCS stands for; the delegation had therefore decided to make a few proposals to be included in the second model (ie to constitute a church and society commission)
- The delegation would like to include in the document an indication of the difficulties felt by the delegation: it was not just a matter of staff but went beyond that
- The delegation was of the opinion that it should therefore inform their constituencies about the difficulties that had been encountered
- "internal autonomy" was to be taken to cover General Assembly and Executive Committee; staff structure, appointments, dismissals and regulations; finance and budget

David Bleakley was of the opinion that the proposed text would be rejected by the CEC Consultative Committee. KK stipulated that once the text was adopted it should go to the EECCS GA in June and the CEC GA in September. A point 5.6 would be added stating, "Whatever model

is chosen, it is recognised by both CEC and EECCS that further work needs to be done to implement the detailed proposals."

The next steps would now be the following:

- On the CEC side, the document would be discussed in the joint committee, the resulting text be sent to the EECCS GA in June and then the CEC GA in September in Prague, and passed to the CEC Consultative Committee
- On the EECCS side the document in its present form would be sent to the members of EECCS asking them to react by the Executive Committee meeting in April; at the EECCS GA in June it would choose one of the two models and the decision would be passed on as such to the CEC GA in Prague
- KK asked that to assist CEC delegates a "Churches' Guide to the Institutions" be prepared

In March 1992 Helmut von Verschuer gave his opinion that the model to go for should rather be the "associated organisation" model.

At the EECCS General Assembly meeting of 24-26 June 1992 (chaired by Klaus Kremkau), the Ecumenical Patriarchate was welcomed into consultative membership as was the European Commission for Church and School. A drafting group was set up to look at future relationships between the CEC and EECCS. Jean Fischer addressed the meeting and expressed concern among CEC members about being pushed too fast to take position, and in general about the state of health of the ecumenical movement and relations with the RC Church (the impetus of Vatican II was beginning to lose ground).

The bye-laws of EECCS were to be changed to allow certain former C/E European Churches to seek associated organisation status with EECCS.

Marc was thanked for 25 years of service.

Gérard Merminod was in post in the office in Strasbourg.

A presentation was made to the Assembly on the work of the Council of Europe.

Ploni Robbers-van Berkel was elected the new EECCS President.

On 1 July Marc had lunch with Ken Collins – an encounter which was going to lead to the significant wording of Chapter 10 on environment of the European Commission's White Paper which Ken Collins and Janni Paleokrassas, EU Commissioner in charge of Environmental Policy, related at a later date! (see pp.227 below).

In September 1992 the 10th General Assembly of the CEC took place in Prague. The Final Report of the Policy Reference Committee (30 Sept 1992) stated that "The CEC should seek in conjunction with CCEE, EECCS and the European Institutions, to bring philosophers, artists, scientists and theologians together in order to promote a dialogue between contemporary European culture and Christian faith": this element had been highlighted during the Assembly by the Romanian Orthodox Primate. In the section for "Church and Society", there was talk about the issue of poverty in Europe and recommended that "in co-operation with EECCS, the CSC/CEC should monitor closely the effects of economic and political developments in Europe on the social conditions of people and communities directly affected by increasing poverty (unemployed, migrants, elderly, youth, women)." Under structural questions, "The Policy Reference Committee noted and welcomed the report of steps towards closer co-operation between the EECCS and CEC, recognised the desire for as full co-operation as possible with both EECCS and EECOD and urged that everything possible be done to ensure the closest working together." However, the Message of the Assembly still failed to say anything positive about European integration. Instead, it warned against a new division, now "on the basis of economic power, ethnic, cultural and also religious traditions".

Marc reported back to the EECCS Collegium on this Assembly meeting the following year, as follows (in summary):

> At the close of the CEC Assembly in Prague, the Policy Reference Committee had made the following comment: "that the CEC should seek, in conjunction with CCEE, EECCS and the European institutions to bring philosophers, artist, scientists and theologians together in order to promote a dialogue between contemporary European culture and Christian faith. We must ensure that we do not fail to reveal to Europe the meaning and the spirituality which is needed to face the next century."
>
> The word "spirituality" – not unlike the word "soul" – has evolved in meaning over time, and often needs to be understood within a particular historical timeframe. What then about the current timeframe? Europe is in the midst of major upheavals and seeking new reference points, identity markers on both the E/W and N/S axes. It is against this background that Jacques Delors' cry "Without a soul, Europe has no future" has to be heard; a cry imbued with both helplessness and at the same time a signpost; all the more unexpected coming from a – *French* - top politician and meeting head-on a public immersed in the market strategies of building Europe.
>
> Quite apart from the message and impact here for Churches, it is a fact that even within the political establishment many are beginning to question the predominant if not exclusive importance ascribed to economic growth in Western society – even if they may not be saying so publicly.
>
> The traditional economic analyses built around cyclical ups and downs are no longer sufficient to explain ever-worsening unemployment in a world of dramatic technological developments, a globalised economy and diminishing natural resources. The concept of constantly increasing growth is no longer tenable. And in this new reality our old tools, mechanisms and systems suddenly look woefully inadequate.

Europe has become increasingly secular – and yet there is a new search for spirituality in a world where the old institutions (political parties, trades unions – and the Churches) no longer appeal or meet people's needs.

This has a lot to do with the identity of the individual: one is at once driven by the market to conform to a norm *and* to assert one's individuality; in the process, the very fundaments of human rights can be perverted – as the individual presses his desire – and his rights – for autonomy at the expense of a sense of responsibility and concern for social relationships. It is in this context that people are questioning the meaning of their lives. But the quest takes place in the marketplace and outside traditional institutions: each individual picks and mixes for himself as best meets his aspirations.

How then can this return to the spiritual be interpreted theologically? The people of Europe are perplexed by the turn this new Europe is taking and whether to judge critically, pessimistically or discern hopeful pointers for the future. The theologian is similarly caught between the criteria that tradition and earlier revelation have transmitted and a search for new meaning, "le pourquoi du pourquoi". And why this breakdown between Church as institution and spirituality? Then thirdly, the cultural unity of Europe has always emerged from a diversity of cultures and religions – sometimes conflicting – so real dialogue between religions is more important than ever before.

Looking first at this new "spiritual" quest, one should read into it not so much a void needing to be filled as a deep dissatisfaction with what post-industrial society has to offer. The quest for meaning is therefore set firmly in the context of the culture of our society and how it is organised, that is the ongoing interaction between economy, politics and values – given that values are what underlie our reasons to live together in society. It also means that all those seeking something spiritual need must engage with the here and now of our society.

What of the link between institution and spirituality? The disarray – and quest for spirituality and meaning have to be seen in terms of human society as a whole and not as so many private exercises – where the Church can provide a (renewable) framework as can other institutions or fora. This is the old reminder that there is an "invisible" as well as a visible Church. Christian spirituality could be defined thus:

- By recognising it as a gift which has to be constantly reappraised in a new setting
- By continually letting one's judgement be challenged by one's fellow travellers
- By authenticating this spirituality through visible action in our surroundings

These three criteria distinguish spirituality springing from Christian inspiration from all the forms that emanate from individual persons and needs - which are then evaluated by quite different criteria.

Lastly, the dialogue between religions – broken off in 1492 – has to resume – to counter the tendency towards integrist religious practice, nationalist and ethnic-focussed thinking. Christianity was largely responsible for the rupture – and so must take the lead in relaunching.

No single individual, institution, political or philosophical tendency or religion can monopolise the thinking out of a new project for Europe. The traditional interplay between politics and economics *must* widen to include culture. That is why Jacques Delors wants to bring in men and women from many different spheres of life and thought. And in this discussion religion can lift the horizon beyond the short term, situating the human face not only in a historical perspective but as a responsible actor relative to his or her near and more distant neighbour and the little blue planet which is there for us all.

In December 1992, Marc delivered a speech in Edinburgh where a European Summit was taking place at the time, on "The Prophetic Church and the New Europe".

He commented that cracks were appearing in what had seemed to be a steadily on-going and stable process of construction of a new order of peace in Europe: signs of political instability and social unrest. Why?

- Due to the old struggle between the pull of national sovereignty and the drive to further integration?
- The threat of economic recession leading politicians to look after national interests first?
- The absence of popular support?
- OR perhaps, a more complex, and rather a cultural and spiritual crisis?

Paul Ricoeur offered a technique for reading the "culture" (in the broadest sense) of any one time through its

- Tools - economy, technology and research; the stage we have reached over the centuries
- Institutions for decision-making (politics, norms, law)
- Value system governing behaviour (ethics)

These three spheres – the political, the economic and the ethical – cut across each other. The culture of the time as a whole can be found in the area where all three spheres overlap. *(Marc was here implicitly criticising the European Commission's approach of breaking down society into sectors, unconnected policy areas.)*

How can a view of a cultural Europe be defined? Not least against a background of different groupings (Council of Europe, EU, OSCE…) and new religious diversity against a background of old claims (Roman-Catholic, Byzantine, Muslim …).

Any attempt to perceive some sort of "cultural identity" in Europe is fraught by the obvious tensions and oppositions: this is Europe's own particular story

- A united space or space for national recognition
- The critical debate between tradition, the "pace of experiences" and a "horizon of expectations" (Olivier Abel)
- A fair balance between individual freedom and social responsibility.

The tendency for one may be stronger in Western Europe and the other in Eastern Europe. Increasingly anyway Europe has to be seen from outside, from a world perspective.

Today there are contradictions in trends: on the negative side

- Retrenched national resurgence perceived as a remedy for economic and social problems
- The debunking of ideologies (communism) has left a void – absence of vision, utopia – which "the market" cannot fill
- Survival on the world market is meaning competitiveness at the price of social fabric.

The traditional values of freedom, responsibility and justice seem only to apply on the margins of society. Simply "improving" the economic model or the functioning of democracy will not suffice as people no longer feel they can act in the hope of change, they are resigned and empty. Europeans are weary.

That European society *is* still alive can be seen however from some encouraging action, on the positive side, such as

- "Bürgerinitiativen"- people taking to the streets when they feel strongly
- The women's movement, and thereby desacralizing all power and hierarchy

- The "Greens" – with a view not only to their neighbours' environment but also that of future generations: growth *cannot* be unlimited (whatever the Enlightenment persuaded us)
- Regionalist groups – new forms of democratic participation (so long as not purely inward-looking)
- The Ecumenical movement.
- The prophetic role of the Churches in Europe today
- Assuming their part of Europe's heritage, the Churches have, among themselves, to grow in unity while at the same time recognising the value of diversity
- In a world which is more and more interconnected, they should seek to give form and content to the concept of universality (catholicity), which is part of their credo
- They have to respond to the ethical challenges resulting from the rapid development of sciences and technology in the fields of biogenetics, communication and information

Recently the General Secretary of the CEC spoke of an "ecumenical winter" describing the current trend for Churches to emphasise their own confession and institutional order. The prophetic role is part of the essence of the Church, i.e. "Church is there for others". In today's world forum Churches should be coming together in action, sparking off new inspiration, relying on God's promise to stay with them until the end.

Practically, the Churches can play this role

- By being the democratic voice between people and politicians with a critical and questioning realism to counter the rhetoric

- In countering the compelling uniformity of globalisation with alternatives which are not based on fear and insecurity, and which have a different claim to universality; in finding the unity within intercultural dialogue
- In finding new ways of living together where more weight is given to forms of solidarity and social responsibility, in a new form of asceticism with priority to preserving minimum living standards.

The call launched by the President of the European Commission to look for Europe's soul should be an incentive for the Churches to participate actively in this search.

A Joint Staff meeting took place on 8 Jan 1993 in Strasbourg at which two working groups were set up – on Political and Monetary Union, and on the Agricultural Policy of the EC (which in due course, at the instigation of Kees Nieuwerth, would include the question of ecology). In the minutes of this meeting it was noted "Marc expressed his hopes of creating an open forum on the future of Europe with lay people from Central and Eastern Europe not directly involved in Church leadership, though Jean found it unrealistic and unnecessary to seek to go behind the backs of Church Leaders". EECCS does get such non-clerical specialists from EC countries in its working groups, but there is a mismatch here between the situation in East and West.

Keith Jenkins reflected during this meeting on the Prague Assembly which he had attended – noting the absence of any common vision and a feeling that the enthusiasm perceptible at the Basel Assembly of May 1989 had waned. Churches in the East – and public opinion there in general – were largely disappointed, even disillusioned with the West: it was currently something of a love-hate relationship. The Orthodox Churches were strongly critical of the materialist ethos of the West.

On 13 February a meeting took place in Hoeilaart outside Brussels between George Carey Archbishop of Canterbury and the UK Ambassador to NATO under the aegis of EECCS.

The Consultative Committee of CEC met in Iserlohn from 10-17 March 1993 during the Central Committee meeting, to discuss the relationship with EECCS and develop a co-operation agreement between EECCS and CEC to facilitate and enhance joint work by building on the agreement. It was noted that EECCS would amend its constitution to allow CEC to have four voting representatives on the General Assembly of EECCS, of which one would be appointed as a voting member of the ExCom.

A further joint staff meeting took place in Geneva from 1-3 July 1993. As a result Marc was asked to write a paper on "Europe : une crise de l'esprit; d'une théologie rétrospective à une théologie prospective. Dans le thème général: Enjeu de la théologie dans une Europe qui se trouve à la croisée des religions". This 16 page paper was written in the light of observations made at the Prague CEC General Assembly, and presented at a meeting in Strasbourg.

> *I tried to grasp the reality of the moment in theological terms. The Orthodox Church – rather like the Evangelicals today – constantly referred back to their basic texts, the Church Fathers in their case. That having been said, I learned a lot over the years from fruitful contacts with members of the West European Orthodox diaspora. I was once invited by Christophe d'Aloysio,*

a young and brilliant Orthodox theologian who chaired Syndesmos (the World Federation of Orthodox Youth). I remember asking him how the Orthodox faith – so linked as it was to past history and almost indistinguishable from national identity – was able to find its way in a modern secularised environment. He responded, that for those who had to leave Russia after the 1917 revolution, this forced exile far from the mother Church was experienced as a theological liberation. Many theologians fled to the West very soon after, and the Orthodox Institut Saint-Serge in Paris became the centre of a lively new Orthodox theology.

The history of Europe however has always been one of crisis upon crisis, and in this paper, I was trying to spell out a theology of the resurrection in eschatological terms, looking forward to the (unknown) history to come, which is where the EU is, writing on a blank page with no reference texts to rely on or hark back to.

On 23 September 1993 the Strasbourg "Beirat" was set up as a standing committee of EECCS. Its tasks were

- to follow the work of the Strasbourg office of EECCS
- to make recommendations to the Executive Committee of EECCS on the priorities for the work in Strasbourg and for work relating to the Council of Europe
- to oversee the execution of projects entrusted to the Strasbourg office by the ExCom of EECCS within the guidelines established by the ExCom.

It was composed of

- 8 representatives of the Conference of Rhine Churches
- up to 3 persons appointed by EECCS ExCom with particular experience of the European institutions based in Strasbourg

- 1 representative of the Anglican congregation in Strasbourg (so long as there was to be an Anglican representative in Strasbourg as an associate staff member of EECCS)
- the General Secretary of EECCS

At the EECCS General Assembly meeting of 23 September 1993, the main theme was "Agriculture, rural life and the future of the European Community". The EECCS working group on Agriculture and the future of rural society (moderator Professor Jerrie de Hoogh) presented a report: "A possible future for agriculture and rural society in the European Community". Ploni Robbers-van Berkel was in the Chair, and Jean Fischer (CEC) briefed the Assembly on the latest developments in the countries which once constituted Yugoslavia. The constitution was amended to take into account

- political changes in Europe
- discussions on the relationship between EECCS and CEC
- discussions on the relationship between EECCS and CCME
- discussions on the future role and composition of the Strasbourg Beirat.

The Ecumenical Patriarchate announced that it was intending to open its own office in Brussels. New rules were adopted for the Strasbourg Beirat. Peter Pavlovic was invited from the Ecumenical Council of Slovakia for a discussion on Central and Eastern Europe. A briefing paper had been produced for the 1994 EP elections.

The CEC Presidium met in Nice from 27-31 October 1993. In his report, Jean Fischer indicated that new walls had risen up between East and West. It was also noted, that since March of that year *EECCS had become an associated organisation of CEC*, adding "this is only a step in a process for the two organisations to grow to closer co-operation (point 18)".

On 6 September 1994 Hans-Joachim Kiderlen was replaced in the Brussels EKD office by Heidrun Tempel.

At the EECCS GA meeting of 20/22 September 1994, worship was led by Barney Milligan. The Ecumenical Council of Churches in Hungary was elected to full membership. The International Association of Prison Chaplains in Europe was admitted to consultative membership, as was the Christian Council of Sweden. Discussions took place on the working methods of EECCS (a working group moderated by John Arnold); preparations were made for the second European Ecumenical Assembly (Graz 1997). The main theme of the meeting was Unemployment and the Mission of the Churches to the European Institutions.

In December 1994, a farewell meeting took place over a long lunch between Jacques Delors (President of the European Commission) and representatives of the religions (also Jewish and Muslim) and the Humanists, in which Delors expressed some disappointment about the dialogue with the religious and philosophical traditions; the dialogue with his "7 Carrefours" of intellectuals had proved easier to develop. He stressed that Europe needed a memory and a soul, and re-emphasised his appeal to religious and philosophical traditions. The feeling was after this meeting within the staff of EECCS, Marc included, that important though this gathering had undoubtedly been to mark the conclusion of Delors' Presidency with all that it had represented, it was to be hoped that it would not herald a new type of encounter with the Commission/FSU in place of one of the or even occasional twice-yearly Dialogue Meetings: not only had one of the six-monthly Dialogue Meetings in the already established format been lost, but the conversation – dialogue if you like although it was never really one – was not of the same quality and depth. At that stage, the other religions and the Humanists were not comparably organised to produce real experts (as distinct from just representatives or even leaders of their

communities) who were able to discuss with experts from the relevant Commission DG policy matters in depth prior to their treatment on the agenda of the next meeting of the European Council, this being the Churches' desire and objective with these meetings (even if they never really worked effectively like that as it was increasingly difficult to know the agenda of such Council meetings sufficiently well in advance to be able to prepare properly at Churches' level); on this occasion therefore the encounter was broad and superficial and EECCS protested that this was not the planned purpose of such meetings.

Meanwhile a meeting was being planned for Toledo in November 1995 where the European Commission would bring together scholars of Christian, Islamic and Jewish background prior to an EU Conference on the Mediterranean area; Keith Jenkins would attend this on behalf of EECCS. It was reported that the new "Soul for Europe" initiative was being co-ordinated by Alastair Hulbert (half-time) plus a steering committee involving EECCS, COMECE, OCIPE, the Academies, the Jewish community, the European Commission and the Humanists.

In 1995 Marc wrote a paper for a WCC consultation in Bossey which was then published as an article in the Ecumenical Review and formed the basis for an EECCS working paper for discussion with the European Commission on "Models of alternative job creation".

> The European Commission had published a White Paper on Growth, Competitiveness and Employment, in which it was observed "Although we have changed, the rest of the world has changed even faster": in other words, despite progressive economic integration within the EU member states, this was proving insufficient in the face of the collapse of communism, US neo-liberalism and the technological revolution bringing in globalisation.
>
> Since the industrial revolution, work has been the basis of participation in society as well as the means to provide individual security. But it was nowadays no longer a valid measure for either. The

White Paper outlines strategies to combat unemployment where both competitiveness and solidarity have their place – both in turn based on the concept of job creation. Is this traditional concept still valid?

The White Paper *does* give space for potential "new sources of jobs" – which might not simply be construed as a halfway house between unemployment and returning to work but also as a "new development model" (chapter 10).

Such new avenues have recently been explored by the Churches – in agreement and conjunction with the European Commission. The result was a 90pp. paper "lecture critique de documents et projets d'Églises en Europe qui traitent de la question du chômage et de l'avenir du travail dans une société en pleine mutation » (ML 1995). This was the product of an examination of different church statements and the outcomes of the WEN (Work and Economic Network of Churches in Europe) Consultation in 1994.

It emerges that a radical reappraisal is required of the meaning and place of work in society, but the dilemma faced by everyone (especially in the Churches) struggling with the issues is, "how can we diminish the importance of work in a culture in which the market – and consequently the labour market – plays such a decisive role in defining the content and quality of human relationships?"

This then highlighted the following needs:

1. to rediscover the meaning of work on the level of personal self-fulfilment (exchange of knowledge and skills, self-esteem, enjoyment – over against productivity). Work should not be by definition paid, and income should not only result from work
2. An evaluation of the importance of time – spent working, spent not working; time as stress; time as something over which one has control (and not vice versa)

3. Awareness of the society environment, different levels of "community building"(as distinct from competitive individualism)

4. Consideration of what type of society one is wanting

This is against a backcloth where political desperation has led to recourse to short-term, economy-driven policies rather than taking the more dramatic and in the longer term more stable line of prioritising the participation of those being currently marginalised (the unseen unsung labour heroes) into a new political culture.

It has to be noted that each (national and regional) cultural (and historical) context is very different. Moreover so far, there are very few if any real projects of real alternative job creation on any scale. Catholic teaching continues to lay great store by the importance of work – although there are also voices in favour of the concept of "stewardship" (Dominicans). Protestants are more critical of the traditional work ethic with "a consensus … to strive for a more sustainable society in which men and women should feel more free vis à vis the constraints which a society primarily based on economic growth and higher productivity puts on their shoulders".

On 14 March 1995 Marc presented a paper to the Collegium on the future of ecumenical co-operation in Europe. The first point focusses on the relation between CEC and EECCS and summarises the principle changes that have meantime taken place in this relation:

- a constitutional change which gives CEC representation with voting rights for 4 delegates in the EECCS GA and one CEC delegate in the EECCS ExCom with voting rights. The EECCS General Secretary attends meetings of the CEC CC.
- At least one meeting annually between the staffs of CEC and the EECCS Collegium

- Possibility for a representative of either organisation to take part in the working groups of the other organisation
- Joint representations of the two organisations to the European Institutions and the Council of Europe NGO Liaison Committee

Mention is made of the need for both organisations to re-evaluate their respective mandates in view of the changes that have occurred in Europe. The evolution taking place leads one to believe that in a relatively short time the geographical area covered by EECCS' interests could coincide with that of CEC's. This evolution underlines the need to launch without more ado a process of redefining the relations between EECCS and CEC and their respective mandates.

It states that an exploratory group should be set up – given the spirit of co-operation reigning between the two organisations and the re-positioning which does not affect EECCS alone. From the outset, the staff of both CEC and EECCS were fully involved in the negotiations and discussions.

- There are two central questions underlying this thinking
    - How to build a Europe that has meaning for men and women in terms both of the exercise of their rights and their responsibilities and which ties in better with the need for peace and justice?
    - What place should be that for Europe not forgetting the memory of its past (internal conflicts and external imperialism) in a world characterised by centrifugal forces and regional re-groupings?

In all this, 3 scenarios are possible

1. EECCS takes on the entire Church and Society in Europe portfolio. EECCS would thus become the Church and Society Department of a new CEC. The starting point would be the current mandate given to EECCS by the Churches namely

Church and Society questions as covered by the European Institutions. Based in Brussels and Strasbourg.

2. The Churches recognise the growing importance of international institutions on the European scene and decide to mandate EECCS to cover this. Based in Brussels, Geneva, Paris, Prague, Strasbourg. This mandate could be pursued in collaboration with one or other local Church(es).
3. The Churches – with reference to the two preceding points – give priority to the EU institutions in a quest for response to these questions

In the wake of this, EECCS was given the role of "watchdog" for the political, social and economic transformations taking place at the instigation of the EU Institutions. There are three main areas of concern: implications of integration for the men and women living in the EU; consequences of integration for those living in Europe outside the EU borders; and consequences of this integration for those living in the southern hemisphere.

The third scenario however presupposed a consensus within the Churches over the specific nature of the EU institutions, giving them an overriding role in the quest for a new European order based on justice and peace, and thus deeming appropriate – notwithstanding the need for restructuring so as to make the respective mandates of EECCS and CEC more complementary – an ongoing Church body especially geared to this.

At the EECCS General Assembly held in September 1995 in Strasbourg, there were four CEC representatives: Bishop Teofan, Bishop Jeremias, Dr Roland Sigrist and Rev Irja Eskola. Three new members were welcomed: the Freie Evangelischen Gemeinden in Deutschland, the Ecumenical Council of Churches in Slovakia and the Ecumenical Council of Churches in the Czech Republic. The new ExCom as from 1/1/1996, would be chaired by Jacques Stewart, with Hans-Balz Peter as

Treasurer. It was noted there that Richard Fischer had been appointed to man the EECCS Strasbourg office, with James Barnet also in Strasbourg as assistant staff member (replacing Gérard Merminod). A discussion had been held on "the cultural dimensions of the current economic and political issues", introduced by Professor Gilbert Rist and prepared by the Ecumenical Association which had issued a publication on the subject. The enlargement of the EU was resulting in a broadening of the agenda of EECCS. There was also a question of overlap between agendas of EECCS and CEC on human rights, environment and Church-State relations, and between membership of EECCS and CEC: seemingly, "those Churches and Church bodies who were members during the 'old EU' have found a way to re-position CEC and EECCS structurally and in terms of responsibility". But it is less straightforward for the new or potentially new EU countries. "However the Churches in the Nordic countries as well as in Eastern Europe pointed out clearly that the expertise, contacts and framework which EECCS is offering through its presence in Brussels and Strasbourg, are needed". Irja Eskola alluded to a paper on "the work of EECCS 1996-1998", and said moreover "not even mentioning the prophetic responsibility of Churches, simply so many decisions of the EU affect our Churches, that someone has to help us to cope with all this". Nonetheless, the fact of belonging to two ecumenical bodies was a problem for these Churches – and the Nordic Churches in particular cited the financial burden. The Orthodox Churches had another issue: "through its new members, the Orthodox communities need the right to become 'full members' also in terms of issues, agendas and mutual understanding". Irja Eskola noted that women's issues were lacking in EECCS' agenda.

The EECCS GA took the following decisions:

- The ExCom had approved the paper on "the future of ecumenical co-operation in Europe" (see p. 165 above) which should serve as

a basis for the negotiations with CEC from the EECCS' point of view

- The ExCom has asked CEC to prepare its own policy paper – not a paper in reaction to that of EECCS – to be discussed with EECCS
- The joint staff meeting of 17-18 October should give high priority to these two papers and also work out the framework for the future process

I have the feeling that this year was a turning point in the way things would take shape from now on. Jacques Stewart (EECCS) and Jean Fischer (CEC) knew each other well and must have worked together on a solution. There remained nonetheless a fundamental asymmetry between the relationship Member Churches/staff in CEC and Member Churches/staff in EECCS, and in my view, that was never really fully probed or resolved, and is partly at the root of current tensions. For EECCS, Church and Society – or if you like, Church in Society as the United Protestant Church of Belgium now terms it – has been at the very basis of all we have done since the sixties, it has been our perimeter fence, our terms of reference; whereas for the CEC – for perfectly understandable reasons – it was limited to the CSCE agenda alone, and what Rüdiger Noll (staff member responsible for the Church and Society Commission of the CEC in Geneva at that time) could develop in that sphere. There was nothing comparable there to the whole EU project, with its backup in transnational legal provision, which we had been accompanying and evolving with simultaneously over the years. And we had quite literally – thanks to the early structures of the Ecumenical Centre/Association – done this hand in hand (even though always critically: in critical solidarity if you like) with the European

> *institutions. There was entirely different from the way CEC had been working.*
>
> *And then also there came a sea change – that's my feeling – at EU level at this point too. The period of Helmut Schmidt and Kohl was one thing; with Schroeder that had gone: it was more German reunification that counted than European integration. This was reflected I'm sure in the attitude of the Synod of the EKD around this time. I did not continue to attend their meetings once Keith was fully in harness.*

A joint CEC-EECCS staff meeting took place in Geneva on 17-19 Oct 1995, co-chaired as usual by Jean Fischer and Keith Jenkins. CEC had experienced a major financial crisis in 1994 and 1995, leading to re-organisation of staff responsibilities and a 7% decrease of salaries. The Churches were asking for better co-ordination of the work being done by the WCC, CEC and EECCS. Work was already underway for the Second Ecumenical Assembly (EEA2) in Graz, to which EECCS would make a particular contribution in the field of economy, ecology and lifestyles. EECCS was interested in stepping up its work in the field of human rights – especially the Minority Rights protocol (Council of Europe). It wanted to set up a Human Rights working group but there was a need to co-operate closely with CEC here, which was already working (with the WCC) on the question: more with a focus on the people affected than on the institutions, and on conscientious objection. CEC had published a Human Rights Manual. CEC at this time was also very concerned by the situation in the Balkans. A question was raised at this meeting on the participation of CEC's representatives in the EECCS GA: were they representing their respective Churches or CEC as a whole, and to whom should they be reporting back? An inventory was made of topics on the current agenda in CEC and EECCS with a view to watching for potential overlap: poverty, human rights, national minorities, Church and State, ecology. In many cases the focus was

different, but in many cases also there was already reciprocal membership in working groups and shared communication: the conclusion was therefore that "there are common themes, but the addressees and the context in which the themes are made operational are different, and for that reason one should rather speak of complementarity and not of overlap".

At this Oct 1995 meeting they took stock of the stage reached in the new CEC-EECCS relationship. It was difficult not to let current financial difficulties blur the main priorities and concerns. Both staffs had been asked to put forward proposals for the future structure of the relationship, taking account of the drastic changes that had occurred in Europe since the end of the eighties, but the CEC staff had been constrained by the view held by the CEC GA that nothing more was needed beyond the agreement adopted by the joint CEC-EECCS working group in Dec 1991: since then CEC had adopted a new constitution allowing EECCS to become an associate member and EECCS had introduced the necessary amendments to bring CEC into full membership of the GA and ExCom. The paper prepared by Marc and adopted by EECCS (see pp. 165, 168 above) on the future of ecumenical relations in Europe, was presented as part of a broader effort to re-evaluate the existing present relationships between the different Church organisations with which EECCS co-operates in order to present a mode of presence corresponding better to the ecumenical nature of the message Churches should be delivering. The three scenarios presented in this paper as possible options (see p. 166 above) were however dismissed.

Some further significant comments arose during the discussion:

- the separation between faith and service, which had been seen to mark the difference between the two organisations, was questioned: CEC had to be seen as a Conference of Churches in which both elements had to coexist even with tensions.

- Churches needed to reaffirm their universal vocation transcending national boundaries
- The old East-West divide opposing Latin and Orthodox was surfacing again
- There was a return to a confessionalist attitude: an example of this was the nostalgia for a Protestant Synod in Europe; in 1973 the Leuenberg Concord had been established between the major Lutheran and Reformed Churches to strengthen such links and is now known as the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE)
- Greater attention should be given to the place and role of the National Councils of Churches in fostering ecumenical relationships. In some places, the RC Church is a member of the NCC
- What would be the place of the Joint EECCS-COMECE Committee in the final structure, and the parallel to the CEC-CCEE relationship?

EECOD was due to be wound up by the end of 1995, largely for financial reasons. EECCS was looking for ways to maintain the N/S dimension on the Churches' agenda vis à vis the European Institutions if only a financial solution could be found. Meanwhile EECCS would take over EECOD's part of the ownership of the rue J II building.

In May 1996 Marc gave a paper in Iserlohn on the Contribution of Churches in the new configuration of Europe ("…zur Neugestaltung Europas"). His main thesis was that Churches – as major institutions in society – are all too unaware of the contribution they can make to giving a new shape to Europe in conjunction with the EU institutions.

He pointed to the major changes that had taken place, the revision of the EU since Maastricht and the end of the eighties, as a result of the rapidly changing international context, ("Die Geschichte hat uns

überholt" (Jacques Delors)) with the dismantling of the Soviet Union, the end of the Cold War and the growth of globalisation and revolution in communication technology. "The Emperor of Europe is naked – as seen in the tragedy of the Balkans – yet called upon more than ever before to shoulder his responsibilities in the world."

There have also been major internal upheavals: an erosion of democracy and lack of political credibility; an individualistic – so fragmented – consumer-driven society; a bureaucratisation of institutions (Churches, political parties, Trade Unions) at a time when high unemployment reigns in a society whose bonds are forged through work; a crisis of values that constitute consensus in society.

What is the Churches' role? To define it gives legitimacy to their existence at a time when their input is otherwise dwindling. This can be perceived

a) Within EECCS, its mandate and activities: it is an intermediary, a relay between member Churches and European institutions on subjects they have mutually prioritised – social policy, environment, external and security policy, democratic deficit, enlargement, institutional reform church/state relations nationally, and ethical questions in the field of genetics

b) The Churches' position in the kaleidoscope of Europe, in a permanent quest for a right balance: holding onto memory and tradition over against the quest for new ways, a utopia

Marc's second thesis was that these major changes and the threats they imply, have to be seen as interlinked, and only if treated correctly and together can the threat of conflict be avoided. This requires a new culture of joined-up, practical thinking. In concreto: maintenance of the social fabric must not be at the cost of establishing a truly multicultural society.

How can the Churches help here? Europe has to see itself anew on planet earth – not as the hearth of world colonisation according to a set social hierarchy of "civilisation" but as the rest of the world sees it, caught in its own ideological net of a global free-market economy. Europe has to uphold its potential claim as a visionary pioneer to act and find new ways forward – within a public and democratic critical debate where the Churches play an obvious part.

What part might this be? Firstly in relation to history: the past cannot be changed but one's evaluation of it is not set in stone and constantly needs revisiting from fresh, and more modern perspectives and evolving power relations. This includes the dialogue between Christianity and Islam in Europe from the 15th century, which came to an end with the Spanish Conquista. This has to be rethought as much by every individual as by the specialists and academics. "Si je ne découvre pas en moi le terrain où l'hindou, le musulman, le juif, l'athée, l'autre peut avoir une place – dans mon cœur, dans mon intelligence, dans ma vie – je ne pourrai jamais entrer dans un vrai dialogue avec lui » (Raimon Pannikar, Le Monde 2/4/1996). The Churches' special stance here lies in the space it allows for acknowledgement of errors, forgiveness and reconciliation in humility and a new light after the event. This contrasts vividly with the current tendency to insist on rights and being right (and the other in the wrong) and is more than purely symbolic. The founding fathers of the EU buried the hatchet; as did Willy Brandt falling to his knees in Warsaw.

If politicians can do it, the more so the Churches – in giving *vision* to the future (and not seeking solutions to immediate problems). This was Delors' call to find Europe's "soul", in terms both of motivation and goals. Vision is not the language of political short-termism and media images and sound bites of the moment. But it is eminently democratic, linked to meaning for each and every citizen. The type of conviction and vision that urged on those who (recently) visited the Bosnians,

> Croats and Serbs in ex-Yugoslavia; or that drives so many Palestinians and Israelis working for peaceful co-existence as fellow human beings. The test of any politician's solution lies in its validity for the weakest and most oppressed in our society – but the politicians cannot reach this solution on their own.
>
> Whose spokesman will the Churches be?

The next joint CEC-EECCS joint staff meeting took place on 6-7 June 1996 in Strasbourg. There was discussion of whether or not one would deem the present time as an "ecumenical winter". Some said the problems raised by recession were being healed by "denominational identity" – but that that is purely a matter of where someone is born. For the most part - for young people - it is natural that there are differences of faith. The ecumenical movement was heavy in structures, methodology and language and needed a new way of talking. The other trend however towards globalisation and individualisation had yet to reintroduce the value of community. It was noted that the ecumenical movement had made no impact on European institutions – which still thought in sectorial, compartmentalised categories, lacking a transversal approach. One needed to be wary however: the confessional stance was one of self-preservation and defensive entrenchment in a safe past – but even there, there is more division than might be imagined from outside.

There was also discussion at this meeting about continuing the work previously carried out by EECOD – and whether APRODEV (which had been set up in 1990) might adapt its mandate and work to strengthen advocacy work and analysis. Contact had been made with Rob van Drimmelen (WCC): Rob was to man the Brussels office from 1997 for the next 17 years, retiring in the spring of 2014.

As concerned further progress on the CEC-EECCS relationship, a common paper had been produced now called the "Paris document" as a basis for future discussions. To implement its proposals however would require a change in the CEC bye-laws, and before EECCS were to be

dissolved it would need confirmation of the continuity of its work. Nonetheless Keith felt it was important that at least a symbolic change be made in the bye-laws (however potentially complex the process involved) in order to convince those with hesitations, and the Paris document needed some amendments on the scores of continuity, statements and setting up own (EECCS) working groups before sending to Member Churches and bodies.

In September 1996 Konrad Raiser (WCC General Secretary), accompanied by Ninan Koshy (CCIA) and Jean Fischer (CEC) visited European Commission President Santer in the context of an ecumenical visit organised by EECCS that also involved meeting with senior civil servants.

In autumn 1996 during the celebrations for Emmanuel Adamakis being consecrated Bishop, Marc learned the tale from Greek Commissioner Paleokrassas and Ken Collins of the origins of Chapter 10 of the Commission's White Paper (see p. 227 below).

At this stage Marc Luyckx had moved away from the Forward Studies Unit (Cellule de Prospective in the European Commission) and been replaced by Thomas Jansen, former General Secretary of the EPP. An EECCS-COMECE follow-up to the inter-religious meeting in Toledo on inter-religious dialogue (Nov 1995) was being planned for April 1997. The EECCS GA of September 1997 was to focus on "Enlargement of the European Union – towards a continent reconciled with itself".[35] Meanwhile the EKD office (now Heidrun Temple) was focussing on Church/State relations (not just the Churches) and

[35] This was the title given to the paper produced by the Working Group on Political and Economic Union (chaired by Jean-Pierre Thevenaz (FEPS), with Norman Shanks (Church of Scotland), Laurens Hogebrink (Council of Churches of the Netherlands), Joachim Gaertner (EKD) and both Keith Jenkins and Marc Lenders from the EECCS staff), which was one of the most significant pieces of work being produced during this whole period when one might otherwise have the impression that staff time and energy was purely devoted to structural questions and relations with the CEC.

proposals were being made for an article to be included in the revised Treaty of European Union. Other prior concerns were political and economic union and social cohesion; bioethics; economy, environment and social affairs; North/South and post-Lomé arrangements; NGO relations with the Council of Europe (and human rights); Soul for Europe; Ecumenical Association.

The next joint staff meeting took place on 19-21 March 1997. CEC was working full on at this stage for the CEC Assembly and EEA2 (Graz). CCME was working closely with CEC and WCC on the Ecumenical Year of Solidarity with Uprooted People and seriously considering possible integration with CEC so long as the particularity of its work remains respected. There was interesting discussion in the attitude to religion in the former Communist states – both at the political level and among the people: reversion to earlier practice and attitude for some; disinterest amongst others; sects, proselytism and search for new spirituality or religiosity. Also part of a search for a "new security".

Marc introduced a paper he had written on "concepts, traditions and understandings of Church and Society". This paper started with a historical retrospective. In the wake of the Second World War it had in fact been the nation states rather than the Churches that had made the move towards reconciliation and healing – by establishing the European Institutions as we now know them. They had been sui generis in nature and the Churches had had furthermore to find new ways of relating to and working with them. At this stage of reassessing the Churches' response in the new political context, there were pitfalls to be avoided and the Church and Society agenda had to keep an eye open for the deeper, underlying issues and the longer term and not just short-term political topics. Without confusing ethics and theology, the quest for meaning in a secular age will be prime. Rüdiger – also contributing a paper to this discussion – said that CEC had never really defined what it meant by "society" although it had been using the term "Church and

Society" to cover matters of concern in CEC outside the Church since 1992. Moving towards combining CEC and EECCS work in this field after Graz was going to be difficult but should be based on close dialogue between the staffs and working groups involved. The CEC Presidium and EECCS GA were due to establish a Commission of Church and Society with an equal number of EECCS and CEC representatives in autumn 1997 which would define a new mandate to present to a common session of the CEC CC and EECCS GA in 1998. This proved to be a very controversial suggestion: who was actually in a position to judge what should be the mandate, programme and priorities for such work; where were the expectations coming from – and the resources? Eastern European Churches actually had no experience in working in this field – and needed training. There needed moreover to be a continual re-evaluation of what corners of the field the Churches were equipped to play competently, and where they simply did not have expertise or resources to make a valid and specific contribution. And the methodology of the approach and response would vary according to the institution related to. There was quite some discussion on the relative visions of security as seen in the EC context (internal economic negotiation) and NATO (balance of fear): the Churches seemed uninterested in relating to NATO, or to security questions generally (OSCE).

Preparations for the Graz Ecumenical Assembly were proving much more difficult because of the different approach of CCEE (Consilium Conferentiarium Episcoporum Europae – Council of European Bishops' Conferences) since restructuring to include representatives of the RC Church in Central and Eastern Europe (where the leadership sees the revitalised Catholic Church in the East to be the keeper of the true faith). This emerged from conversations with Jean Fischer at the time.

This was the last joint staff meeting attended by Jean Fischer.

At the CEC GA meeting in Graz in July 1997, changes to the bye-laws to the CEC constitution were adopted. Meanwhile changes to the statutes of EECCS were being prepared for the final EECCS GA scheduled for September 1998. It was anticipated that the budgets of CEC and EECCS would be fully integrated by January 1999. It was suggested that all CEC member Churches having representatives in Brussels and Strasbourg move to make these representatives associated staff members as was currently the case for the EKD and Church of England in relation to EECCS.

During the Graz Assembly Keith Jenkins had had a heart attack and was then off for some months to convalesce. The European Commission asked EECCS/the Soul Screening Committee to take over the complete administration of grants on a sub-contracting basis from the end of 1998 but EECCS was unwilling to do so. EECCS (Richard Fischer) had gained consultative status on the steering committee on bioethics in the Council of Europe – one of only a few organisations to have this status. There had been ongoing work (Heidrun Tempel) on getting a clause into the Treaty of Amsterdam whereby the EU would pledge to respect religious institutions. This finally became a reality, and the Treaty of Amsterdam was agreed in June 1977 and came into operation in May 1999. However, the clause in question appeared in the form of a non-binding Declaration. (It was subsequently to become law in the Lisbon Treaty.)

EECCS had put out a statement on EU enlargement.

The next joint staff meeting was held on 8-10 October 1997 in Brussels, in the wake of the 11th CEC Assembly and the Graz Ecumenical Assembly, the EECCS Assembly and with Keith Clements having succeeded Jean Fischer. The cuts in Geneva – both CEC and WCC – had resulted in poor morale – and most CEC secretaries were by now working half-time. There was ongoing debate in the wake of Graz about relations with the RC Church – and even discussion of the RC

Church joining CEC – but generally coming to the conclusion that CEC and CCEE should continue to work together although the latter's structure, focused entirely on Bishops' Conferences, made for less flexibility.

Work was meanwhile ongoing in a Joint CEC/EECCS Committee to constitute a CEC Church and Society Commission, with all the legal implications covering Brussels and Strasbourg. The question remained about the status of the office of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Brussels – set up at the suggestion of Jacques Delors. Integration or association would seem appropriate but the Ecumenical Patriarch himself insisted on retaining an entirely independent identity.

There was also ongoing discussion of how to integrate groups and persons (often actively involved in EECCS working groups) in CEC where they were not members and would have no voting or participation rights; also whether more priority should be given to Councils/Federations of Churches where they exist or to individual Churches as members. All programmes of Church and Society working groups – in EECCS and CEC – were due to be wound up at the end of 1998 and it was therefore time to see what should be carried forward in the new Commission, and how, as Keith Clements put it, to retain the "genius" of each. The need for potential flexible response was underlined, as the Institutions to which the Churches were relating were "moving targets". A plea was made that while the CEC Central Committee would have to define the overall mandate, each working group should be able to work out its own programme and style. It was clear nonetheless that the Churches had high expectations from this new Commission. There was extensive discussion on how in future to work on the issue of Human Rights – given that both CEC and EECCS had worked on this hitherto but in different ways.

Until now, the EECCS staff had worked as a Collegium, jointly answerable to the Executive, and now there needed to be found new

ways of communicating directly with the Churches and ensuring two-way communication over the work. There was also an imbalance between the Commissions in terms of staffing. There were felt to be inadequate internal communication facilities (data base, website, training required). It was also discussed how the Commission itself should be constituted so as to be representative (S Europe, E Europe, Orthodox, minorities ….. with closeness to the Churches and sensitivity to the European institutions being further important criteria): a "critical fellowship". A conflict with the CEC Central Committee was foreseen here – with the option being of having "ex officio" places to ensure competent input, but this would have budgetary implications.

A further Joint Staff Meeting was held on 1-3 April 1998 in Alsace. It was discussed what future communication tool should be used in place of the CEC Monitor and EECCS/AOES/CCME Newsletter – and what language used. There was discussion of the new CSC in the light of what had gone before – vision, "culture", balance, agenda, age vs. "experience". One had to be wary of oversimplifying and generalising – talking of "the East", "the West", "the young", "the Orthodox" – as if such regions or groups were monolithic and impervious to change. If CSC was to do its job well, it needed to be less paternalistic, and to start with, drop "the terminology of two sides". Disestablishing, stepping out of the CSC agenda used hitherto would be helpful. The relation with Catholics was raised – in the light of the apparent contradiction that in a "united" Europe more divisions were appearing than ever before.

There was an in-depth discussion on how to consider the European Institutions: they are a means to an end rather than an end in themselves, and focussing on them does not imply lack of critique; moreover many society problems arise in countries outside as well as within the EU. How was CSC to retain its specificity if it also related to OSCE, NATO, the UN (ie took on the world)? It was felt nonetheless that there should be no hierarchy among Institutions, nor should value judgements be

made about them. There was also discussion about how to relate to the member Churches on whose behalf the CSC was speaking to the Institutions, if the member Churches are insufficiently informed or actually "trained" to think European.

Another discussion was on how to see all three CEC commissions (Church and Society, Churches in Dialogue, Churches in Solidarity) as parts of one whole: the Churches in Dialogue commission should not be the only place where theology was done. In future the programme of the three commissions should converge and inter-communicate, and staff encounters reflect this. Much effort was devoted to drafting a document for a proposed CSC programme – which found the right balance between the Churches' tendency to think nationally, the EU institutions' framework to focus on economy … It was discussed whether "women's issues" should have separate focus or be integrated throughout all other programme areas.

A joint EECCS/CEC ExCom and GA took place from 11-14 September 1998 in Vaalbeek outside Brussels, at which Commission President Jacques Santer appeared and spoke: he officially acknowledged the value of the work done by EECCS. New statutes were discussed at this meeting. Another staff meeting was fixed for 26-28 Oct 1998.

This moment (Vaalbeek Assembly) *marked the end of the "merger" process which then became effective from January 1999.*

In April 1999 Alastair Hulbert left the staff and returned to Scotland; his successor from the Church of Scotland was Stewart Lamont. Win Burton returned to the Ecumenical Centre to take over the co-ordination of the "Soul for Europe" Initiative.

In July 1999, Marc Lenders retired.

Institutions in Progress IV*:*
Is There Still Leeway to Develop Europe?

Is there still leeway to develop Europe as a special novel project or has it been sucked into the inevitability of world economic currents?

Interesting are the parallels that can be drawn from the way things have gone in the Churches together at European level and for the EU member states themselves over these latter twenty years, particularly from 1990-2010. Historical events - 1989 in particular – impacted sharply on both. There were others – notably the change from Delors/Santer's Commission in 1999 to Presidents Prodi and then Barroso. It was if the millennium was the excuse to "break with the past", the pioneering era, with a clean sweep. The coincidence with the enlargement to the countries of former Central and Eastern Europe, the introduction of the single currency and growing unemployment especially among young people, were, taken together, so many writings on the wall that a blank page was now opening in the history of the EU. The attitude of Angela Merkel – and her increasingly powerful position on the EU stage – has also shaped things – as Marc understood better on reading the latest book by Habermas on the "Constitution of Europe" with a much more inter-governmental approach evolving over Europe, with the European Council playing a much more important role than in the past and the Commission being reduced to mere Executive and less and less initiator of new policy proposals. The whole question of legitimacy is an issue as well – where are the checks and balances? The European Parliament has this role but the population does not find it convincing, it is less and less supported and this makes for a serious

democratic deficit around the whole project of the Union which is potentially having serious consequences as the idea of referenda surfaces in one or other Member State, and in any case an attitude of pick and mix, national interest over against European solidarity. Habermas says one must distinguish between the State and the People – at the moment it is the State that is calling the tune but the People are not necessarily following.

> *When Kohl, Mitterand and Delors departed from the European scene things changed radically: the dynamic behind institution-building went into reverse gear and there was a clear reversion toward an inter-governmental approach. From this point on the nation states – in one or other combination and centre of national or regional interest – require the other institutions to execute and follow up, where in the past a strong European, that is non-national initiative and drive had come from the other Institutions such as the Commission and the Parliament.*
>
> *The push towards integration had largely come from France and Germany in the first – post-war – instance, strongly motivated by a desire for reconciliation. And the climax in the decision-making process came at European Summit meetings after a lot of ground-work and pre-negotiation in the other institutions, both European and national. This was replaced now by the European Council – and with various forms of stalemate, damage prevention or at best lowest-common-denominator compromise, rather than progress or innovation. The Central and Eastern European countries were initially concerned most to join NATO – as a bulwark against Russia. The EU – where they would be required to match up to an "acquis communautaire" – felt somewhat like exchanging one master for another, although they eagerly sought access to this market in the West. So indeed, at this point the focus was above all on "the*

> *market" – and this was what for example countries like Denmark and the UK had only ever wanted from the EC too: they are sea-faring, trading countries basically. They want to maintain the trade in ham between their two countries and the Euro is not an asset here at all. Germany's first priority at this point suddenly became reunification, an internal matter first and foremost. So all in all Europe then became more an economic than a political project. Of course it was Delors who had fought for the Euro, but he has since stated that he had fully intended the political side (fiscal policy etc.) to progress in parallel and that had not happened.*
>
> *An opportunity was missed to re-shuffle the cards and re-think the game. After an initial moment of hesitation, it was as if there was no question but that the EU would be enlarged and take all these countries on board into a project which had never remotely been designed to hold them.*

And it is then interesting to see how this is paralleled among Churches, which first and foremost – even if they are not State or Established Churches – have a tendency to identify with the national culture and viewpoint especially if they are majority Churches (a point Marc makes clearly about minority Churches on the first page of this document): speaking here of course mainly about Protestant and Orthodox Churches and not so much the Catholic Church which is universal in character and organisation. That having been said, this is as true in a state that has been an EU member for 40 years like Great Britain, as in a new State like (RC) Poland. The key issue will be the extent that the People feel – or can be persuaded to feel "European" – as European citizens in a global context, sharing not supranational or transnational law but cosmopolitan, common European law which has a meaning, a good meaning, a value relative to national legislation and not undermining or competing with or overruling or side-lining it. That is in

the hands of national politicians – who need to have the courage to look beyond the next election, and that is exceptional: basically they are hostage to their voters and no longer leaders. An example was the 2012 elections in the Netherlands – Hollande in France does not have such courage. It isn't just a question of bankers' responsibility, it isn't just a question of the Right and the Left alone, but one of attitude and values and the Churches may have to detach themselves from the national context to see that at European level: can they do that? Have they any reason to want to do that? Already in Britain, they are seeing a new need to champion the poor, those who are suffering from the severe budget cuts – and although those cuts are as necessary in Britain as in Greece, there has to be a care for the most vulnerable and a sign that the strongest – within a nation and among the nations – are contributing and sensitive. Economics has become a transnational matter. But politicians are elected on a national ticket – despite increasing loss of national credibility – and so welfare and social affairs, integrally linked to economics, fiscality and so many other matters are being reined back into the national political fold and guarded there as tightly as possible. Germany is perhaps the only exception – and it is extraordinary to see in the 2013 national elections there that 73% of the electorate felt strongly enough about participation in some form of consensus that they turned out to vote. In France, Marie LePen's party has now gained seats in the European Parliament and this phenomenon is reflected in many other member countries. Once again, Germany is perhaps the exception, but Angela Merkel is from East Germany and has a different attitude yet again; she speaks Russian (and Putin speaks German from the time he worked in the KGB): they can speak each other's languages. And Merkel does not have as part of her personal legacy the euphoria of Franco-German reconciliation that lies at the basis of the European project. This is not the generation marked by two World Wars.

The European Commission may not be "democratic" in strictu sensu, but it is the "guardian" not only of the Treaties but of the continuity and forward motion of thinking and of the spirit of the whole project with an overview which itself has its own checks and balances. In 1989 for the first time, the European Commission was opening up to civil society and to the Churches, with the invitations to dialogue Jacques Delors issued on more than one occasion during his term as President of the Commission both to Christian Churches and other communities of faith and conviction, and through the mandate and very structure of his Forward Studies Unit, where he made room for a prospect of a longer-term vision of the type of society people in Europe wanted together for the future, quite (or relatively) irrespective of member states' opportunist short-term election promises. That was swept aside in all the reshuffling that took place after Delors' successor as President, Jacques Santer, left and this was not purely an administrative shake-up. There was also a profound cultural shift from the French cultural approach that had dominated since the inception of the EC, the French "universalist" thinking of a new type of citizen (liberty, equality, fraternity). The new geographical centre of the EU was apparently Prague – and there was undoubtedly a new, unplanned approach in the culture and even language in the European workplace. The Ecumenical Commission – currently still termed the CEC Church and Society Commission (until December 2014) – was similarly subjected to huge upheavals which may have been inevitable but not necessarily desired …

In conclusion

In all this, Marc Lenders' job was one for which not only no job description was or could be written in 1966, but could not have been formulated or constrained within set parameters at any time during his working life in the Ecumenical Centre.

Fundamentally a Protestant theologian, fundamentally a European by conviction, the mandate he came to ascribe for himself was to sense where was and what was the Churches' role in relation to the evolving European idea and institutions that carried that idea forward and gave it shape, and to find ways to interface, synergise, highlight, dynamise experts and thinkers on both "sides", and above all bring them together to listen to each other.

The story and viewpoint of those many names and faces, men and women, too numerous to list for the most part, may be told in their own memoirs in some cases; and so much more can be found in the Centre's archives, the rich fruit of the many working group meetings which Marc inspired and managed. These pages in a way relate the less interesting story – Marc's own perception of how that very *process*, dry as it may sound in se especially in the latter chapters, has developed from nothing at all and how he personally, with all manner of colleagues, led it forward. How much is increasingly at stake. How much has been achieved, astonishingly. How much potential lies ahead.

> *It is difficult to imagine any other job which could have given me such scope and variety. Of course there were moments of routine, administration, staff and office management, sitting in long meetings – that were far from exciting. But the opportunities I had to travel – whether to lecture or just to attend meetings where the European input was required – were fabulous. And thereby the chance to meet all manner of people from the Churches and outside. I think – just an example – of a meeting Wolf-Dieter Just invited me to attend at the Academy he moved to in Mülheim an der Ruhr, where they were discussing the Euro. Many of the Germans there were against the idea - not just out of sentimental attachment to the Deutschmark but because of the fear, that were it to prove a flop, they would find themselves back in the terrible situation they and their parents had known in the thirties. Just sharing moments such as that, with all the perspectives of culture, history and humanity that came together, was such a privilege. And of course it happened time and again.*

7

RELATIONS WITH THE ROMAN CATHOLICS IN BRUSSELS

In a non-majority Catholic country such as Britain, it is perhaps difficult to imagine that an Ecumenical Centre would not automatically imply Catholics and Protestants (and Anglicans and ….) – and that as much of the work, themes treated, was being done in parallel and sometimes in co-operation with Roman Catholics, it would have had more impact and credibility if the two offices had joined forces: after all in the sixties Vatican II was making many things possible as not before and there was a real air of new openness.

Right from the early days there were links of many kinds (see pp. 24 & 26 above). As described earlier in this text, Marc did not see his work in the Ecumenical Centre as being pastoral in nature – as did rather the Foyer Catholique. However from the outset of its designation, the Centre de Prière in the Berlaymont was a joint space. (When in the late eighties the Berlaymont was closed down for a number of years while asbestos was removed, a space was made in one of the Commission's office blocks further down rue de la Loi – and ultimately in 2001 the van Maerlant Chapel was acquired near rue Belliard and the Commission's van Maerlant building, renovated and reconsecrated the Chapelle de la Résurrection with a truly ecumenical Committee running it with which Marc was still involved for many years.) A short worship service was organised at midday every Tuesday, attended by some Commission civil

servants and some of the local Brussels pastors. Occasionally more intensive encounters took place – such as a 48 hour residential fast during Lent in 1976 Jeûner pour Changer – to consider problems of world hunger; and special meetings during the week of Christian Unity. Whenever notable personalities were heard to be passing through Brussels, the Foyer and Centre would stage a lunchtime lecture in the Foyer's new offices at 221 rue de la Loi to which civil servants regularly came in quite considerable numbers. Quite apart from the planning of these activities, the entire staff of the Ecumenical Centre would be involved in sending out invitations, buttering sandwiches, or in the earlier stages before the house was quite ready for use, painting walls and sanding floors!

On another floor of this building was OCIPE – the Brussels Jesuit office (which also had offices in Strasbourg and, post-1989, in Warsaw). Co-operation with its Director Father Jean Weydert was close from the outset – and the story has already been told of the joint work which led to the Roehampton Conference and subsequently, the setting up of the Joint Task Force and the Finalities group.

> *When ERE was closed down in 1986, I explored the possibility of some form of merger between the Ecumenical Centre for Church and Society (AOES as the new local structure was called) and OCIPE because over the years when I was a Board member of ERE and actively involved with it, I had appreciated this partnership as a resourceful ally for my work in Brussels. ERE had worked closely with the Catholic Institute of Canon Houtart in Louvain-la-Neuve, and much work had already been done with OCIPE through EECOD and the Finalities group.*

However it was not to be. The real problem lay no doubt in the differences in institutional status between the two organisations. The AOES was directly dependent on the Protestant and Anglican national

Churches and Federations of Churches, and regularly in touch with them through ECCSEC. OCIPE was an office of the Jesuits and as Father Huot-Pleuroux (an early representative of the Catholic Bishops) memorably pointed out, "the Jesuits are not the Catholic Church"!

> *The non-Catholic ecumenical bodies enjoyed a certain latitude of action which was less the case for Catholic institutions. The World Council of Churches is entitled by its member Churches to take a position, but this position does not necessarily imply that it is committing the member Churches as such. This "ecumenical space" is crucial in order to create the conditions for a dynamic consensus, and the member Churches actually mandate the WCC to find a consensus, even delegating part of their own responsibility to this other body – a consensus with which the member Churches may in turn subsequently disagree. (One can see this also in the difference in "behaviour" at international level between a national Church and a national COUNCIL or Federation of Churches, the latter being accustomed to giving and taking, adopting less rigid lines.) That was a vital condition for setting up the World Council as a viable organisation (and one which sits uneasily for example with the Orthodox: the roots of the WCC go back to the thirties, it was established in 1948 – but the Orthodox did not join until 1961.) There is no way something like the WCC could exist within the Catholic Church – even though at one point in 1968, when Mgr Tucci was Vatican delegate to the WCC Assembly in Uppsala, there was actually talk of the RC Church joining in some way. The later WCC General Secretary Konrad Raiser explained clearly that progress can only be made through grass-roots activity, little by little. For even if there could quite likely have been common or compatible approaches on Church and Society questions such as ECCSEC was treating most of the time in relation to the EC – agriculture,*

development aid, trade, environment – as soon as any aspect of doctrine or Christian social ethics came into play, there was no latitude, the only line was the hierarchical line as decreed in the various Encyclicals, as for them there is only one sole and unique message. The Joint Task Force – and ERE – were the only truly ecumenical bodies at European level: they were exceptional. The JTF (later EECOD) could survive as long as it did thanks to the commitment of Marga Klompé who managed for several years to raise money within the Dutch religious orders.

All that having been said, these differences are surfacing again nowadays in a different light: on matters such as youth euthanasia (recently discussed in Belgium), the position of most religious communities and therefore of any representative called on by the media to speak on their behalf, is clearly known and readily available. This does not apply however within the Protestant community which requires considerable internal debate at different levels before a "view" can be published – less in keeping with the current world of instant sound-bites.

What also needs to be noted however is that this approach has played out particularly favourably for the non-Catholic Churches in the context of working with the European political institutions. The European Commission is responsible for the first initiative in any policy area – but thereafter follows a whole period of consultation with other organs and with civil society bodies before the Council of (national) Ministers reaches its decision on that proposal. The Protestant Churches within EECCS (and its other configurations) have been able to use that time for their own consultations – involving key players from the political institutions at the same time – in a way that the RC Church and even the Orthodox Church have never had the

> *structures or leeway for, as their social doctrines are fixed and out in the public domain: they could only ever react and never truly participate, and it is hard to keep up with the pace of change and innovation where new ethical dilemmas, never previously anticipated, arise every day. The ecumenical ecclesiology, dialectic, found in the way of working of the WCC, has proved of particular relevance and usefulness in the context of the EU dialogue. Ultimately it is the principle of subsidiarity operating, in a context where it is essential to acknowledge a very wide plurality.*

Even so, the manner of working was also quite different. Jean Weydert's style was to prepare a document presenting an issue from all its different aspects, at the outset, rather than first allowing a brainstorming to take place among participants from different horizons. The document could be modified – indeed long periods were spent in meetings redrafting one paragraph or another – but with the idea that at the end here was a document with which all were in agreement. This *modus operandi* was a kind of rehearsal paving the way for reaching consensus among the political decision-makers at a later stage. Marc recalls such a meeting in Aix-en-Provence to discuss regional policy, for example, to which John Hume from Northern Ireland came.

Increasingly under Jean Paul II and then under Benedict XVI, the working relations have been less flexible and open still than was the case back in the sixties and seventies. There are now a number of different RC offices in Brussels with which the CSC/CEC (and earlier EECCS and AOES) are working and have worked: besides the Foyer Catholique and OCIPE, there is the Dominican Centre with Ignace Berten where the co-operation has always been particularly fruitful and open; and then in 1980 the Bishops' Conferences of the EU set up their own office, COMECE (Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community). This office increasingly became the official

partner in action for EECCS in the nineties, and subsequently CSC/CEC, especially from 1983 under its General Secretary Noël Treanor. From now on many meetings were prepared together – particularly the official level encounters with the European institutions. And although in many instances they are expected to work together – or if acting unilaterally keep the other informed – this is by no means always the case and quite some friction results.

Another aspect which needs to be borne in mind – if not in the forefront at least more or less consciously – in this context is the place and repute of the Church, and particularly the Catholic Church in Europe (and particularly Western Europe) – and the effect that this will have had even if only indirectly on the course of events during these years. In France – where 42% of the population are Catholic – and more directly because apparent on a day-to-day basis, in Belgium, there was strict separation of Church and State; the EEC institutions were largely modelled on the French system from the outset; and indeed even several generations later, in the nineties and early years of this century, a strong anti-clericalism could be sensed in the European civil service. There were – are - of course partisan lobbies – including incidentally a very strong but not publicly acknowledged Jewish (Lubbovitch) lobby – and one answer to the question, why is there not a regular multi-faith approach to the European institutions (as was tried for a short period for example with the "Soul for Europe" initiative), might well be that there is no "need" for that when the Christian (by which largely understand RC) lobby is so deeply engrained and well maintained (not only through the official instances mentioned in the previous paragraph but by many other NGOs, lobby groups and agencies – to say nothing of more informal Opus Dei contacts within the institutions themselves).

In certain circumstances either within the European Institutions (as when Jacques Delors took care to involve the Humanists in "Une Ame pour l'Europe" – without which, according to Jérôme Vignon, the very

French Cellule de Prospective would never have cautioned the operation) or within Belgian circles, this mistrust or downright dislike made itself clearly felt. Marc was aware of it for example when working on the Southern Africa issue with Paulette Pierson-Mathys in the seventies: she was prepared to give no credence whatsoever to the value of the role of the Churches in South Africa in the anti-apartheid struggle at the time, intelligent and open and well-informed though she was. More recently he took part in a Belgian radio broadcast with the MEP Véronique de Keyser on behalf of the CSC/CEC (which since Marc's departure in 1999 was for quite some time somewhat handicapped by having no French-speakers on its executive staff) where there was stiff and outright criticism of an apparently blatant Catholic presence in the current European Parliament.

As a Protestant however Marc came across fewer problems. As described earlier, he certainly did not patrol the corridors of the Berlaymont in a dog collar and his conviction was that the Churches he served would be listened to for the value of their informed message on the subject matter under discussion: it was vital to show that they knew as much as their opposite numbers in the European Commission about the ins and outs of the issue and were not coming in with some kind of airy fairy moral gloss and a lot of jargon. More will be said about this in the next chapter. It will already have been evident that the fact that Commission President Jean Rey was a Protestant was crucial at the time of the setting up of the Ecumenical Centre. Subsequent Commission Presidents have almost all been explicitly Catholic. And when the time came for the Commission to appoint a staff member to have particular responsibility for relations with religious communities – whether Marc Luyckx (former JTF secretary) and Jérôme Vignon in Jacques Delors' Cellule de Prospective, and then Thomas Jansen, or Umberto Stefani, Mme Daniela de Napoli and others in the President's Cabinet, and more

recently Michael Weninger and Jorg Cesar das Neves – they have been RC to a (wo)man. Just an observation![36]

> *M Stefani was a lovely man but had probably been given the job of relating to Churches – under President Malfatti – to see him through to retirement: this job had not existed before. I went to see him with John Arnold. His successor was Daniela de Napoli who had a special interest in human rights and worked closely with the Papal Nuncio in Brussels, but none of these people could understand the Protestant reality: for them (especially the Italians among them) Churches meant Catholic Bishops!*

… and with the Orthodox

The situation for the Orthodox is somewhat different – not least because of the breach between the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Istanbul and the Greek Orthodox Church – to say nothing of the Russian Orthodox Church which is perhaps of less relevance here as Russia is not an EU member state but it does belong to the Council of Europe; the Moscow Patriarchate is in principle a member of CEC (although its active participation is currently suspended). The Church of Greece was brought into EECCS at the time of Greece's entry into the EEC (1980) but its membership was not managed successfully: they never got to the stage of taking more active responsibility in, for example, the Executive Committee, as both it and the Ecumenical Patriarchate have done in CEC governance structures. Each of these Orthodox bodies now has separate offices in Brussels besides being involved with CSC/CEC work. The small Ecumenical Patriarchate and Greek Orthodox Church offices are not the main subject of this paper: the cultural context of

[36] In 2012, a woman and a Lutheran (with Anglican sympathies) was appointed to this post of BEPA's Adviser for Dialogue with Religions, Churches and Communities of conviction, in the person of Katharina von Schnurbein.

these Churches however, set against the history of the 20th century and before, is a fascinating question in itself with relation to involvement in Church and Society issues in today's EU (as already touched on pp. 35-36).

> *When I try to put myself into the shoes of Jean Fischer as General Secretary of the CEC in the eighties, I can see that his prior concern was not Protestant Churches, which were minorities in Eastern Europe for the most part, but the Orthodox. I even remember him going to Belgrade with a CEC delegation during the Balkan War and manifesting support for the Serbian Orthodox against the Croats. The Orthodox Churches had been members of the CEC from the very beginning – and had then become members of the WCC in 1961 under Philip Potter: they no doubt saw this as one way of having contact with the West and the rest of the world.*

8

RELATIONS WITH THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY INSTITUTIONS

There are two aspects to this question – one being the personal contact, man to man, Marc and his colleagues with fonctionnaires; the other being the relation between one institution and another, Ecumenical Centre and later Commission and European Commission (and subsequently other Institutions).

In the early days as mentioned before, Marc found no opposition to his wandering the corridors of the Berlaymont and knocking on doors: on the contrary, a Protestant pastor not masquerading in any kind of clerical dress was a rather intriguing phenomenon for many brought up in a Catholic setting, as will have been the case for the majority in those days of six member states; especially if one is not coming from an established State Church. And in return, someone like Helmut von Verschuer had apparently little difficulty in persuading his superiors of the importance of taking time to attend meetings in the Centre or arranging meetings of the Ecumenical Commission in the Berlaymont (with a full deployment of Commission interpreters). It should be remembered that in these relatively early days "Europe" was a project which was not just a job but a matter of conviction, a commitment to an idea: many of those working in the institutions had been involved in the Resistance during the war, and it gave young Germans the chance to "come back into the fold". There was at this stage no *a priori* status for

dialogue with religious groups – everything was new and experimental and it could well have been that Helmut's immediate boss thought it was a good idea for him personally to have this involvement, and for the European Commission in this way to have an inkling of what was going on. On the Catholic side things may well have been more out in the open – indeed many quite high profile Catholic civil servants were prominently active in groups like "Vie Nouvelle" (cf. p. 37) and others from the outset.

One of the first tasks had rather been to put aside any kind of prejudices in the minds of civil servants about why one was seeking to enter into dialogue: this was not mission, and it was not just nice banalities of the kind "we are against any form of racism". The only way to gain respect was to prove through the quality of work, backed by expertise of the highest level, that the Churches had something important to say and which had to be heard. This was not done overnight – and of course having a person such as Helmut von Verschuer as President of the Board of the Ecumenical Centre, given his senior position in the Commission, was not a negligible factor when it came to discussing agriculture or rural and hill farming or even trade in agricultural products with third countries. Helmut was by no means an isolated phenomenon – even though an exceptional figure from the beginning – and the commitment of such individuals "on the inside" was all-important in that process of "making a difference" which is however so difficult to measure when looking back. Marc was conscious that in every person he met in the Commission – as in all professions – there was the man or woman as well as the professional, and it was a case of creating the conditions where the balance could be fruitful in both directions – in the spirit of being "as shrewd as serpents and as simple as doves"……

> *I remember a group of Chilean refugees who had arrived in Brussels shortly after the Pinochet coup, so probably around 1975/6. They wanted to make their case to someone in the European Commission and suddenly there they were, occupying the Lieu de Recueillement (Prayer Centre) in the Berlaymont and moreover, on hunger strike! I was contacted – probably as a result of earlier contacts I had had through the Maison d'Amérique Latine in Brussels and I managed to phone Elias Verploeg – the AOES Treasurer who worked in the personnel department of the Commission, and persuade him to stop the police being called. And Verploeg reacted constructively and allowed them to stay the 24 hours they wanted – mattresses and all! – and then they gave a press conference and left peacefully!*

The Ecumenical Centre proved also to be a useful resource to the Commission on more than one occasion. In the late seventies, during the time of apartheid in South Africa, when the Commission's DG I (Trade and External Relations) maintained strong trade links with South Africa at the same time as its DG VIII (Development Co-operation) was trying to find ways to support the liberation movements in southern Africa and particularly Namibia, it was in 23 Av. d'Auderghem that top DG VIII officials met representatives of the SWAPO in exile for the first time. And when at a much later date (1998/9) the Commission was arranging a conference with ACP countries in the context of the Cotoniou agreements (which succeeded the Lomé Convention), the Commission suggested that the Ecumenical Centre be co-organiser and assist with bringing delegates from those countries (while the Commission paid the bills): through the CETA – Conférence des Églises de toute l'Afrique – it was possible to identify good partners within civil society, whereas the European Commission alone would have had to rely on names put forward from the various national administrations by the governments. Thomas Jansen – with whom a close and mutually

trusting working relationship had developed during co-organisation of meetings with Jacques Delors' FSU - sought the Centre's help with all the visa and travel arrangements which were extremely complex; the meeting took place in the offices of the EPP party.

> *I remember one meeting with the ACP countries when I found myself talking to the Cameroon Ambassador, and risked asking him why there were no trades union representatives in his delegation, as one of the major issues being tackled at the time was how to build up civil society in these newly democratic countries, and encourage dialogue with the social partners. And with a gleaming smile he replied, "Oh, I represent the trades unions too!"*

In the sixties, there was no Directorate General within the European Commission for Press and Information – just a small office, which however was run by Jacques René Rabier – later to be President of the Foyer Catholique. Rabier subsequently explained why this was: the member states had wanted to keep their own hold on what was published so as to be able to filter and angle it according to the national situation, the result being however that there was no possibility of controlling the quality and balance of information given. In this situation however the Churches had an interesting potential position – in so far as they were non-partisan (although in the Ecumenical Centre, critically positive) and had access to many different levels and groups in society in the different member states, reaching out to a very broad spectrum of public opinion. This was something Delors was to come to realise too (see below). The people on the Churches' side had to be experts in the field as well as bringing the additional dimension and perspective of their faith; moreover they represented a diversity from different countries which political and practical constraints often prevented civil servants from encountering: such was the case of a

senior woman in DG Transport who through EECCS met a delegation of Austrian farmers worried about the effect on their pastures of new roads planned over the Alps; another instance Marc recalls was of Kees Nieuwerth talking with people from DG VI (Agriculture) about the high suicide rate among farmers in Holland due to the scarcity of land and rising debts. These sorts of encounters painted a more nuanced picture from what the civil servants were getting from mere statistics, Eurostat. It resulted in a degree of complicity between the two "sides" and also proved to be an opportunity for them to share their points of view in a more personal capacity than encounters with official delegations or more self-interested lobby groups permitted.

Although the Ecumenical Centre made a point of *not* looking to the European Commission for financial support, in order to maintain sufficient critical distance, it did receive together with the Foyer Catholique a very small annual grant for running the more "pastoral" activities for civil servants such as lunchtime lectures and the prayer centre, and for many years the meetings of the Commission of Churches were held in Commission meeting rooms with interpreters provided which was a major mark of support – but did have the disadvantage that certain civil servants (but by no means all)[37] would speak and think less freely on their home ground, and also be less inclined to stay to listen and discuss after delivering their piece. This was a major problem in the first phase of the Dialogue Meetings, where senior civil servants would deliver a speech, and then leave the Church representatives to talk about it among themselves, with only the FSU staff member remaining to

[37] There were notable exceptions: Marc recalls particularly a meeting with the MEP Bourlanges who spent a whole day discussing with EECCS; and indeed any degree of dialogue was considered better than none. Christian Anz, member of the AOES Board, was another particularly open fonctionnaire. This was a good illustration of Max Weber's thesis of the "éthique de responsabilité" versus the "éthique de conviction" – the distinction has to be made, there is a place for moral reflexion and a place for decision-making, one cannot replace the other, neither can one be separated from the other.

represent the Commission. This was subsequently changed: Church delegates would be the first to speak so that EU officials had to listen before giving their own speech.[38]

> *This financial independence was crucial in our view. In due course all sorts of Church bodies arrived in Brussels and set up offices: Diakonisches Werk from Germany was one, and they wanted to co-operate with us in our dialogue with the Commission on social policy. But Eurodiaconia receives a very substantial part of its budget in the form of subsidies for different projects from the Commission – and therefore their line cannot be as independent and critical as ours could. It was also important in the early days when we had to try to defend ourselves in the ecumenical field vis-à-vis the pre-1989 CEC (which tended to discount anything relating to the EEC as corrupted by capitalist imperialism) to be able to say that we were not being paid by the EEC.*

In this as in other areas though, everything was set to evolve. A first change took place with the first enlargement to include Denmark, Britain and Ireland (1973). The whole ethos of work in the European institutions had hitherto been almost entirely dominated by the French civil service tradition (reflected too in the *lingua franca* at the time). The British had none of the hang-ups of laïcité and to have clerics wandering the corridors – even in dog collars! – seemed perfectly normal. Religion was part of all sectors of life including the public domain.

Another change came with the arrival in 1985 of Jacques Delors as President. An avowed Catholic himself, he was of course French and respected the laïc tradition within the Commission. He nonetheless

[38] For a detailed analysis and critique of the Dialogue meetings between the Churches and the European Commission from 1990 – 2014 see survey by Laurens Hogebrink (in preparation).

proceeded to set up his Cellule de Prospective or Forward Studies Unit – in which he wanted to encourage creative thinkers from all walks of life to contribute to giving Europe a real heart and soul. When this was set up, Riccardo Petrella (a leading light in the Foyer Catholique) who had worked in the FAST Programme (science and technology – see p. 126) and has more recently launched the World Water Contract, proposed that one of his staff members be transferred to work in the CdeP and this was Marc Luyckx. Marc Luyckx, a former priest, had headed the Joint Task Force/EECOD in the Ecumenical Centre before landing a job in the European Commission, and it was he who was then to encourage Jacques Delors in the context of the CdeP to foster the dialogue with communities of faith and conviction out of which the Soul for Europe initiative was to emerge. Jacques Delors had been invited to speak at the annual Conference of French Catholic Bishops in Lourdes and had been very disappointed to note the total lack of information or even interest amongst them for what was going on at European level. (At this time, in the mid-eighties, COMECE had barely got going and there was really only OCIPE providing information and opportunities for dialogue, an office as small and thinly manned as the Ecumenical Centre). Delors came back from Lourdes realising that public opinion was not keeping pace with developments in Europe and that this was potentially putting the future of the European project at risk – hence his new initiative in an effort to give people "a sense of belonging to Europe", ownership, and he used a phrase previously used by the founding father Jean Monnet, a soul.

Here the meeting with Church leaders on 5 November 1990 was a watershed.

From 1991 on, bi-annual meetings started to take place between official representatives of the Churches and Councils of Churches, and representatives of the Commission and also other European institutions, especially the Council of Ministers and members of the European

Parliament. These were organised by the Forward Studies Unit (Cellule de Prospective) in the European Commission in close co-operation with EECCS and (from 1995 on) with COMECE. The programme would be agreed after discussion between all three, with the formal invitations often emanating from the FSU, and all three bodies would then select participants and speakers from within their own circles. The FSU also provided the facilities. Some Churches would have liked these meetings to be formalised in some way – but that was premature for the European Commission: this was new ground. Nonetheless Marc alerted in a paper (April 1994) that these meetings had more significance than at first sight in terms of Community as distinct from purely national jurisdiction. They were still rather unsatisfactory on both sides – even today, in some meetings, neither has the feeling that they are being fully heard by the other. The backcloth to the agenda for the 8 meetings held between 1991 and 1995 was the prospective enlargement of the EEC to countries of Central and Eastern Europe, Political Union and the many issues arising for both Churches and the Commission, not least unemployment.

The paper referred to in the previous paragraph was called "Churches in search of a model for relating to European institutions. An example: dialogue with the FSU of the Commission of the European Communities."

> In November 1990, a first meeting took place between leaders of Churches/Councils of Churches in the Ecumenical Commission and the Commission of the European Community. In the wake of this meeting, these Church leaders had expressed joy and surprise at the obvious concern the European Commission displayed to dispel the purely technocratic image that might be current and to pay more attention to the ethical dimension of various policy issues it was handling. The FSU – which works directly with the office of the President of the European Commission – had therefore at the explicit request of the President in this case invited the Churches to regular dialogue meetings, timed and

structured to enable both sides to exchange views just before the European Council meetings that concluded each six-monthly Presidency, and covering the subjects chiefly at stake. Four such meetings have so far taken place – and a fifth is in preparation. While it is premature to draw any conclusions[39], some observations can be made.

1 These meetings are relatively informal: some members of EECCS would actually prefer a more official structure (a view often reflecting their own national situation). The Commission sees that as premature: in the history of the EEC everything is sui generis, new, exploratory, pioneering – and the result of gradual experimental processes. Nonetheless the Churches need to watch with vigilance any pattern which might be emerging for relations between Churches and public authorities, transfer of competences to other levels, standardisation, etc.

2 The impact of these encounters is hard to evaluate – although there already appears to be a degree of disappointment on both sides (that the European side is not being adequately transmitted to the national Churches; that the Churches' views may not be having any impact on the Commission's work). It has to be remembered however that significant advocacy work takes place between Church experts and people in the different institutions long before decisions are reached at Council level. The style of operating this "dialogue" has also had to be modified: long statements of positions already worked out and defined on either side have given way to short introductions followed by a real exchange; the subjects are known in advance and appropriate Church representatives meet the day before to prepare this exchange. A degree of understanding is required that the EEC suddenly found itself in 1991 (when these meetings were launched) re-situated in a Europe that could not have been predicted, with a Single European Act leading up to the

[39] Laurens Hogebrink has subsequently made a detailed study of these meetings in a work to be published, as mentioned a few pages previously

Treaty of Maastricht, culminations of the previous process of the Europe of 15 working together, and now applicable potentially across Central and Eastern Europe.

3 Each dialogue meeting had its salient themes, but the Churches increasingly saw their role to put their finger on the weak spots and highlight them:

- The democratic deficit and participation by all citizens; the importance of the regions of Europe; how will relations with countries in C/E Europe develop – can a rift between a Latin Europe and a Slav Europe be avoided?; there is no European policy on migration
- The reform of the CAP (and a member of the Council of Ministers took part in this dialogue meeting for the first time; the EECCS input draws on the work of the working group on agriculture – see below pp. 216ff); the relation between the model of economic growth and the plight of the biosphere. The Commission representatives seem conscious of the fact that preservation of the environment has to be built into macro-economic growth policies
- Will the iron curtain be replaced by one of silver? Does the urgency to bring the countries of C/E Europe into the EEC fold hide a drive to replace any "Community" by nothing more than a free-trade area? A diplomat involved in the meetings of European Political Co-operation (linked to the Council of Ministers) attended this meeting, and a discussion took place on the difference between the concept of *peace* underlying the European construction project and that of *security*, a more traditional one, featured in the Maastricht Treaty.
- The crisis of democracy demonstrated by the Danish and French referenda: the gulf between politicians and citizens – how should one read the current suspicion, rejection, indifference to politics? What is the link with increasing social and economic marginalisation and rotting of the very fabric holding society together?

> The Churches have to be aware here that their role is shaky: is their role as guardians of public morality upheld and credible in a society which is cracking? Can they speak out in debates such as these or should they be observing from the side-lines? For what society do they stand?
>
> Marc's conclusion was that they should not stand back – but engage as fully as possible with public authorities on occasions offered such as these. What kind of paradigm does this provide?
> Here is the Commission – a point at which problems arising in our society are picked up and handled; and a place where policies affecting all sectors and levels of our society are thought out. And here are the Churches – actually invited as partners to dialogue, criticise, relate on a regular basis: a model which could well serve as a crucible for relations with public authorities and international institutions in the modern age.

EECCS produced a position paper on agriculture and the future of rural society leading to a Dialogue Meeting in November 1991 where it was discussed with officials from the Commission's DG I, with the Special Committee on Agriculture in the Council of Ministers and FSU staff. (Political Union was the other topic of this Dialogue Meeting.) This time, there were no long speeches: for both topics, Marc had prepared papers with questions. There was a feeling on this occasion that more dialogue was taking place than had ever happened before. These meetings organised together with the FSU were of great importance for EECCS, not just in terms of content but also in themselves as a possible way of establishing a new type of Church-State relations.

The FSU needed help – but at the same time was intimating that this partnership should be with all the Churches – and if possible all religions together.

Was there alongside all this – or rather an unseen but strong undercurrent – a strong Masonic presence in the Commission? (Freemasonry in the Latin countries tending to be of a strongly anti-clerical flavour unlike the Nordic style, generally speaking). That is another story – which may or may not one day be told. Suffice it to say that Marc was not aware of it at any time. (Jérôme Vignon was to say when the publication to mark Keith Jenkins' departure from CSC/CEC was being prepared, that the Soul for Initiative would never have gained approval within the FSU if the Humanists at any rate had not been included around the table.)

This new move by the Commission President himself to include religious (and secular) communities in the process (through the different forms of co-operation and dialoguing at different levels and in different groups managed by the FSU) was in many ways welcome – the recognition of partnership in dialogue which the Churches had been seeking for some time to acquire and here was a form of institutionalisation. It also however had its drawbacks. Whereas in earlier days Marc could just pick up the phone and dial someone working in agriculture or regional policy or social affairs and ask for an appointment, or request a speaker for a meeting, things now became more formalised.

> *This was the price we paid for gaining formal recognition – institution to institution and no longer person to person, and "representative" of something, no longer speaking freely. To some extent we had to follow in the wake of what the RC Church was already doing. It was more straightforward this way for the Commission – but not necessarily more productive in terms of quality and content and outreach of discussion. What used to*

> *happen was that those on each side went away with ideas for a new way to tackle issues, comforted and reinforced by the knowledge that there were others "on the other side" thinking along similar lines and that there could well prove to be a coalescence of thought and action in the future. We rather reckoned with the fact – which we knew from personal contact to be the case – that there were many working in the Institutions who were somewhat frustrated as the structures prevented their ideas and energies being taken forward – or even prevented them from voicing them at all. This was the huge potential which AOES represented – which was no longer exploited, or at least understood at the time it was wound up.*

A specific person was nominated in the President's Cabinet through whom these contacts were to be channelled (/controlled?), and there was also a desk within the Cellule de Prospective for such matters. In those earlier days too the Board of the Ecumenical Centre or AOES played an important part: the Board members were for the most part civil servants in the different institutions (mostly the Commission) and were the well placed eyes and ears of what was going on. Subtle shifts as for example decision making power from the Council of Ministers to the European Councils or summits (not institutions as such) were detected and pointed out by those working close to these centres of power in a way that the Churches back in the member states would not have been aware of – and the implications could then be discussed, also with some of the senior people close to those seats of power. The AOES was closed down in 1999 when a new Church of Scotland staff member in the CSC/CEC office felt its current President, Grant Lawrence was unable to manage it adequately alongside his very demanding day job in the Commission (something which Helmut von Verschuer had succeeded doing in a quite exceptional way) and failed to understand the historical importance of this body and its potential use given the right people on board.

Nevertheless if the person appointed in more recent times was open and committed to the potential work with religious communities, this could prove very fruitful. Marc recalls a meeting with Martine Reichert who had been appointed to maintain dialogue with the Churches in President Santer's cabinet, and where the conversation hinged on trade with Israel and export of produce from the settlements on Palestinian territory, and where Martine simply rolled her eyes over in the direction of the Council of Ministers building on the other side of Rond-Point Schuman and without being more explicit said merely – that's where the blockage lies and we can do nothing from here. The contact with Thomas Jansen when he was in the Cellule de Prospective was particularly fruitful. But then Prodi succeeded Santer, most of what Delors had set up was swept aside almost as a matter of principle, Thomas Jansen's contract was terminated – though fortunately he continued the good work as the left hand man of the Secretary General of the EcoSoc providing a platform for NGOs and religious communities to feed into the Convention which led to the drafting of the Constitution; the contact with his successors has been different.

On the purely institutional side, the novelty was one of institutions relating to institutions transnationally – as distinct from on an inter-state basis (as with the Council of Europe); and also of dealing with the ongoing tension between the different European Institutions (Commission, Council of Ministers, European Parliament, European Economic and Social Committee) – each requiring a different approach according to the moment and the topic. Initially the Churches' staff was too weak to be able to take on relations to the Parliament: this came more to the fore once the Strasbourg office was opened; and relations with the Economic and Social Committee were particularly significant during the time – more recently – of discussion of the Convention leading to the Constitution, when the EcoSoc provided a civil society platform (not coincidentally the initiative of Thomas Jansen, formerly of

the Cellule de Prospective) – in which the faith communities were included. At the time of writing, the European Commission is in rather a back seat relative to the other Institutions – very different from the 1960s – another instance of how the Churches need to observe gauge and constantly adapt. It is the European Council which is most to the fore at present – not envisaged at all in the original Treaties – and the trend could be a reversal to re-nationalisation where the individual Member States have more say again (which gives huge importance to the bigger states over against the smaller ones), and thus perhaps more to national Church/State relations over against a transnational body like the CEC?[40] The story will be continued! The relationship between the Presidents – Barroso and van Rompuy in the Commission which has just ended its term – was far from clear either: Delors has already said it won't work; it sometimes feels that there is no vision behind what is taking place, and that makes it all the more difficult for the Churches to know how to react – let alone give a lead and a vision either nationally or at European level.

[40] The formalisation of "open, transparent and dialogue" with i.a. Churches, given a legal basis in Art. 17.3 of the Lisbon Treaty for the first time, is potentially significant for future work if it can be implemented in a satisfactory way.

9

PARTICULAR TOPICS COVERED IN THE WORK

9.1 Agriculture

Despite the major importance of agriculture in the palette of EC policy areas from the outset, it is perhaps surprising that this subject was not a major focus of attention in the Ecumenical Commission early on. When it was decided upon however in 1987 it became immediately apparent that there were some very competent people in Churches in the member states to contribute to reflection on the subject: Herbert Rösener in Germany (Kirche im ländlichen Raum), David Noquet of the Mouvement d'Action Rurale in France, Jesse Sage in England, Jerrie de Hoogh in the Netherlands and others. Prior to that Helmut von Verschuer had led a working group within the AOES bringing together civil servants from the General Directorates for Agriculture and for Regional Policy – such as MM Christian Anz and Georges Rencki.

In a paper written in homage of the contribution made by LKR Herbert Rösener to these discussions, Marc wrote (in 1991):

> We are often asked whether our work through EECCS has actually changed anything inside the European institutions, and it is very hard to say definitively, yes, with a concrete example - also because besides major joint events like conferences, there is the day-to-day contact and

dialogue which is less spectacular but no doubt equally mutually influential and enriching.

When pressed however I most often tell the tale of how the European Commission came to take on board the issue of rural development as an integral part of the Common Agricultural Policy. Here LKR Herbert Rösener from the EKD was a key figure.

The story goes back to the 1980s where a number of European civil servants used to meet in the context of the Ecumenical Association (AOES) – one of them being Helmut von Verschuer who had at the time a senior post in the Commission's Directorate General for Agriculture (DG VI) – and was also the President of the Ecumenical Association. The focus of discussions was not on the well-known facets of the CAP, that "flagship" European policy so often scrutinised critically in the press, but on the role agriculture played for the future of rural society. This question had renewed relevance in the light of the recently developed EEC regional policy and enlargement to include Greece, Spain and Portugal – countries in southern Europe with largely agriculture-based work forces.

The working group had already been set up within AOES – bringing together civil servants involved in social policy, regional policy and agricultural policy: already a first. But in the back of my mind I have to confess to wondering how we were going to convince the Churches that this was an important issue for them. H. Rösener took the initiative to find experts working within the Churches – from Germany, the UK, France, the Netherlands and Portugal. At this stage, the debate was more academic than political: even moving the member states to embrace the idea of supporting hill-farming some years before had required massive efforts. Now however the opportunity was offered through the unlikely insistence of Margaret Thatcher in 1985 that the CAP be reformed, in response to which the Commission produced a Green Paper. The Churches reacted: and at the EECCS General Assembly meeting in

1985, a discussion took place with Commissioner Andriessen. The Churches' reaction focussed on three crucial issues: any reform of the CAP must acknowledge

- The social dimension, at a time of growing unemployment and "new poverty".
- The N/S dimension, agriculture and farmers in the southern hemisphere (an element not touched on in the Green Paper at all).
- The question of the environment.
- And must integrate all three into a new concept of European agriculture.

The Commission issued a second version of its Green Paper shortly after, this time taking into account the dimension of the impact of exports on the world market: already the first sign of some influence from the Churches' position. In the weeks and months that followed, civil servants working within the AOES and the Church experts started working more closely together. The civil servants relished not only the comparative freedom of "thinking outside the office box" but also the opportunity of listening to voices fresh from "the field". The Church experts started to understand what was involved in casting ideas into policies.

By 1990, the Commission's organisation plan featured a new department responsible for rural development. The working group continued to meet even after H. Rösener had to leave in 1988 – further inspired by new members from the wine-growing areas of France and Germany keen to share their finest produce! And culminating in a conference organised by the British members of the group under Jesse Sage in June 1991, bringing together 80 people involved in rural development from across Europe – the first time this had happened in the Protestant Churches in Europe.

> It marks a not untypical – but particularly noteworthy example of the way Churches and European institutions worked fruitfully and sensitively together. While decisions at European level are ultimately taken by the national governments sitting together in the European Council of Ministers, the Commission's role leading up to that moment is crucial and has to be very flexible, developing new strategies and directions in every new context and sector. This also determines the unique role and behaviour of the Churches – very different from what goes on nationally – needing to find flexible and original – pioneering – ways to respond on every occasion, often with considerable rapidity.
>
> In conclusion I note that over the last two years, the Churches' interest in what is being discussed and decided on both in Brussels and in Strasbourg has grown considerably; at the same time the European Commission is looking to establish informal structures that can permit regular dialogue to take place with representatives from the Churches.

So in this first major debate that took place at the EECCS meeting of 24/25 September 1985 with Commissioner Andriessen on the basis of the working paper drafted by AOES on the role of agriculture and the future of rural society, and the very recent European Commission proposal for reform of the CAP contained in the Green Paper, Commissioner Andriessen stated that it was essential that ethical questions be raised in Commission circles – but commented that he could not discover in the AOES paper what were the Churches' motivations for entering the debate. Herbert Rösener responded that the Churches' concern was for man – and especially the weakest, whether in disadvantaged regions or the developing world; also the environment, taking care of creation. Commissioner Andriessen stressed that at the heart of the Green Paper was finding a balance – compatibility – between the maintenance of family farming concerns and the requirements of economic profitability. The problem was going to be especially acute for the new member states such as Portugal

(commented José Leite for the Portuguese Churches) as the changes will be enormous and the rural world moves slowly. There was particular criticism from the Churches during the debate of an inward-looking EEC, and questions over food surpluses. There seemed also to be a lack of longer-term thinking and strategies. The Commissioner commented that in the case of Portugal, its entry into the European Community could be justified on political and historical but certainly not on economic grounds. The Churches could play a major role in helping people to manage change.

The conference referred to in Marc's paper above was held at Hengrave Hall in the UK, and had been much appreciated. Not all the Churches were represented, and it had not managed to formulate a declaration to pass on to the European Commission. However on this occasion, representatives from Eastern Europe were particularly happy to be actively involved – and would in fact have liked more focus on possible reform of the CAP. It was realised that there was a particular need to define the specific role of Churches in rural areas and relations with local politicians.

The European working group met again in Vill near Innsbruck from 2-9 September, 1991. It was abundantly clear that for the different regions in Europe (East, South, West, Nordic) very different issues were arising. The Dialogue Meeting (referred to on p. 209 above) with this topic on the agenda, then took place on 19 November, 1991 with people from the Commission, the Council of Ministers and the Forward Studies Unit of the Commission. The main concerns of the EECCS working group in relation to the CAP were once again

- The third world
- The environment
- The social implications

A representative from the Council of Ministers' Special Committee on Agriculture, Claudio d'Aloya (speaking in a personal capacity) described how unstable was the EEC's agricultural policy, with strategies changing every six months in relation to different member states' home policies: whereas the Commission had prepared studies and policies on integrated rural policy, the Council of Ministers had given these no special attention – even for the five new German Länder: the Council was reluctant to take any directive decisions; the policy if any was of "liberal individualism". Particularly up for discussion here were the so-called "MacSharry proposals" which were intended to remedy the huge problem of social injustice whereby 70% of the subsidies were going to just 10% of the richest farmers. The Commission's intentions here were

- To raise the subsidies to small farmers
- To eliminate excessive profits of the big farmers
- To reduce significantly the overall cost of the CAP
- To reduce dumping in the Third World.

The real conflict – inconsistencies – was between the drive of EC trade policy (more competitive agricultural sales outside the EC) and the call to produce in a more ecologically friendly fashion and maintain farms in a way to sustain rural life and landscape (tending to increase unit costs). There appeared to be a clear inconsistency between EC internal (social-democratic) and external (neo-liberal) policy. Basically the North was exporting the crisis to the Third World – including its toxic waste. Moreover, home production had to be cut if EC markets were to be opened up for increased third world (and Eastern European) production.

The porte-parole of Commissioner Andriessen at this meeting – Mr Waechter – insisted that environmental issues were now central, integral to all strategies, obligatory. The idea of compensating farmers for

producing less was seen as revolutionary in 1986: by now (1991) it was accepted as necessary. The debate also focussed on the relation between creation and nature: how to manage the covenant between mankind and creation so that humanity could survive while behaving responsibly, and at what level should this management be defined? What kind of government intervention is required to change individual behaviour? It was felt in the EC institutions – said Jérôme Vignon from the FSU – that the principle of subsidiarity could not work in ecological matters.

The gradual change of mentalities and behaviour required a multifaceted approach, a "pédagogie du changement". It involved for example discussions in a currently ongoing Commission seminar bringing together ten different DGs, said Vignon. The same could be achieved with a diversity of religious communities sharing views on commonly held values and theological traditions.

9.2 Development Aid

The question of EC development policy was immediately highlighted at the Roehampton Conference in 1974 as requiring priority attention from the Churches – and as has already been mentioned, this was taken on by Protestants and Catholics together in the Joint Task Force, housed in the Ecumenical Centre – and which later developed into EECOD and was then replaced by APRODEV (which is a collectivity of WCC-linked Europe-based, purely non-Catholic development NGOs led until early 2014 by Rob van Drimmelen and housed in the adjacent building in Bld. Charlemagne). This progression towards becoming in legal terms an NGO was necessary both in terms of recognition on the Brussels European lobby scene and for funding purposes – for agencies like Justitia et Pax and in Belgium, Broederlijk Delen were operating at this kind of level. This evolution marked also a move from mere monitoring of policy to development action in the field.

Relations with DG VIII were good from the start – with some key people working in the Commission such as Jaap Houtman (who succeeded Helmut von Verschuer as President of the AOES), John Scott, Maurice Foley, Bernard Ryelandt, Dieter Frisch and others sympathetically inclined to Church involvement in policy making.

> *I remember one occasion when I had been with Jean Weydert in Strasbourg for some kind of meeting on development questions at which the Commissioner spoke – Claude Cheysson at the time (between 1973 and 1981). And at the end of the meeting he said to me, I'm going back to Brussels now, would you like a lift? – in his plane, as he was returning to Brussels and flying straight out again to somewhere in Africa. So I went with him! He did not chat – busy going through papers for the whole journey and sorting things out with his secretary. The next time I saw him was after the Beyers Naudé affair – in Cheysson's office with Willy De Clercq. I don't know if Cheysson had any particular religious affiliation but it was the typical instance where one was appreciated and respected as an equal partner on the work scene, and that was what we were aiming for.*

During the time that Marc was on sabbatical in Washington (1988/9), the JTF helped to organise an EEC-ACP conference. Marc recalls that the ACP participants came on from this to Washington and he was able to persuade the Faith and Economic Justice team in the National Council of Churches in the USA, of which Marc was a member, to organise a meeting with the IMF – in the course of which the entire delegation was received by its General Director Michel Camdessus.

9.3 South(ern) Africa

This was not *a priori* a matter for the Ecumenical Centre/Commission to work on as it was not explicitly a field of EEC policy: during the time of apartheid the European Commission had trade relations with South Africa as well as with many other countries – for which Commissioner Christopher Soames was responsible. However it was a matter that was worked on intensively by ERE from the outset, and Marc had become involved in the subject in this way, and also through his membership of the Belgian group to combat racism and apartheid with Paulette Pierson-Mathys. It was also a matter of concern in many Churches, and in the WCC (Programme to Combat Racism with Baldwin Sjollema).

In September 1976, a delegation from the SWAPO (South-West African People's Organisation – the Namibian liberation movement) visited the Ecumenical Centre and a meeting was organised with Commissioner Cheysson (see p. 66). Marc then recalls a Commission of Churches meeting in October of that year, when Paul Oestreicher spoke vehemently about the uprisings in Soweto of the previous June, and subsequently a discussion was arranged with Christopher Soames, as Marc insisted that that was where the resistance lay at European level, politically, and where the money and trade potential lay. At that same meeting the CCEC learned that Beyers Naudé had been arrested, and a letter was sent in protest to the Belgian Embassy in S. Africa.

Another visit was organised for a delegation of South African trade unionists. Gradually as working relations with Commission officials in DG VIII (Development Co-operation) became closer and more trusting it transpired that the matter was being watched closely, whatever the official policy of trade relations "as normal" – and even if Claude Cheysson himself did not put that card on the table, his assistant Bernard Ryelandt was fully in the know and a particularly trusted official who then worked well with the Ecumenical Centre was John Scott.

> *I remember a phone call out of the blue from John Scott, adviser to the Director General of DG VIII Maurice Foley, saying, we need to know what is happening in South-West Africa (Namibia) and have no direct sources of information: can you brief us? This had doubtless come to us because of our links with the WCC which at that stage was publicly (and controversially) supporting the African liberation movements and the anti-apartheid struggle. When however a SWAPO delegation actually arrived in Brussels in September 1976, and asked me to arrange for them to meet Cheysson, the Commissioner agreed but only on condition the meeting took place at the Ecumenical Centre – which it did.*

It has to be said however that this was one aspect of the work – and the fact that until the seventies (with the 1976 Soweto uprising) it was unclear whether Marc was undertaking it as Director of the Ecumenical Centre or in a personal capacity - which no doubt cost him some favour in some Churches, particularly in Germany where any unpopular stance taken by the Churches had an immediate effect on who was willing to pay their church tax.

However, the AOES document on Relationships between the EEC and South/Southern Africa was extremely significant in the same way as that on Peace and Security (1983), insofar as it highlighted the limited possibilities for action in these spheres on the part of the European Commission, and member states were being called upon to act.

The AOES worked on the issue of relations between the European and South(ern) Africa at the request of the Council of Churches of the Netherlands, under Jaap Houtman, and a document was produced for the EECCS meeting in January 1985 (using material prepared by ERE). At this meeting a substantial debate took place with Maurice Foley, a former British MP and for the past ten years responsible for relations with South(ern) Africa in DG VIII (development co-operation) of the

European Commission. Maurice Foley stated that the time was coming when the European Community would have to make a clear choice as to which side it was on. An annex of the Lomé III Convention expressly condemned apartheid – but the move had not yet been made to stop investing in South Africa and invest rather in neighbouring countries. Officials in the trade policy sector (DG I) were not yet ready to take this step, nor would some Churches (EKD) support economic sanctions.

On 13 June 1985, amid a violently deteriorating political situation in South Africa, EECCS Chair Pierre Chrétien led a delegation of Revd and Mrs Beyers Naudé, Antoinette Panhuis and Marc Lenders to talk to Willy de Clercq, Commissioner responsible for External Relations in the European Commission – with whom Beyers Naudé started off speaking Flemish/Afrikaans before going into French when they went on to see Claude Cheysson: a significant and symbolic moment of cultural encounter. It was agreed at this meeting that EECCS would from now on forward directly to the European Commission any request stemming from the SACC. It was apparently a determining factor in the stance then adopted by the European Commission in July of that year.

As a result of this, a resolution was put by Paul Oestreicher to the Ecumenical Commission at the 25/6 September 1985 meeting, sparked by a specific request from the SACC for a response. The first part was directed to political institutions "indicating that economic sanctions are one of the few means left to dismantle apartheid without violence". The second part controversially called on Churches, in solidarity with Churches in South Africa, to address those responsible for finances in the Churches and also individual Christians. These latter points were to put the EKD representatives (Joachim Gaertner and Klaus Kremkau) in a particularly awkward position as the discussion was still raging back home between the Rat of the EKD and the Frauenarbeit section over boycotts. A call was made above all to demonstrate solidarity with Christians in South Africa, and a point on conscientious objection was

added. The Resolution was finally voted through with three abstentions on the second part.

A further delegation from S. Africa, led by Beyers Naudé, attended the EECCS Assembly meeting in September 1989.

9.4 Ecology and Economy

A working group was established by EECCS in 1993 in the wake of the first Rio Earth Summit (1992). The working group produced a report in 1995 with the challenging title: "The Dominant Economic Model and Sustainable Development: are they compatible?" The report was to be read as a critical examination of the mid-term evaluation of the Fifth European Community Programme of Policy and Action in relation to Environment and Sustainable Development. Helmut von Verschuer – by then retired from the European Commission and living back at home in Hessen, Germany – was the rapporteur.
The specific aims of the working group were:

- To elaborate the concept of sustainable development from an ecumenical perspective
- To enter into dialogue with the EU institutions on the need for sustainable development
- To contribute to the ecumenical dialogue taking place on sustainable development

This report was well received by the European Commission and became the basis of several dialogues with senior civil servants of the Commission and of the Environmental Committee of the European Parliament.

Later, the European Commission representatives asked EECCS to enlarge upon the group's work by including the consequences for social and labour policies from the angle of sustainable development.

A second report was published in 1999, after a consultation held in 1998 in Herrenhalb (Germany). Kees Nieuwerth was by now moderator and the group had been renamed ECO/3 (Ecology, Economy and Social Issues). It bore the title "Sustainable development and the market economy", with the subtitle "Integrating environment in economic and employment policies".

> *At this time – the beginning of the nineties - there was a Scottish Labour MEP who was already into his second mandate, a geography teacher back home and member of the EP Environment Commission: Ken Collins. At the time Jacques Delors was preparing his famous "Livre Blanc" (white paper) on Employment – it was to be the definitive document on the subject, the Bible if you like. We in the Ecumenical Commission worked intensively on this White Paper while it was still in draft form, as Jacques Delors eagerly invited feed-back: it was his come-back in the wake of setting up the Single Market to all that Thatcher and Reagan were saying about liberal market operations. This must have been in the late eighties or early nineties, and we mentioned to the MEPs with whom we were working, how important we felt it was that questions of ecology and environment feature in this document – where hitherto there was no mention of them. Then some two or three years later I happened to find myself at a big celebration in the prestigious Conrad Hotel on avenue Louise, to mark Emmanuel Adamakis being elevated to Bishop, and I was seated next to the ex- Greek Commissioner Ianni Paleokrassas – he had just stepped down – who had had the environment portfolio. And I talked to him about the White Paper which had been published by then, saying how odd I found the chapter there about ecology and environment as it really did not seem to "fit" in any kind of organically integrated way, it was just as if it had been added on*

as an afterthought. And the ex-Commissioner then said, well there was this MEP who chaired the EP Environment Commission who came to see me and said I had to make sure there was a chapter in the White Paper, so I went to see Delors who said fine, write it for me, which I did! So that was a splendid tie-up to a chapter which we were involved in and where, as so often, we had no inkling what had been the effect of our work!

9.5 Social Policy, Poverty

Social policy was never central to policy-making at European level for the simple reason that the Member States clung on to it firmly – this was an area where they were directly in touch with their voters and they did not want to relinquish it to a level where pressures felt in other countries might supersede what they deemed most urgent nationally. In earlier times, the Churches' role in this field had always been primordial – charitable care – and then progressively the State developed welfare policies and took over the responsibility.

The earliest signs of any recognition that increased mobility within Europe was having a social impact were reflected in an embryonic EC policy for miners in southern Belgium from Italy – and who subsequently moved back to Italy, where there then arose questions as to pension and other rights including invalidity payments.

One of the first European leaders to highlight the growing inconsistencies between member states' provisions was Jacques Delors, who hoped that pressure from the trades unions would usher in new policies. A programme to combat poverty was introduced, but did not attack the roots of the problem.

On 5th June, 1988 Marc gave the following talk to representatives of a regional Synod of the ERF in Marsillargues (in the south of France),

and the message is as true today almost thirty years later. These matters are becoming increasingly preoccupying in our present times, and the lack of serious measures to address them over against the preponderant importance ascribed to the economic advantages of opening up the borders within Europe, can be seen in the growing social unrest.

> Everyone – and France in particular – seems to be looking ahead to 1992, when the Single European Act will open up a single market of 320 million consumers to potential exporters from elsewhere in an increasingly competitive world. This is a significant step politically, allowing as it does for certain decisions to be taken by majority vote where previously consensus was required; but political to largely economic ends.
>
> But what else does this Common Market represent? 16.3 million unemployed and a growing number of people living in poverty (women, young people, isolated people, immigrants). In its 1975 report, the Commission had recognised the existence of 30 million living in poverty, but since then other factors have contributed to this number now nearing 70 million. The figures don't tell us much about the realities: for there are whole regions that have been hit - in the Ruhr for example, with the collapse of iron and steel production – and thousands put out of work in a single community, many of whom will not find new jobs. In a country like Great Britain, which is said to be emerging from the economic crisis, salaries for the best paid have indeed increased considerably but the percentage of population least paid is much higher and such disparities are repeated in other member states.
>
> Our society is based on the "value" of work – yet there are fewer and fewer jobs and those there are, are often under threat or shared unequally around. Such situations breed unhealthy sentiments of despair and resignation in the population. Certain sectors are particularly vulnerable – minority groups, immigrant workers, farm workers.

Are we sufficiently aware of this or is it largely invisible? How, if at all, are we reacting? Often with great generous gestures – soup kitchens are set up, ATD Quart Monde has prompted a group of European civil servants to launch an anti-poverty drive, the European Commission is allowing its costly agricultural surpluses to be used to help the poor. But all this is downstream and not upstream action. The overarching philosophy of the market economy remains intact: in this era of the "Wealth of Nations", enough wealth will be created for there to be leftovers to feed the poor, and Adam Smith was confident that a natural balance would operate in society between individual self-interest and awareness of our moral, religious and social obligations – in other words, responsibility for the community.

But this is no longer the eighteenth century and the Church is no longer the focal point of the village. The National Front is gaining support, the Communist party losing it, and Mrs Thatcher has declared "there is no such thing as 'society'". The State is there to maintain law and order and the individual is responsible for managing his or her own affairs. This new economic way of thinking has even swallowed up some vital precepts underlying our Christian faith and turned them upside down, allowing theology to legitimise neo-liberalist economic thinking – and the Protestant Churches may be most prone to this tendency. It is largely technological development these days which is enabling the European Community to hold its own on the world economic stage.

However the European Community also has a tradition of social responsibility – noticeably lacking for example in the US or Japan. The European Community indeed boasts of now introducing the structural funds – social, regional and agricultural subsidies – which were not part of the Treaty of Rome and have recently doubled in size, particularly to support the new member states Greece, Spain and Portugal.

But our economic restructuring is not over; and poverty in the cities is growing: our eyes tell us what the statistics do not.

Our member states – our European Community – are part of a world economy. Our export subsidies on European agricultural produce have led to developing countries being unable to develop their own agriculture for home consumption – hence famine – or for export – hence third world debt directly affecting employment in the US.

A further problem lies in the unsynchronised advance of EEC evolution: while economic integration progresses at Community level, political and social measures remain jealously guarded at national level. There is *no European social policy* in real terms. There is a general tendency to weaken social security provision; only four of the twelve member countries have a guaranteed minimum wage. The gaps between the richest and the poorest are growing. Some member states will not even admit that poverty exists. The Council of Ministers has finally allocated 25 million ecus for the four years to come to combat unemployment (30 million people). This compared with 23 billion ecus to subsidise exports of surplus agricultural produce.

This may be an attempt to "cope with" poverty but is a far cry from implementing justice: the Dutch Churches call it allowing a "sub-class" of human beings to emerge – in a European Community which claims to champion respect for human rights?!

This challenges the credibility of our Churches. A Church that doesn't focus on the poor in our midst is not a Church. The Hebrews were the people chosen over against many other "more civilised" nations; the manner of Jesus' birth is significant, as is his repeated action to bring the less advantaged onto centre stage. At Pentecost – and later for the apostle Paul among the Corinthians – the emphasis was on sharing of material goods and of the Holy Communion itself among all equally so none should be in need. Calvin, preaching in the Cathedral of St Pierre on Matthew III, 9-10 stressed how it was God's purpose that

we should be looking out for each other's needs - and not to do so was nothing short of murder.

How are the Churches reacting to growing poverty in Europe? Different campaigns have been launched – by the Anglican Church in Great Britain, the Dutch Churches, the EKD… Near here in Sommières a major meeting of Protestant Social Workers took place in 1986. At European level a group of experts and some involved in this Church activity was recently set up and met in Mülheim. Awareness is growing at least in the Churches' special agencies, even if the vast majority of people in the Churches are still rarely if ever confronted with the stark reality of poverty at the edge of their lives. As Pastor Bonhoeffer said, pacifist though he was, the time comes when we have to take up arms, or at any rate put our foot down and say enough is enough. We have to examine the root causes of what is going on and not just lament or patch up the effects. The Churches need not just to be Samaritans, roadside ambulances, but stand bang in the middle of the crossroads.

We realise we live in a world of interdependency: that means either we let the strongest win or we practice solidarity in recognition that all have the same rights to respect and to dignity. 25 years ago we thought we could sort out the North/South problem and help the developing world "to catch up". This has patently failed. 40 million people a year die from the effects of malnutrition. Charity is not the answer. If the price of raw materials continues to drop and interest rates continue to rise, and we protect our markets more and more, the North will only get richer and the South poorer. The same is now happening within our own countries.

Is it beyond our capacity to change things? The least act that reinstates a single human being into the heart of the community counts for more than it is. And at the same time it banishes despair, fatalistic, pessimistic thinking by reviving hope.

At a political level inequality and injustice breed violence. Our democratic system and institutions will not survive if powerless minorities are not heeded and valued. So any policy which increases division or reinforces exclusion must be rejected.

At the economic level the Churches tend to be more at a loss. However discussion between economists and theologians is on the increase, and the realisation that all material questions have an ethical, even a spiritual side. The Church needs to provide a vision of hope and justice for all: this is what Paul saw as the message of the resurrection.

Today is election day in France. In the US at election time, the Churches work hard to urge all to exercise their right to vote, as most black people for example think there is no point and never do. Our Churches, strengthened by the Gospel, can show that there is hope, there are real choices to be made.

10

EPILOGUE BY MARC LENDERS ONE LONG, HARD LOOK BACK AND SELF-EVALUATION

Introduction

As I take this last look at that part of my life spent in charge of a project endeavouring to work out a model for dialogue between Churches - initially in EECCS and subsequently in CEC - I have taken the lead from Jacques Delors when in February 1992, during a meeting with representatives of the EKD, he warned: “If in the next ten years we haven’t managed to give a soul to Europe, to give it spirituality and meaning, the game will be up.”

These words follow a direct line of thought going back to others Jacques Delors had also uttered two years previously (in November 1990) during a meeting held between a delegation of Protestant and Anglican Church leaders and a delegation from the European Commission, where he wanted to voice his anxiety that some thirty years after its launch, the European Community had not really taken full ownership (*affectio*) of this European project.

During this meeting, Delors made a direct appeal to the Churches to contribute to the soul and heart of Europe. These words “soul” and “spirituality” led to a degree of confusion: some heard this as a direct appeal to Churches. But the confusion abates given the context, when

one recalls that it was Jean Monnet who had used the word "soul", and Jacques Delors was a political figure straight from the French tradition of "laicite" and strict separation between matters of Church and State.

Why the lack of popular appeal?

My first underlying question would be to examine what was this "*desaffectio societatis"* for the European project that Jacques Delors was referring to among Church representatives in 1990?

The causes of such disaffection are many and varied. At the outset, with the six founder members, civil society could see in the reconciliation between France and Germany the guarantee of future peace that could be lasting and stable – even though this reconciliation was not going to happen overnight (as seen in France's rejection of the EDC in 1954). The plan was indeed to build up Europe hand-in-hand with the post-war reconstruction taking place with promises of full employment and a steady increase in living standards, thus carrying with it a broad consensus right across the whole population.

Scalded and set back by the rejection of the EDC, the founding fathers moved more pragmatically taking the line that the goal of political union ("ever closer union between the peoples and the Member States of the European Community") might be brought about by creating a supranational market. (Note that at that time free movement of people applied only to people with jobs, workers.)

This first period of euphoria was brought to an abrupt halt by the first oil crisis of 1973 followed by the neoliberal offensive of Reagan and Thatcher which had a considerable impact on the EEC countries straight away. The White Paper on "Growth, competitivity and employment" launched in 1993 at the instigation of Delors, was at once a form of response to this offensive from overseas and an expression of the European Community's desire to position itself in its own way on

the new stage of globalisation. Relative to the previous "thirty glorious years" however, 1993 saw growth rates starting to fall, unemployment levels rising considerably (from 3 - 10% in ten years) and substantial increases in national public debts in the member states.

Cracks were appearing in the European edifice as a result of tensions deep within the interior design:

- On the one hand the race was on to complete the single market without more ado so that the EC could stand up to outside competition; but in fact this thrust forward would wreak considerable – and lasting – havoc in its wake on the political, economic, socio-political and cultural fronts leaving more and more people high and dry.
- On the other hand none of the succession of Treaties really provided for a proper Community social policy to be worked out in any shape or form. All the Commission could do was launch and finance pilot projects, very limited in scope – such as the one to combat poverty. This was a major lacuna.

It took me some time to understand the reason for this. All the member states after all had some form of social security systems of their own, even if some were more developed than others, and there were the burgeonings of a social policy at European level. When one digs deeper there emerges an underlying problem that explains why this aspect was never properly developed, a problem which has never been confronted right from the time the EEC was first created, and which moreover is bound up integrally with its very goals and objectives.

On the one hand you find those who one way or another, want to emphasise the setting up of a major European market in the expectation that the fruits thereof will drop onto the plates of every single consumer. (Note how the word "consumer" has surreptitiously crept in to replace "citizen".) Nationally, such political leaders held out against developing

a Community social policy as these comprised sensitive issues where they might lose votes from the public.

On the other are those whose eye is still set on a political Europe, much as the founding fathers had in mind. In the current EU they are very much in the minority.

How did it start to wane?

Still it is interesting to speculate what are the reasons behind this loss of influence by those believing in a political Europe.

There could be a number of possible causes:

a) One is of course the almost exclusive focus in the European project, on the economy
b) Another is the way the national media filter the information supplied by the European institutions. Time and again we discovered when groups from the Churches came to visit the Ecumenical Centre how badly these visitors were informed or even misinformed about what was going on within the European institutions, or even how each one functioned and they interacted. It was if the Community world was a world of its own with nothing to do with national politics and decision-making
c) It was also a fact that casting the fundamental motivation behind the founding of the Community into instruments and mechanisms was an almost impossible task. This was how the early years of the European project were spent, setting up legislative and institutional frameworks which would transform the way States dealt with conflicts of interest in the future.
d) Those states of Central and Eastern Europe that joined the EU after the Soviet Union fell apart needed above all to re-establish their independence. Allowing them in, contributed indirectly to an increasingly inter-governmental approach at the expense of an

overarching Community spirit. Given past experience, they were in no way ready to exchange the heavy hand of Moscow for that of Brussels, and they wanted to define their new identity in terms of nationalism. Their other prime interest was to espouse that economic model which would give their people those material, consumer goods they had so long been deprived of.

Hence – the rise of the intergovernmental approach

And so one could summarise it all by saying that while the task was one of "widening and deepening", the former took clear precedence over the latter. With the institutionalisation of the European Council under the Treaty of Lisbon, it seems as if the intergovernmental approach has come out on top. Despite this a strong trend of Euroscepticism has emerged in nearly all Member States which can be observed not only in the poor turnout for elections to the European Parliament, but also the rise of extremist parties on the political stage. Governments may repeatedly try to blame "those Brussels technocrats" but the real issue behind this problem of increasing disinterest in and dislike of Europe is elsewhere. Its roots are in the feeling within civil society that politicians in general are too distant from - not on the same wavelength as - the problems compared with how citizens themselves are perceiving them.

If so, what then …

This was my personal attempt to understand this phenomenon of a "*desaffectio societatis"*: if no adequate response and remedy is found in due course, the European edifice is bound to fall apart.

So now I'd like to embark on the more speculative and precarious path of exploring what could be the conditions that could lend a new lease of life to the European project?

It is my feeling that the current malaise in civil society stems from how men and women in society increasingly feel that our political leadership is less and less able to exert any control over the financial and economic agents that both set and unashamedly impose on us all an agenda of their own. Most of us are now convinced that the current threats to the environment spell a very real danger to us all - now and for future generations; despite this, the problems are not really being seriously grappled with which is a sign for me of the resistance on the part of these powers: they are fully aware that time is running out but hang on by the skin of their teeth to their powerhold as long as it lasts.

These powers operate and are organised at a transnational level. So it is utterly futile to try and tackle them at a mere national level. And this is why it makes real sense to build up Europe at the political level. The intergovernmental approach had its hour of glory during the financial crisis, without doubt. But it can offer no guarantees as it has to allow each state to safeguard its own interests, and this aspect is further punctuated by the ever-recurring rotation of national elections which tend alas only to project in the short term. So this approach is never going to be able to put in place the kind of policies that transcend national frontiers and require longer term planning.

I have to wonder whether those in politics have a proper grasp of what is going on in civil society. They often seem to take a rather condescending attitude as if to say, we know what is good for you.

Personally, I am convinced that the only way to get over this dangerous disconnect between the politicians in power and civil society is through a gradual transfer of national power to the European political level, provided that is, that the European Parliament becomes a strong and coercive instrument for guaranteeing that procedures are transparent and democratic.

I imagine that when the time comes that the EU is in a position to put policies in place that will tackle such major questions as energy

transition, global warming, migration and social policy, many of those who have given up on traditional politics will re-enter the fray. There are more people out there than one realises who are fully aware that the major issues we face in society today, affecting our lives on a daily basis, can only be tackled if the transnational dimension is taken on board. Nowadays that means political action with a medium and long term view.

And now the Churches in all this

Having devoted this first part to describing the way I see the project of building Europe having evolved over the years, I should now like in this second part to attempt a critical and lucid look at the work that I, with all the others involved in this pioneering venture, undertook to motivate the Churches for this, the unique European political project construed by a very small group of people for a shattered Europe.

Why have the Churches been so hesitant about becoming involved in the European project?

I can see four reasons:

a) I readily admit that the questions dealt with by the Council of Europe are closer to the customary agenda of the Churches. The image the European project put forward with the European Community from the very early years - that of a Common Market - actually got in the way of and obscured what was its final purpose. Economic and commercial questions of this kind seem to many to be way off the Churches' agenda.
b) Many of the Protestant Churches are national in character and do not therefore sit easily with the essentially transnational nature of the European institutions
c) The fact that the initial ecumenical project came from "below" – a group of politicians and leading civil servants. Lucian Leustean

comments in his book (op. cit.) that calling themselves a "Commission" (ECEC – Ecumenical Commission on European Co-operation), the Patijn group at first came in for criticism from the Churches. In Brussels all began with an association which was basically pastoral in kind (many new families converging on Brussels and the opening of a European School), which in turn could flag up for the Churches that this project was potentially interesting for them and presented new challenges to explore.

d) The project of a political Europe in some way stamped and sealed the division of Europe into East and West, and the Churches were unhappy with this. That was particularly true for the Protestant Church in Germany, which was itself divided into two. Hence the difficulties with the CEC. The hope at one point of providing a Western counterpart to the Christian Peace Conference in Prague in a manner of critical solidarity proved unfeasible.

Any regrets?

- Allowing the Ecumenical Centre (AOES) to disappear too easily: it served a significant function as a relay and source of contacts with the institutions
- Not having managed to set up a residential conference centre in Brussels on the model of the Evangelical Academies
- The relatively weakly developed base of underlying theological thinking on which ethico-political discussion could draw. This contrasts with the firmly established "social doctrine" of the Roman Catholics; we had to start again from scratch each time. This made the impact of closing down ERE as an institute for meta-research all the more painful
- The failure to implement a plan devised by the Collegium in the nineties to organise team visits to parishes within the member

Churches, along the lines of those already taking place with the Church of Scotland: this would have gone some way to remedying the problem of communication with member Churches.

What have I learned from this experience?

If I compare the current context – fifteen years on – with the one I was working in, one thing is patently obvious: many things have changed both on the side of the representation of Churches and on the side of the European institutions. So this relativizes the import of what has been learned.

One strand runs throughout the whole period, from the beginning of the Ecumenical Centre right up to the integration of EECCS within CEC, and that is the effort to instigate and maintain a dialogue between the Churches and the European institutions. After a long process this finally resulted in the European institutions acknowledging the importance of such dialogue by writing it into the Lisbon Treaty of 2007 (article 17).

The institutionalisation of such dialogue is there today because there have been individuals, men and women on both sides who wanted to make it happen. These men and women took some finding. The context was often helpful. On the Churches' side, we were able from the start to count on a number of key persons who had the full support of their Churches but were also personally convinced and enthusiastic about the project. As the years passed, the first stage which was something of an improvisation or ad hoc spontaneous trial as is inevitable when any new project kicks off, evolved into a much more institutionalised set up - Win's text makes that clear – but the conviction that we needed to carry on with what we had begun has got stronger and stronger over the years.

As for the world of the European institutions, our chief vis-à-vis was the European Commission, a fledgling body taking its first tentative steps: those working there were fully aware of the innovative nature of the project. In a word, the institutional dimension was there, and would grow stronger as a factor as the years passed, but it was not oppressive as such and on both sides there were cracks, openings which were where the real encounters could happen. One just such opening was the Forward Studies Unit set up under Delors' Commission which for a number of years, provided a doorway and a pool of resources for us to locate the partners we needed for structuring this dialogue.

I am fully aware that as time passes, the institutional weight will be felt more heavily; we too were increasingly conscious of it, but the lesson I draw from this experience is that genuine dialogue only happens when there is a space between the man or woman facing you and his or her job or function. This space is where it all begins. Being involved as we were in the ecumenical movement, we knew something about this already. This last comment leads on to another lesson we learnt – which was doubtless quite unintentional and unconscious, one of those quirks of history that may never be explained. The building of Europe was not only a new opportunity for the Churches but actually pushed them into coming together for this dialogue with the European institutions. Big Churches, small Churches, from the North and from the South, and with CEC, coming from a wide horizon of different denominations and cultures. In my time it was more or less just the Protestant family – even if a number of other denominations also came to be represented through the national Councils of Churches.

I came to learn that working with Churches at that level and in that way meant the relative power play that operated otherwise in the world was set aside. The minority Churches joined in with just as much authority as the larger ones when grappling with social questions that everyone was facing.

The international character of the Churches' representation in this way lent credibility to their witness. These Churches were not primarily there to defend interests of their own however legitimate these might have been. What we wanted to show our partners in the European institutions was our concern to highlight the plight of those who tended to be relegated to the fringe of society. Our society lacks adequate points of reference and we were at pains to give some pointers for those working out policies in areas for which the European institutions had competence, and which were affecting every individual and the generations to come.

A new era has begun for the Churches now within the CEC – the Conference of European Churches. There are new challenges on the horizon, and in turn the Churches will need to find new and imaginative responses. They will have to respond to the deep crisis in which Europe has plunged yet again; we as Christians do have answers. We need to discern in the crisis the signs of the coming of the Kingdom – just as Christ exhorted us to all that time ago.

The time has come to stop looking back. In closing I want to say how much I owe to all those who were alongside me during this time. I could not begin to list their names – but they know who they are. They are graven in my memory – that safe haven where time and place have no importance. I particularly single out Helmut von Verschuer who was a friend throughout on whom I could count, always there as much in times of difficulty as in times of joy with all the discretion that marks true friendship. And finally let me also express my gratitude to Win Burton, a colleague and friend, who has persisted even during my more reticent moments and kept a steady hand on the tiller as we reploughed through the successive stages of this ecumenical adventure.

Marc Lenders
October, 2014

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