

Circular from Maurice Couve de Murville (Paris, 20 January 1962)


Caption: On 20 January 1962, the French Foreign Minister, Maurice Couve de Murville, sends a circular to France’s diplomatic representatives informing them of the substance of the most recent meeting of the Committee studying plans for European political union, held on 18 January 1962.

Source: Ministère des Affaires étrangères ; Commission de Publication des DDF (sous la dir.). Documents diplomatiques français. Volume I: 1962, 1er janvier-30 juin. Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1998. 717 p. p. 36-39.

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Note from Mr Maurice Couve de Murville, Foreign Minister, to French diplomatic representatives posted in Bonn, Rome, The Hague, Brussels (Ambassador), Luxembourg, Copenhagen, Washington and Brussels (Delfra).

Paris, 20 January 1962, 2.45 p.m.

T. Nos 452 to 462; 188 to 192;
124 to 134; 182 to 192; 9; 39;
958 to 968; 1245 to 1255; 107 to 117.

The Study Commission, which met on 18 January, considered the following issues:

I. Information for the United Kingdom

Mr De Vos¹ elaborated on the observations sent in an aide-memoire from the Netherlands Government to the other five governments. The Netherlands Government believes that, after the Ministerial Conference of 15 December, the political structure of Europe must henceforth be envisaged as a group of more than six Member States. The Netherlands Government, which refuses to sign anything until the basic assumption, i.e. Great Britain's accession to the Common Market, has been put into practice, considers that if the UK does not join, all the work done so far on political structure would have to be reviewed and would not feel bound by any undertaking.

While refraining from demanding that the UK be invited to sit on the Commission, Mr De Vos called for regular multilateral contacts to be established between the Six and the UK.

The representatives of Belgium and Italy, both of whom had said that the phase for bilateral contacts between the UK and each of the Six was over, backed that idea. Mr Cattani² was nevertheless opposed to the frequency of multilateral contacts being finally established, adding that meetings would be useful only if the Six could first manage to make progress amongst themselves.

After some hesitation, Mr Jansen³ gradually warmed to the idea, stressing that contacts with the UK should not slow the work of the Study Commission.

Mr Christian Fouchet⁴ made the following remarks:

1. The Commission, a mere intergovernmental body, was not empowered to take a decision allowing a third country to join the Member States, in whatever form, without first having received instructions to that effect from the Ministers.
2. Third parties should not be privy to any progress achieved until the Ministers had approved the Commission's proposals.
3. On 15 December, the Ministers approved the proposal put forward by Mr Luns⁵ that they should meet again to discuss issues relating to the United Kingdom.

Mr Fouchet added that, under these conditions, the Commission might propose a date for a meeting to the Ministers, on the understanding that the Commission would continue its work in the interim, and, furthermore, that the Ministers would consider the Commission's conclusions and establish arrangements for contacts with the United Kingdom at the same time.

All the delegations, including the one from the Netherlands, approved that proposal. Because of the impending government crisis in Italy, the delegations suggested that the Ministers meet in the second half of February.

II. The political structure of Europe

The French delegation submitted a new version, drawn up by the Government, of the draft treaty for a Union of States. This new version differs from the earlier one in that Article 2 6 refers to economic considerations among the objectives of the Union and it restricts the powers of the Assembly, a body whose task, according to Article 10 7, is to deliberate and issue opinions on questions which the Council puts before it.

This new draft was given a cool reception by the other delegations, which were disappointed that their amendments had not been considered. They stated that the French delegation had gone back on both its initial project and the results achieved in Bonn on 18 July. For that reason, the mention of the economy in Article 2 appeared to raise some difficulties that the delegations thought had already been resolved between the Union and the Communities. Likewise, the delegations felt that Article 16 8, more condensed than in the previous version, might even jeopardise the future of the Communities. The other delegations were also troubled by the fact that, in the area of defence policy, no reference was made to the Atlantic Alliance.

Only the Netherlands delegation stated that it could accept the new French draft as a working hypothesis, but it continued to share the doubts voiced by the other delegations.

Mr Fouchet emphasised that most of the changes made to the French draft related to its form rather than substance and urged the Commission to continue its work, even if, ultimately, a text with reservations or alternative versions were to be presented to the Ministers. Mr Fouchet refused to withdraw the new French draft as Mr Jansen and Mr Cattani had requested.

At Mr Cattani's suggestion, the following decisions were taken:

1. The French delegation, as Commission chairman, would draw up a summary table of the various proposals that had so far been referred to the Commission.
2. The Commission would meet again on Thursday 25 January at 3.30 p.m. to discuss the guiding principles of a political Union.
3. The Subcommission on the political structure of Europe would meet all day on Friday 26 January in an attempt to draw up a *minimum* text acceptable to the six delegations and to draft a text which combined the proposals and amendments that France had rejected but that had mustered the support of the other five delegations.

Mr Jansen, supported by Mr Cattani, urged all the delegations to be very discreet in publicising the Commission's current difficulties.

Lastly, the Commission agreed that Mr Sauvagnargues 9 and Mr Corrias 10 should schedule meetings of the Subcommission for Africa and of the Subcommission for Latin America, respectively, on the most suitable dates.

(Europe. European international issues. Policy questions. European political union. General issues.)

(1) De Vos Van Steenwijk, Baron J. A. G.: Director-General for Political Affairs in the Netherlands Foreign Ministry.

(2) Cattani, Attilio, Secretary-General in the Italian Foreign Ministry.

(3) Jansen, Dr Josef, Ministerial Director in the Auswärtiges Amt (Foreign Ministry: Western Europe Section I).

(4) Fouchet, Christian, France's Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Denmark, Chairman of the Political Commission of the Six.

(5) Luns, Joseph, Netherlands Foreign Minister.

(6) The new version of Article 2 reads: 'It shall be the aim of the Union to reconcile, coordinate and unify the policy of Member States in spheres of common interest: foreign policy, economics, cultural affairs and defence.'

(7) The new version of Article 10 reads: 'The European Parliament provided for under Article 1 of the Convention relating to certain institutions common to the European Communities, signed in Rome on 23 March 1957, shall deliberate on questions concerning foreign policy, defence and education on which the Council asks its opinion.'

(8) The new version of Article 16 reads: 'Three years after this Treaty comes into force, it shall be subjected to a review in order to consider suitable measures either for strengthening the Union in general in the light of progress already made or, in particular, for simplifying, rationalising and coordinating the ways in which Member States cooperate.'

(9) Sauvagnargues, Jean, Senior Minister Plenipotentiary, Chargé d'Affaires, East African Affairs at the Foreign Ministry.

(10) Corrias, Angelo, Italian diplomat.