

Letter from the Mayor of Strasbourg to the Secretary-General of the Council of Europe (25 July 1957)

Caption: On 25 July 1957, Charles-Émile Altorffer, Mayor of Strasbourg, writes to Léon Marchal, Secretary-General of the Council of Europe, to argue the case for Strasbourg's being selected as the seat of the European institutions established by the Six under the Rome Treaties.

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Publication date: 16/09/2013

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Strasbourg, 25th July 1957

The President of the
Consultative Assembly of the
Council of Europe
Place Lenôtre
Strasbourg

Sir,

The Rome Treaties now in process of ratification by the national Parliaments of the six countries concerned stipulate that the signatory Governments shall determine the location of the new Euratom and Common Market institutions. The Political Committee of the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe has chosen this moment to request that all European institutions, both present and future, should be concentrated in the same town, since this would have obvious advantages from the standpoint both of the work of the organisations and the co-ordination of their activities.

Strasbourg, which has been a firm supporter of the European idea from the outset, cannot but welcome such a regrouping. Indeed, as a result of recent European developments and because it is the seat of the Council of Europe and the Parliamentary Assembly of E.C.S.C., our city is now universally regarded as the symbol of the unification of the free countries of this continent. In fact, Strasbourg may be said to enshrine the European idea and is eminently fitted to do so for reasons which stem from the early history of our city and province and the vicissitudes and tragedies of a more recent past.

I should therefore be grateful if you would be so good as to sponsor the candidature of Strasbourg as the seat of the European organizations. The reasons why our city was chosen by the statesmen as the seat of the Council of Europe have lost none of their cogency. The establishment of all the European organizations in Strasbourg could not fail to strengthen the symbolic significance of the choice made in 1949, and would be a striking confirmation of the continuity of all efforts towards European unification. At the same time it would dispose of the very rivalries which the draft Recommendation of the Political Committee of the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe seeks to avoid.

I would also take this opportunity of emphasizing that all the practical problems that might arise from the concentration of European organizations in our city are capable of solution. Our Municipality has already provided the land on which the Council of Europe building was erected. It is fully prepared to make promptly available sufficient additional land in the immediate vicinity of the present site to meet the needs of the new services. This solution would enable the European institutions to retain the benefit of investments already made and would make it possible to erect any further buildings required.

As regards up-to-date means of communication, the geographical position of Strasbourg and the basic services that already exist will facilitate any developments and improvements which may be considered necessary.

Thus, in addition to its value as a symbol, which seems to me essential to the European idea, Strasbourg fulfils all the conditions necessary to enable it to play fully the role which we should like to see entrusted to it.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

(signed) Ch. ALTORFFER