

Interview with André Dubois: the Secretaries-General of the Council (Brussels, 8 December 2006)

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[Étienne Deschamps] Unless I am mistaken, during your professional career you worked under three Secretaries-General: Christian Calmes himself, Nicolas Hommel, who was also from Luxembourg, and finally Niels Ersbøll, a Dane. Can you briefly describe your lasting impression of each of these senior officials and their impact on the workings and perhaps even the nature of the institution?

[André Dubois] I would say that the three Secretaries-General corresponded in some degree to three stages in the development of the Communities. The first Secretary-General, Mr Calmes — to whom I have already referred — was the man who set up the Secretariat and gave it what I would call its professional ethos. He left the post in 1973, before enlargement. We all have great memories of him. Incidentally, he left to become Marshal of the Grand Ducal Court, and we maintained personal contact with him for a long time.

Mr Hommel succeeded Mr Calmes and held the position for a number of years. I believe he continued the line followed by his predecessor, but with his own personal style. He adhered to the same course as our previous Secretary-General.

And then came Mr Ersbøll, who heralded a new stage in the development process. Why? Because the activity of the Communities had greatly expanded, and the Council, in Mr Ersbøll's act of appointment, asked him to play the role of a closer collaborator with the Presidency. Moreover, the appointment was no longer permanent — it was an appointment for a fixed period. There can be no doubt that Mr Ersbøll lent considerable stature to the function of Secretary-General. He quickly became one of the main advisers to the Presidents of the Council. But this was also the era when the wheels of the Community were grinding far more slowly than in earlier days. That, in broad terms, is what I can tell you.

I have to say that I have excellent memories of all three. All of them performed sterling work for the Council — Mr Calmes because he created the Secretariat, Mr Hommel because he oversaw its transition into what I would call the more active and political Secretariat it became under Mr Ersbøll. Then came the more recent Secretaries-General, like Jürgen Trumpf, and now the office has become a truly political post. It has followed the development of the Communities. For my part, I have retained very fond personal memories of the three Secretaries-General, and I was always on excellent terms with them.