

Interview with André Dubois: the establishment of the Secretariat of the ECSC Special Council of Ministers (Brussels, 8 December 2006)

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[Étienne Deschamps] What was the atmosphere at that point, in a team that I imagine was initially still small, still limited, it had not taken on the dimensions that it has all obviously assumed today? What was the atmosphere, how were the posts allocated, how was the organisation chart gradually put in place, how were the various departments formed, and what was, I can only repeat, the atmosphere like less than ten years after the end of the Second World War?

[André Dubois] First, as regards the organisation of the Secretariat, it is true that I joined a small team led by the Secretary-General, Christian Calmes, a former diplomat from Luxembourg who had been involved in the ECSC negotiations. It was a team that probably comprised, at the time, 30-40 people, including executive staff. We met and had our offices in an old patrician residence in avenue de la Porte-Neuve, in Luxembourg — you won't be surprised to hear that it has since become a bank. And the Council met at the *Cercle Municipal*, Place d'Armes. It was a small team that never got much bigger, because in fact the Council's powers did not justify a large team of officials. So I can't really say any more than that, of course I was in at the beginning, there was already a team. Mr Calmes had turned to some experienced officials, most of whom had been involved in the negotiations. And he was in the process of surrounding them with a number of young academics — I and other colleagues were among their number. And I would say that the team never grew much bigger. It was in 1958, when the EEC Treaty entered into force, that the Secretariat began to take on another dimension. There was no organisation chart as such. We were small teams of two or three. I was in a fairly specialised team, concerned in particular with external relations, but also with transport. There was a legal department. There was another team which worked on and followed more closely the parallel endeavours of the political Community, as well as relations with the Assembly. And so you see there was no organisation chart as such. There were people who monitored social affairs, people who specialised more in the actual operation of the coal and steel market. At that time, the first signs of the coal crisis were emerging. And I should say that the Council's role in the institutional system must also not be underestimated. I recall one of my first memories of the first Council I attended, at the *Cercle Municipal*. Very impressive. Jean Monnet was there. I think Chancellor Adenauer was there too. And Belgium was represented by Jean Rey, who was Minister of Economic Affairs. There was quite a lively discussion between Mr Rey, a great European, and Jean Monnet, who was also a great European, but was very preoccupied with the High Authority's rights. I remember Mr Rey telling Jean Monnet it was all very well, but there were strikes at the pitheads, and he was the one who must take responsibility for sending in the police. So that gives you a glimpse of how important this coordination was at times of crisis and tension. That's more or less all that I wanted to say about the team as such.

And as for the atmosphere at work, you described it well yourself, ten years after the end of the war. For my part, I returned to Luxembourg. One month earlier, I had finished my military service in Germany, where I had remained long enough to see service in the occupation. That will go some way to reminding you what the atmosphere was like. But I have to say that the atmosphere, and Mr Calmes himself played a crucial part in this, was a very collegial working atmosphere, very open, very sympathetic. We were a small team. We all knew each other. So the atmosphere was unquestionably positive, and also we were all aware that we were working on behalf of an initial supranational undertaking, which was something innovative, which had initiated a major turning point in relations within Europe. So there was a lot of enthusiasm, which was shared, incidentally, by all the officials who were working for the High Authority at the time, in Luxembourg, where I personally felt very much at ease, as I believe many of us did. We all knew each other, we met often, there really was a shared view that we needed to make a success of this initiative. I think that's all I can say on this subject.

[Étienne Deschamps] Without giving away any secrets, can you tell us what led you to work for the Council? How were people recruited at that time?

[André Dubois] Well, that really depended on the circumstances. In my case, Mr Calmes was looking for new officials, young officials. At the time my father came to Luxembourg to work, in particular, the ECSC tariffs were being harmonised, there was a committee that was to work on this, my father had known

Mr Calmes in Benelux. And he happened to say to him, 'I'm looking for young officials, do you know anybody?' I sent in my *curriculum vitae* and things went on from there. I think that was how it was with most of the people recruited at that time, at least as regards the Council. Things were different with the High Authority, where Mr Monnet was also very concerned to preserve its independence. But obviously they turned to more experienced officials, who specialised in coal, steel, social affairs, that goes without saying. I would say that in the Council, it's the way I have always defined our duties, we were 'specialists in generality'.