

The Christian democratic origins of the Schuman Plan

A study on the convergence of confessional beliefs and foreign policy in France in the run-up to the Schuman Plan 1946-1951



The desk of Robert Schuman at his home in Scy-Chazelle where he studied the proposals of Jean Monnet at the end of April 1950

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Introduction

On 20 December 2007, during a visit to the Vatican, former French president Nicolas Sarkozy declared in his speech that he fully assumed the Christian roots of France, and that the 'République laïque' had long underestimated the importance of spiritual aspirations. He then followed: 'a person who believes is a person who hopes. And the interest of the Republic is that there are many men and women with hope'.¹ At the end of his speech, Sarkozy revealed his view on laïcité, a concept that few French politicians have challenged since the adoption of the law on the separation of the church and the state in 1905. He argued for another perspective on religion, a so-called laïcité positive, which looks at the positive effects of spirituality in society, instead of the current demonization of religion in the public sphere. Sarkozy had to face strong opposition from defenders of secularism, as well as religious actors who were reluctant to change the status quo, as the neutrality of public space and the separation of church and state have become a central pillar of France's political identity.²

At another event at the Vatican on 6 May 2016, President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Parliament Martin Schulz, President of the European Council Donald Tusk, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini, President of European Central Bank Mario Draghi, Vice-President of the European Commission Frans Timmermans and other key figures of the Brussels ruling elite, as well as several political leaders of European countries, gathered at a ceremony at the Vatican where Pope Francis was awarded the prestigious Karlspreis in honor of his great endeavors for European Unity and his moral leadership in the refugee debate. His speech on the state of the European Union was a mixture of hope and critique and an invitation to look back at the conciliatory efforts of the founding fathers: 'We need to 'remember' to take a step back from the present to listen to the voice of our forebears ... They were prepared to pursue alternative and innovative paths in a world scarred by war'.

The gathering of so many EU politicians at the Vatican, and a French president calling for a new approach to the principle of laïcité stand at odds with the 'the European policy ethos' which promotes an individualistic and atomistic social order, mobility, cultural liberalism, and participatory democracy, as well as the sacralisation of the principle of laïcité in French politics.³ However, when we take a closer look at the history of European integration in the years preceding the Schuman Plan of May 1951, we quickly come to realize that Christian democratic politicians and in particular French Christian democrats played a major role in the process of European unification.

¹ Nicolas Sarkozy, 20 December 2007, 'Discours au Palais du Latran', transcript, *Le Monde*, 21 December 2007, viewed on 14 April 2017, http://www.lemonde.fr/politique/article/2007/12/21/discours-du-president-de-la-republique-dans-la-salle-de-la-signature-du-palais-du-latron_992170_823448.html (own translation).

² François Foret, 'French MEP's and religion: Europeanising 'laïcité'?', *Religion, State & Society* 42 (2014), 197.

³ François Foret, *Religion and Politics in the European Union, The Secular Canopy* (Cambridge 2015) 283.

After World War II, Christian democratic parties became the leading political force in all six founding member-states of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), either as leading government parties or as part of government coalitions. Christian democrats became the leading political party in government coalitions in post-war France after the foundation of the party Mouvement Republicain Populaire (MRP) in 1944. The MRP was a non-confessional party, with a doctrine which was founded on ideas and principles from Christian democratic thought and Catholic Social Teaching. At the same time it didn't nurture any further relationship with ecclesiastical structures, a so-called nonaligned form of Christian democracy.⁴ The success of European Christian democrats after the war was driven by the decline of the right side of Europe's political spectrum after the capitulation of Nazi Germany, but also through the efforts of several European Christian democratic parties to create a moderate and de-confessionalised party image.⁵ Their electoral basis broadened, and their programs promised the continuity of many conservative Catholic values while at the same time ensuring a more liberal approach to the economy that combined market-oriented economic policy and moderate social reforms.⁶ From early on, this rise of Christian democratic leadership resulted in transnational party contacts. In fact, the first meetings between French and German like-minded politicians were not held at an intergovernmental level, but occurred as early as 1946 in a more private sphere of party congresses and secret meetings.⁷

Meanwhile, European politicians realised that nationalism had contributed to fragmentation and disillusionment on the post-war European continent. However, a new framework for Western-European cooperation had yet to see the light. Franco-German rapprochement remained the major political question, alongside the threat of communism, between 1945 and 1951. The European Recovery Program and its Marshall Plan were launched in June 1947, and the Organization for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC) was created in April 1948. Both initiatives, so it was hoped, would lead to a free-trade customs union in Western Europe that in turn would eventually lead to not only a common economic but also one common political area.⁸ Instead, Western Europe and in particular France came up with their own plan, which took form in the work of Jean Monnet and

⁴ Emile-François Callot, *L'Action et l'œuvre politique du mouvement républicain populaire* (Paris 1986) 333.

⁵ Political Catholicism and its royalist tendencies in France clashed in the interwar period regularly with the French republican values. The new post-war French Christian democratic party, the Mouvement Républicain Populaire, differed from its pre-war counterparts as it was founded by French Catholic politicians who fully adhered to the principles of parliamentary democracy, and who had refused to collaborate with the Vichy regime in their efforts in the Resistance Movement. Furthermore, interventions of the Church in politics became less frequent after the war, and most post-war middle-class liberal conservative Catholic leaders like Adenauer, De Gasperi and Bidault strongly differed from their interwar more conservative and nationalist predecessors. (see: Wolfram Kaiser, *Christian Democracy and the Origins of European Union* (Cambridge 2007)169-174).

⁶ Wolfram Kaiser, *Christian Democracy and the Origins of European Union* (Cambridge 2007) 169-174.

⁷ *Ibidem*, 193

⁸ Alan S. Milward, *The Reconstruction of Western Europe 1945-1951* (London 1984) 469.

which was presented by Robert Schuman as the Schuman Plan on 9 May 1950. This resulted eventually in the signing of the Treaty establishing the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) on 18 April 1951, and the ratification of the Treaty in July 1952. This created a common market for coal and steel with Europe's first supranational control organ: la Haute Autorité.

France took the initiative that would eventually lay the foundations for the supranational European institutions of today, and at the same time French Christian democrats participated in several transnational party networks in the run-up to the Schuman Plan. This synchronism of political ideologies in the core of Europe, and the remarkable French leap of faith into supranational limbo, leave us with the following question: how did the participation of French Christian democrats in those transnational activities contribute to the development of French foreign policy regarding Germany in the run-up to the signing of the ECSC Treaty in April 1951?

The choice for France as a case-study is obvious for several reasons. First, France was the sole initiator of the Schuman Plan, and Konrad Adenauer was informed of the Plan only a few hours before Schuman's official presentation of the 9th of May. This means that understanding the birth of the Schuman Plan necessarily leads us to the French Quai d'Orsay. However, research on German participation in transnational Christian democratic initiatives seems just as meaningful, as the success of the Schuman Plan depended on the approval of Konrad Adenauer. Nevertheless, France is particularly interesting for one more reason. Not only does this research reveal how confessional politics contributed to the European integration process, it also examines the influence of confessional inspired ideas on French foreign policy. Those conclusions are interesting for the broader literature on laïcité in French politics, as well as for critical international relations literature which contest the secular bias in studies of international relations.⁹ In what follows, we will position this research in current scientific debates and the historiography of European integration.

The historiography of Franco-German reconciliation in the early post-war period consists largely of state-centred approaches.¹⁰ Alan S. Milward argues that governments in this period conducted policy on European unification solely out of national interest. France, in this approach, favoured the ECSC because it guaranteed access to German resources, and Germany approved with the Schuman Plan because it was a means to get its long-awaited equal political status acknowledged.¹¹ Milward is

⁹ See for this literature: Douglas Johnston and Cynthia Sampson, *Religion, The Missing Dimension of state Craft* (Oxford 1994), Bellin Eva, 'Faith in politics: New trends in the study of religion and politics' *World Politics* 60 (2008) 2, 315-47, Jeffrey Haynes, *Religion and Politics* (New York 2009), Fabio Petito and Pavlos Hatzopoulos, *Religion in International Relations: The Return from Exile* (New York 2003), Douglas Johnston, *Faith-based diplomacy: trumping realpolitik* (Oxford 2003), Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, *The Politics of secularism in international relations* (Princeton 2008), Scott Thomas, *The Global Resurgence of Religion and the Transformation of International Relations* (New York 2005).

¹⁰ Wolfram Kaiser and Brigitte Leucht, 'Informal Politics of Integration: Christian Democratic and Transatlantic Networks in the Creation of ECSC core Europe', *Journal of European Integration History* 14 (2008) 1, 35.

¹¹ Milward, *The Reconstruction of Western Europe*, 475.

backed up by political scientists like Andrew Moravcsik, who argue that European integration is based on 'a series of rational choices by national leaders' who 'responded to constraints and opportunities stemming from the economic interests of powerful domestic constituents, relative power of each state in the international system, and the role of international institutions in bolstering the credibility of interstate commitments'.¹²

Another school of historians has explained the success of the ECSC based on functionalist arguments. From a functionalist perspective, France and Germany agreed upon transfer of national sovereignty to the Haute Autorité because Jean Monnet's plan took European politics away from power politics and replaced it with a functionalist approach to cooperation in the coal and steel sector which eventually resulted in 'a community in which interest and activity are congruent and in which politics is replaced by problem-solving'.¹³ According to this school of thought, Jean Monnet avoided power politics by identifying a technical and welfare-oriented policy field in which he knew it was most likely to reach high levels of Pareto-efficiency as well as a non-political consensus, both needed to make revolutionary steps towards a supranational European community. In this historiography, Franco-German reconciliation is considered a direct result of the lengthy technocratic bargaining processes over the integration of German and French coal and steel sectors.

The Milwardian state-centred approach has been challenged by the so-called 'transnational turn' in post-war historiography. This implies that practitioners of new international history have moved beyond a focus on one particular country's foreign archives in order to engage in multi-level and transnational archival research, drawing from international and nongovernmental organisations.¹⁴ The work of Walter Lippens is particularly important in this transnational historiography, as it looks beyond the political realm of nation-states and encompasses a larger variety of actors in its analysis.¹⁵ With an impressive collection of documents from a wide range of political movements, publicists, important public and political figures, economic leaders, public opinion, the resistance movement and European pressure groups, Lippens demonstrates the contribution of those actors to European unification efforts in the inter-war and post-war period.

The work of Brigitte Leucht represents another type of transnational historiography as she

¹² Andrew Moravcsik, *The Choice for Europe. Social Purpose and State Power from Messina to Maastricht* (London 1999) 18.

¹³ James A. Caporaso, *Functionalism and Regional Integration: A Logical and Empirical Assessment* (London 1972) 27.

¹⁴ James Casteel, 'Historicizing the Nation: Transnational Approaches to the Recent European Past', in: Joan DeBardeleben and Achim Hurrelman (eds.), *Transnational Europe: promise, paradox, limits* (New York 2011) 151-169, 155.

¹⁵ Wilfried Loth, 'Explaining European Integration: The contribution from Historians', *Journal of European Integration History* 14 (2008) 1, 13. – For this paper Volume 3 (1988) and 4 (1991) of Walter Lippens series of *Documents of the History of European Integration* will be of particular importance.

focuses on transatlantic policy networks in the run-up to the Schuman Plan.¹⁶ Her work therefore represents a functionalist transnational approach to early European integration, as she argues that transatlantic policy networks, by gathering expertise, civil servants and state and non-state actors, helped to create important path dependencies for the process of European integration.

Most recently, Wolfram Kaiser and Jean-Dominique Durand have followed the same path as Walter Lipgens, taking their research one step further by focusing specifically on the prominent positions of Christian democratic political parties and transnational party contacts in the post-war period, and their influence on early European integration efforts.¹⁷ In this line of thought, Brent F. Nelsen and James L. Guth, who focus less on transnational political networks and more on the effects of transnational confessional cultures, argue in their work that Catholicism and Protestantism have resulted in two very different visions of Europe, which have deeply influenced the process of post-war integration.¹⁸ Interesting and also relevant to this field of research is the work of Karl Magnus Johansson, who challenges the 'intergovernmental road to Maastricht' by arguing that the ideologically inspired transnational Christian democratic party networks within and around the European People's Party (EPP) during the 1991 Intergovernmental Conferences facilitated the outcome of the Maastricht Treaty.¹⁹ His work, in addition to that of Wolfram Kaiser and Jean-Dominique Durand, illustrates that the same dynamics have been at play within Christian democratic party networks and their influence on the European integration process, forty years after the Schuman Plan.

Instead of questioning the socio-economic-security interests of Western European states, what these authors all have in common is that they seek to understand how the hegemony of Christian democrats in various European countries fostered pro-European policy outcomes during this period. Therefore, their research does not only challenge the Milwardian state-centred historiography, it also contributes to a less economical and functionalist approach to Franco-German post-war reconciliation. The work of Wolfram Kaiser and Jean-Dominique Durand examines the role and influence of transnational networks of Christian democrats like the *Nouvelles Équipes Internationales* (NEI) and the more secretive Geneva Circle in the post-war European unification process. Kaiser argues that norms and ideas as well as transnational contacts and cooperation led to dynamics of

¹⁶ Brigitte Leucht, 'Expertise and the Creation of a Constitutional Order for Core Europe: Transatlantic Policy Networks in the Schuman Plan Negotiations', in: Wolfram Kaiser, Brigitte Leucht and Michael Gehler, *Transnational networks in regional integration, Governing Europe 1945-1950* (London 2010) 18-37.

¹⁷ Jean-Dominique Durand, *Christian Democrat Internationalism: Its Action in Europe and Worldwide From Post World War II Until the 1990s, Volume II, The development (1945-1979) : the role of parties, movements, people* (Brussels 2013) ; Wolfram Kaiser, *Christian Democracy and the Origins of European Union* (Cambridge 2007).

¹⁸ Brent F. Nelsen and James L. Guth, *Religion and the Struggle for European Union, Confessional Culture and the Limits of Integration* (Georgetown University Press 2015).

¹⁹ Karl Magnus Johansson, 'Another Road to Maastricht: The Christian Democrat Coalition and the Quest for European Union', *Journal of Common Market Studies* 40 (2002) 3, 871-893.

socialisation and trust which in turn made the decision-making of Christian democratic party elites mutually reliable and calculable.

In addition, Kaiser sums up five main functions of transnational Christian democratic networks in the run-up to the Schuman Plan.²⁰ First of all, the networks helped to create normative-emotional bonds between the networked party elites; second it allowed Christian democrats to monopolize external party contacts and marginalize dissent within their own parties; thirdly it allowed them to develop and agree on common policy objectives; fourthly it allowed them to identify suitable political party and societal allies for constructing a sufficiently strong transnational coalition for their supranational core Europe without Britain; and lastly it helped them to construct alliances with leading civil servants in ministries to prevent national administrations throwing spanners in the wheels of interstate negotiations.²¹

Transnational historiography is a promising approach to post-WWII European integration insofar as it enables historians to move beyond the nation, which increases our understanding of the ways in which nations and nationalisms work in practice, opening up a number of questions that could not have been addressed solely within a national framework.²² However, even if both Walter Lipgens and Wolfram Kaiser leave us with interesting observations on those transnational activities, their work fails to convincingly demonstrate how those transnational movements have affected foreign policy on a national level. This research is inspired by the transnational work of those authors, but at the same time argues that if we want to understand the importance of those transnational activities we need to return to national politics.

The position of this research in the current academic debate is two-fold. First, it places itself within the transnational historiography on the post-war European integration period, while simultaneously aiming to improve our understanding of how those transnational contacts have impacted policy outcomes on a national level. Second, it fits into a social-constructivist debate on post-war European integration, as it aims to move beyond the discussion of how national interests resulted in the ECSC. Social constructivism argues that the meaning of power and interests is largely constructed, through ideas that arise out of intersubjective social interactions.²³ The purpose of this research is not to argue that confessionally inspired ideas, rather than national interests, mattered most. Instead, it aims to include confessionally inspired ideas into the historiography of post-war European integration, by showing how those ideas mattered, alongside national interests, in the run-up to the ECSC.

²⁰ 'Chapter Six: Creating Core Europe: the rise of the party network', in: Wolfram Kaiser, *Christian Democracy and the Origins of European Union* (Cambridge 2007).

²¹ Kaiser, 'Informal Politics of Integration', 39-42.

²² Casteel, 'Historicizing the Nation', 158.

²³ Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge 1999) 231.

This research proceeds in two steps to enhance our understanding of how the participation of French Christian democrats in transnational activities contributed to French foreign policy on Germany in the run-up to the Schuman Plan. The first part examines four different transnational initiatives in which French Christian democrats participated in the years preceding the signing of the ECSC Treaty in April 1950: the *Nouvelles Équipes Internationales*, the Geneva Circle, the NEI as part of the European Movement and the Moral Re-Armament Movement. This research expands the scope of research on Christian democratic internationalism beyond the N.E.I. and the Geneva Circle and includes the NEI as part of the broader European Movement as well as the Moral Re-Armament Movement, as we are convinced that this increases our understanding of the efforts undertaken by many leading European Christian democrats on a transnational level for a unified Europe and Franco-German reconciliation.

Findings in this first part derive mainly from the annual congress reports of the NEI and the protocols of the Geneva meetings, which can be found in the archives of Robert Bichet in the Archives Nationales in Paris.²⁴ A few meetings of Geneva are missing in this archive as well as some speeches at the NEI congresses, but overall they offer a good representation of the topics discussed at those gatherings as well as the tone and atmosphere in which those first meetings between French and German politicians were held. As for the European Movement and the Moral Re-Armament Movement, we will mainly rely on secondary literature, supplemented where possible with primary sources that can be found in the Centre Virtuel de la Connaissance sur l'Europe (CVCE).²⁵ It is worth mentioning here that a fairly exhaustive archive consisting of Moral Re-Armament Records can be found in the Library of Congress in Washington D.C., including correspondence of Frank Buchman, the founder of this movement, with both Adenauer and Schuman.²⁶ A first glance at the description of the series displays some possibly valuable material.

Let's move on to the chosen criteria in our analysis of the archival material. No official agreements were signed at any of those gatherings on a transnational level, so their influence can only indirectly lie within their ideological and discursive aspects, as well as the opportunities they provided for socialisation between former perpetrators and victims. Therefore, the analytical focus on the archival material is three-fold, with a participatory aspect, confessional aspect, and ideological aspect. First we examine French as well as German participation: who participated, why, and what power did the participants have on a national level? What was the nature of the intersubjective exchange between French and German participants? Then we look at the confessional character of

²⁴ Centre Historique des Archives Nationales (CHAN), Paris, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine, Archive Privée (AP) 519, Fond Robert Bichet (FRB), boxes 9 and 10.

²⁵ Site of the *Centre Virtuel de la Connaissance sur l'Europe* : <http://www.cvce.eu/en>

²⁶ Moral Re-Armament Recors, A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress: <http://rs5.loc.gov/service/mss/eadxmlmss/eadpdfmss/2011/ms011142.pdf>

the initiative: what was the role of religion in those gatherings? In line with this question, we focus on the ideological aspect of the activities: what did the participants discuss?

This last aspect is important, as our research seeks to understand how ideas, and in particular Christian democratic ideas, might have contributed to the Schuman Plan. Most relevant for our conclusion are the ideas expressed on Franco-German relations, the coal and steel industries, supranationalism, national sovereignty and European politics. The analytical framework of Judith Goldstein and Robert O. Keohane gives us some support in analysing the influence of ideas on foreign policy. They identify three types of ideas that hold the potential of influencing foreign policy outcomes by means of three types of causal pathways. Two types of ideas are relevant for this research: principled and causal beliefs. We will examine if some of the ideas expressed at these initiatives can be regarded as principled ideas or causal beliefs. Principled beliefs are normative ideas that specify criteria for distinguishing right from wrong and just from unjust. They are beliefs that mediate between broader worldviews and particular policy conclusions, as they translate fundamental doctrines into guidance for contemporary human action.²⁷ Causal beliefs are about cause-effect relationships, and imply strategies for the attainment of goals - themselves valued because of shared principled beliefs and understandable only within the context of broader world views.²⁸

The second part of this research explores how, when and if the participation of French Christian democrats in those transnational initiatives can be connected to Franco-German policy in France. We focus on two key figures of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs during the Fourth Republic, Georges Bidault and Robert Schuman, as they are known to have been kept informed about or have been present in person at those initiatives. In addition, they are known for their Christian democratic political background and/or personal religious beliefs. And, most importantly, they were responsible, as ministers of Foreign Affairs, for official French foreign policy regarding Germany, and Europe, between 1946 and 1951. Then we will analyse how the social interactions and ideas expressed at the transnational level may have influenced the policy of both men regarding Franco-German reconciliation and European unification. We examine how and if those aspects were in line with the personal background of both men. A closer look at their personal backgrounds and early careers expose various similarities between the efforts on a transnational level and the personal beliefs and pre-war engagements of both statesmen. In the last part of our research, we will analyse moments and personal declarations during the administration of both ministers, that demonstrate the possible influence of those transnational initiatives on French foreign policy, in the run-up to the signing of

²⁷Judith Goldstein and Robert O. Keohane, 'Ideas and Foreign Policy: An Analytical Framework', in: Judith Goldstein and Robert O. Keohane, *Ideas and Foreign Policy, Beliefs, Institutions, and Political Change* (New York 1993) 3-30, 9.

²⁸ Ibidem, 10.

the Schuman Plan. Keohane and Goldstein argue that principled and causal beliefs can influence foreign policy when they increase the clarity about goals or ends-means relationships or when those belief create some kind of certainty about a policy road not yet taken because of the uncertainty of its outcome.²⁹ Any clear examples that affirm this idea - effect relation at the Quai d'Orsay in the run-up to the Schuman Plan will be highlighted.

In the conclusion of our research we will come back to the research question, and look at how this research has contributed to early post-war European integration historiography. Let's proceed with our first part of the research in which we analyse the transnational contacts between European Christian democrats.

²⁹ Ibidem, 3.

Part One

Transnational contacts between European Christian democrats 1946 - 1951

1.1 Introduction

The following chapter examines the participation of French Christian democrats in transnational confessional inspired initiatives in the post-war period. Between 1946 and 1951 various French public and private actors organised or participated in the transnational congresses of the Nouvelles Équipes Internationales (NEI), the Geneva Circle meetings, the European Movement, and the conferences organised by the Moral Re-Armament Movement in Caux. Those initiatives were opportunities for French participants to meet and exchange views in public and private atmospheres with German counterparts. We will now follow with our analysis of each of the initiatives, in which we will focus on their origins, the French and German participants, the confessional aspect and the ideas and beliefs expressed at those meetings, in particular ideas on Franco-German relations, European politics, the coal and steel industry, supranationalism and sovereignty. If applicable, we will also seek to understand if those ideas can be categorised as principled or causal beliefs - this is not the case for every initiative.

All four initiatives have in common that they offered opportunities for pro-European and Germanophile French Christian democrats to diffuse their ideas and to establish encounters with like-minded Germans. Every initiative in its own way created a hopeful, future-oriented counter-narrative on Franco-German cooperation, which radically opposed the post-war anti-German sentiments in Europe, but also differed from the technocratic transatlantic policy networks and intergovernmental negotiations in the run-up to the signing of the Schuman Plan.

1.2 Nouvelles Équipes Internationales

The annual congresses organized by the NEI were meaningful in the run-up to the Schuman Plan in that they offered a first opportunity for German Christian democrats to socialize with other Europeans from the same political family and more importantly, those meetings fostered a common Christian democratic vision or discourse on the future of Europe. Early on participants agreed upon strong Western European cooperation, because they reasoned that a fragmented Europe was likely to succumb to communist threats. Further, they concluded that Franco-German reconciliation and Western European unification were reciprocally conditional to each other.

France was, paradoxically, the main initiator as well as the strongest critic of this transnational network. The idea to reunite Christian democratic politicians across Europe was partly initiated by Robert Bichet, secretary-general of the Christian democratic political party Mouvement Républicain

Populaire (MRP), in 1944, and close to Georges Bidault. He invited fellow Christian democrats from Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Italy to the MRP party congresses in 1945, and as minister of information he met with Paul van Zeeland, Phelix Hurdes, Alcide de Gasperi and Luigi Sturzo in 1946 to discuss the possibility of a transnational Christian democratic network.³⁰ Transnational party contacts in 1945 and 1946 eventually led the Swiss SKVP secretary-general Martin Rosenberg to organize the first meeting of European Christian democrats in Lucerne from 27 February to 2 March 1947. The MRP, together with the Belgian CVP/PSC, quickly rejected a political party network and preferred participation on an individual



Robert Bichet (1)

basis. The MRP did not want to be associated with more conservative Christian democratic parties like the Italian DC and the German CDU, out of fear of instigating anti-clerical sentiments among socialists and the progressive left wing of the MRP.³¹

Georges Bidault and Robert Schuman never attended the NEI congresses, but were, without doubt, kept informed. A telegram message of Georges Bidault in the report of the NEI congress in Bad-Ems in September 1951 says: 'suis de coeur et de pensée parmi vous'.³² A list of delegates of the NEI congress in September 1953 in Tours shows that, from the thirty delegates, Robert Bichet, Pierre-Henri Teitgen, Maurice Schumann, Germaine de Peyroles, Henri Teitgen and Robert Lecourt held or had held important positions as vice-presidents of the government, ministers or party presidents. Without doubt, on the French side Robert Bichet became the most important advocate of the NEI, and therefore French Christian democratic internationalism, also because of his involvement in the meetings in Geneva as well as the European Movement.

Early on, the MRP cautiously initiated some kind of Franco-German interaction by inviting Bavarian Catholic Josef Müller to its party congress in 1946, where he met with Georges Bidault and Robert Schuman.³³ His participation in the German resistance movement, and his Christian social leanings with a strong Western orientation, made him a suitable liaison in post-war Franco-German relations. Joseph Wirth, former Reich Chancellor, recommended to other European Christian democrats at a private meeting in Lucerne that they should invite representatives of the CDU/CSU

³⁰Wolfram Kaiser, *Christian Democracy and the Origins of European Union* (Cambridge 2007) 193.

³¹Nicole Bacharan-Gressel, 'Les organisations et les associations pro-européennes', in : Serge Berstein, Jean-Marie Mayeur, Pierre Milza (eds.), *Le MRP et la construction Européenne* (Paris 1993), 41-66, 47.

³²CHAN, FRB, AP 519/9, Congres report, *L'Europe et la Paix*, 14 Septembre 1951, , Bad Ems.

³³Josef Müller, *Bis zur letzten Konsequenz. Ein Leben für Frieden und Freiheit* (Munich 1975) 360.

and the reconstituted Centre Party to participate in future NEI events.³⁴ This resulted in the participation of Konrad Adenauer, Josef Müller, Jakob Kaiser, Johann Kint-Kiefer and Heinrich von Brentano at the second NEI congress, which took place in January 1948 in Luxembourg. Adenauer delivered a speech which, without doubt, left a strong impression on the other participants, and led to the admission of the CDU-CSU on terms of full equality as the national German *équipe*.³⁵

The confessional aspect of the NEI meetings becomes clear from Article 2 of its statutes, in which the objectives are spelled out:

Les Nouvelles Equipes Internationales (N.E.I.) ont pour but d'établir des contacts réguliers entre les groups et les personnalités politiques des diverses nations qui s'inspirent des principes de la démocratie chrétienne, afin d'étudier à la lumière de ces principes les situations nationales respectives ainsi que les problèmes internationaux, de confronter les expériences et les programmes, et de rechercher l'harmonie international dans les réalisations, dans le cadre de la démocratie et de la paix sociale et politique.³⁶

In addition, those conferences, held on a public and transparent level, aimed at increasing the publicity and knowledge of the European unification process among wider layers of society. The extensive references in the congress reports to principles of Catholic Social Teaching, Christian democracy and Christian identity, as well as, for example, the invitation and report written by the French Dominican priest Louis-Joseph Lebret on the occasion of the NEI congress in Liège in 1947, illustrate the scope of the confessional character of the NEI. The NEI was by no means influenced by clerical structures, and neither did it deal with theological questions, personal religiosity or religious rites. It remained therefore a political network, aimed at reuniting Christian democratic politicians from all over Europe, who at the congresses were able to deliberate about a common Christian democratic vision for the future of the continent. Or as Henri-Teitgen, father of Pierre-Henri Teitgen, expressed at a NEI congress in Bad-Ems on *L'Europe et la Paix* in 1951: 'Les Nouvelles Équipes Internationales constituent un cadre où les hommes appartenant à une même famille spirituelle peuvent converser entre eux dans un climat de sympathie et de confiance'.³⁷

The reports of the annual conferences expose of the position of Christian democrats on a wide range of political and social-economic issues during this period. Of most interest here are the ideas with regard to Franco-German reconciliation expressed at those congresses before 9 May 1950. The

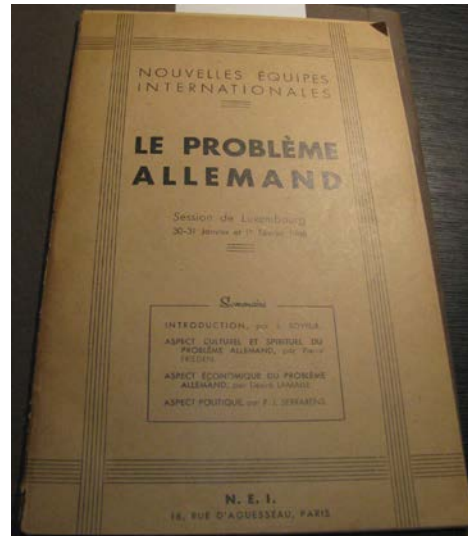
³⁴ Procès-verbal de la Conférence politique internationale de Lucerne, 27.3.-2.3.1947, SKVP, Generalsekretariat, Bern, 22 March 1947m BAR, CVP-Archiv JII.181, 2372.

³⁵ Wilfried Loth, *Documents of the History of European Integration IV, Transnational Organizations of Political Parties and Pressure Groups in the Struggle for European Union, 1945-1950* (New York 1991) 480 and 490.

³⁶ Robert Bichet, *La démocratie Chrétienne en France, Le Mouvement Républicain Populaire* (Besançon 1980) 246.

³⁷ CHAN, FRB, AP 519/9 Congress Report, *L'Europe et la Paix*, 14 Septembre 1951, Bad-Ems.

NEI Congress in Luxembourg about *Le Problème Allemand*, held from 30 January to 1 February 1948, was important not only because of the attendance of the first German delegation, but even more so because it recognized that ‘the problems of the new, ‘good’, Christian Germany were also those of Europe, and that the solution of the German problem was an integral aspect of European reconstruction’.³⁸ Adenauer’s speech at the NEI congress in Bad-Ems in 1951 illustrates the importance and uniqueness of this first invitation of a German delegation: ‘C’est pour moi un réel plaisir de vous dire que l’accueil des délégués Allemands à Luxembourg nous a profondément touchés et a renforcé notre volonté de travailler de toutes nos forces pour que l’Europe dévastée soit reconstruite dans un esprit véritablement Chrétien’.³⁹



NEI congress report February 1948 (2)

Adenauer’s speech at the congress in Luxembourg is particularly enlightening, as it shows how Christian identity, Franco-German reconciliation and the quest for European integration were skillfully intermingled into a powerful discourse:

Christians, and above all Christian statesman, are under an obligation to co-operate closely in international affairs, because their activity is governed by the same ideas and directed to the same end: the realization of personal freedom and social justice ... I should be glad if my country could, as soon as possible, enter into intensive and comprehensive trade relations with the Benelux countries and with all other states. This applies especially to France: for the idea of a European federation stands and falls with friendly cooperation between France and Germany. ... I speak for a great number of Germans when I express the fervent hope for Franco-German friendship as the lasting foundation of a united Europe. If this can be achieved, the Christian West can be saved.⁴⁰

The idea that Franco-German reconciliation formed a crucial precondition for a united Europe, and that this reconciliation could only happen within a united Europe, gradually became a shared consensus among recognized elites. This causal belief was supported by Henri Teitgen in Bad-Ems: ‘En vérité le “rapprochement” de la France et de l’Allemagne et l’édification d’une Europe fortement

³⁸ Wilfried Loth, *Documents of the History of European Integration IV, Transnational Organizations of Political Parties and Pressure Groups in the Struggle for European Union, 1945-1950* (New York 1991) 480.

³⁹ CHAN, FRB, AP 519/9 Congres Report, 14 Septembre 1951, *L’Europe et la Paix*, Bad Ems.

⁴⁰ Wilfried Loth, *Documents of the History of European Integration IV, Transnational Organizations of Political Parties and Pressure Groups in the Struggle for European Union, 1945-1950* (New York 1991) 491 (author’s translation).

unie sont réciproquement condition l'un de l'autre'.⁴¹

Another causal belief expressed at the NEI congresses was the idea that a weak Europe would inevitably fall prey to communist expansionism. Adenauer expressed his concerns about communism and weak Christian democratic cooperation during his speech at the congress in Bad-Ems: 'Il ne sera pas possible de sauver l'occident et de s'opposer au matérialisme et à l'affaissement de la morale, sources de tous les désordres, qu'en unissant les forces politiques qui trouvent leur inspiration dans le christianisme, forces puissantes mais encore insuffisamment organisés. ... C'est avant tout grâce à une collaboration plus étroite des partis chrétiens que l'intégration politique de l'Europe sera favorisée'.⁴²

We cannot detect as clear a link between the NEI congresses and the signing of the Schuman Plan in 1951 as is possible in the case of the transatlantic technocratic working groups who directly contributed to, for example, anti-trust legislation. However, Konrad Adenauer did mention 'the common management of European industries dealing in basic products' as early as January 1948 at the NEI congress in Luxembourg.⁴³ Overall technical questions on the economic integration of Germany in Europe were avoided during the congresses. Nevertheless, it becomes clear through sporadic statements that Christian democrats favored harmonization of social policies between different European states and state interventionism to defend the common good, within the limits of subsidiarity, while at the same time respecting free enterprise and private property.⁴⁴ Europeanisation through interventionist policies, with redistributive dimensions to structure markets would create, according to many Christian democrats, the much needed distinctive European third way societal model between liberal capitalism and Soviet communism.⁴⁵

The NEI differed strongly from the technocratic transatlantic working groups attended by Jean Monnet, academic experts and civil servants, as those mainly focused on form and policy in the run

⁴¹ CHAN, FRB, AP 519/9 Congress Report, *L'Europe et la Paix*, 14 Septembre 1951, Bad Ems.

⁴² Ibidem.

⁴³ Roberto Papini, *The Christian Democrat International* (Boston 1997) 61.

⁴⁴ For harmonisation of social policy see: (AP 519/9 NEI, Résolutions du Congrès de la Haye sur l'Organisation de l'Europe, 17-19 septembre 1948) and (AP 519 /9 NEI Objectifs de la Démocratie Chrétienne dans l'Europe actuelle, Les résolutions du congrès de Sorrento 12-13 et 14 Avril 1950, p.7). For state interventionism and respect of private property/freedom of enterprise : (AP 519/9 NEI, Objectifs de la Démocratie Chrétienne dans l'Europe actuelle, Rapport Politique par M. Lodovico Benvenuti, Député italien Membre de l'Assemblée Consultative Européenne, Congrès de Sorrento 12-14 et 14 Avril 1950, p. 1,3, 6) and (AP 519/9 NEI VIème Congrès International, Force et Faiblesse des Chrétiens dans les Démocraties Européennes, Fribourg Suisse, 12-13-14 septembre 1952, p.7).

⁴⁵ Wolfram Kaiser, *Christian Democracy and the Origins of European Union* (Cambridge 2007) 223.

up and during the interstate negotiations of the Schuman Plan.⁴⁶ The NEI congresses were not meant, however, to be technocratic policy networks, and rarely do we find concrete policy recommendations on the integration of the French and German coal and steel sector. For example, even though preferences for a federalist Europe existed in Christian democratic circles long before 1950, it was only at their congress in Tours in September 1953 that they specifically discussed the idea of supranationalism and the notion of sovereignty. This was long after the first assessments of Monnet about the possibility of implementing some form of supranational higher authority.



Pierre-Henri Teitgen at NEI congress in Tours September 1953, Robert Bichet sits in the foreground at the table (3)

The NEI congresses provided first and foremost a platform for Christian democrats to discuss and agree upon a more holistic approach to European integration. How social should Europe be? How can we mediate between the principles of American capitalism and Soviet communism? How can we secure peace and security through Franco-German reconciliation? What are the rights and duties of the states on the national and international level? How to encompass overseas territories within a future European framework? What are the strengths and weaknesses of Christian democracy in Europe? Those were the questions asked at the congresses, and even though participants agreed upon the stark differences between different national Christian democratic parties, they also succeeded in creating a more or less consistent Christian democratic vision of Europe. This was strongly inspired by principles of Catholic Social Teaching like the sacredness of the human person, human dignity, the principle of subsidiarity, the idea of mercifulness and the common good.⁴⁷ Or as Wolfram Kaiser argues: ‘the NEI’s crucial function was to serve as a forum for the ideological rationalization of concrete Christian Democrat policies’.⁴⁸ In other words, the congresses focused less on form, and created some kind of principled and ideological blueprint supporting the Schuman Plan.

⁴⁶ Brigitte Leucht, ‘Transatlantic policy networks in the creation of the first European anti-trust law, Mediating between American anti-trust and German *ordo-liberalism*’, in: Wolfram Kaiser, Brigitte Leucht and Morten Rasmussen, *The History of the European Union, Origins of a trans-and supranational polity 1950-1972* (New York 2009) 56-73.

⁴⁷ In speeches participants of the congresses regularly referred to those Christian principles when addressing social/political/economic issues. Henri Teitgen, French political and judicial figure not to be confused with Pierre Henri-Teitgen, referred explicitly to the teachings of the Encyclical ‘*Quadragesimo Anno*’ published in 1931 in his argumentation on the need for a European supranational authority to take upon responsibilities which the nation-states were better off leaving to this authority (519 AP/9 L’Autorité Supranationale et la Notion de Souveraineté, VIIème Congrès Tours 4-5-6 septembre 1953, Aspects Politiques par le Batônnier Henri Teitgen.

⁴⁸ Michael Gehler and Wolfram Kaiser, ‘Transnationalism and early European integration : The *Nouvelles Equipes Internationales* and the Geneva Circle 1947-1957’, *The Historical Journal* 44 (2001) 3, 780.

1.3 Geneva Circle

The added value of the meetings organized by the Geneva Circle was the secretive but informal atmosphere of those gatherings, which in turn created social relations built upon mutual trust between the French and German Christian democratic ruling elite. Georges Bidault and Konrad Adenauer discussed political affairs freely and exchanged information about each other's national situations. The meetings prepared the synchronization of German and French politics in the run-up to the Schuman Plan, and were used by the French as a parallel diplomatic channel to exert pressure on Germany and Belgium, helping to ensure the success of the interstate negotiations prior to the signing of the Plan in April 1951.

The public and open character of the NEI congresses made it impossible for Christian democratic government officials to elaborate on the strategic direction of their governmental actions towards Franco-German reconciliation, as a majority of French public opinion still favored a repressive policy against Germany.⁴⁹ For this reason, a new kind of transnational meeting began to be organized at the end of 1947, under the name of the 'Geneva Circle'. Those participating in the Geneva Circle met three times a year between 1948 and 1955 to discuss political matters in a smaller-scale and more confidential atmosphere. No official or binding agreements and declarations were made during those meetings, but Albert Gortais, one of the co-founders of the MRP, explained at a Geneva Circle meeting on 10 June 1949 what the added value was of those meetings compared to the NEI congresses, and why closer collaboration between the NEI and Geneva should be avoided:

[...] les NEI peuvent et doivent jouer utilement un rôle de manifestation publique dans l'existence d'un courant international inspiré de l'esprit démocrate-chrétien. C'est une toute autre chose que de vouloir conjuguer, à l'échelon des hautes responsabilités politiques, ..., des efforts que nous poursuivons dans nos différents pays et sur le plan de l'Europe elle-même. Cet objectif capital exige une méthode discrète et c'est pour y répondre que nous nous rencontrons à Genève. Bidault et Adenauer peuvent engager à Genève des dialogues qu'il leur serait impossible d'envisager dans un autre cadre et sur un autre plan. Il ne faut donc pas ... mélanger tous les buts à atteindre et les différentes méthodes qui doivent y correspondre, sous peins de n'arriver à rien de concret sur aucun plan.⁵⁰

The Geneva meetings were initiated by Georges Bidault with the support of Victor Koutzine, who had been helping him in developing links with prominent German Christian democrats since the beginning of July 1947. Victor Koutzine was a journalist who knew Georges Bidault from the interwar period, and for whom he had worked informally after 1945 as a consultant and informer. At this time, Georges Bidault was not only far ahead of French public opinion (which still favored a

⁴⁹ Wolfram Kaiser, *Christian Democracy and the Origins of European Union* (Cambridge 2007) 205.

⁵⁰ CHAN, FRB, AP 519/10, Geneva Circle, protocols, 10 June 1949, Geneva.

repressive and alienating stance on Germany), but also of his own official Gaullist policy as foreign minister.⁵¹ Georges Bidault participated at the Geneva meetings from early 1948 until mid-1949. He was mostly accompanied by Robert Bichet and Albert Gortais, but other prominent MRP politicians like André Colin, François de Menthon, Pierre-Henri Teitgen and Joseph de Fontanet also attended the meetings more or less regularly. On the German side, Konrad Adenauer participated in the same meetings as Georges Bidault in 1948 and 1949. Furthermore, those meetings were attended by Johan Kindt-Kiefer, the German counterpart of Victor Koutzine, as well as other prominent German Christian democrats like Jacob Kaiser, Heinrich von Brentano and Bruno Dörpinghaus.

Politicians came together in Geneva for political reasons, and their common political background played a facilitating role in this. The confessional aspect was insignificant at those gatherings, and they therefore differed strongly from the NEI, where participants spoke much more freely about the meaning of their confessional identity in politics.

So how did the meetings in Geneva contribute to the success of the ECSC if the power of final decision making still lay within a formalized intergovernmental negotiating system, and no collectively binding decisions were taken during those meetings? Firstly, mutual trust was created between French and German party elites at the meetings in 1948 and 1949, where both Bidault and Adenauer participated. These personal and private high-level encounters created good relations which inevitably benefited and facilitated Franco-German relations in the run-up to the Schuman Plan. Bidault expressed the need in March 1949 for a united Europe based on a strong Franco-German relationship and a Europe in which nations would somehow give in on their sovereignty:

L'Union c'est la simple affirmation d'une bonne volonté réciproque. La Fédération ou la Confédération, suppose au contraire des institutions politiques stables devant lesquelles les Etats abandonneront une part leur souveraineté nationale. ... Il est indispensable que l'Allemagne ait sa place dans les institutions Européenne. Ceci est en corrélation avec la réconciliation nécessaire entre la France et l'Allemagne. C'est aussi une condition d'existence durable pour l'Europe elle-même.

Adenauer thanked Bidault for his wise and generous words and said: 'Nous sommes d'accord', followed by Kaiser who seemed deeply moved: 'Oui, pas d'Europe sans réconciliation Franco-Allemande'.⁵²

Those meetings facilitated socialization, but certainly did more than that, as Wolfram Kaiser has

⁵¹ Wolfram Kaiser, *Christian Democracy and the Origins of European Union* (Cambridge 2007), 205.

⁵² CHAN, FRB, AP 519/10, Geneva Circle, protocols, March 1949, Geneva.

argued in his work.⁵³ It provided opportunities for leaders of Christian democratic parties to effectively decide on central features of the new ECSC order. Just before and during the interstate negotiations for the Schuman Plan in 1950 - 1951, leading figures of French and German Christian democratic parties came to a common vision of a United Europe, supported by the United States, which would exclude the Brits and keep the socialists down.⁵⁴ At the last meeting attended by Georges Bidault and Konrad Adenauer on the 10 June 1949, Bidault clearly underwrites this vision: 'Il y a trois Europes possible : l'Europe Anglaise, cela signifie pas d'Europe du tout. L'Europe russe, ce serait l'Asie. Quant à l'Europe de tout le monde sa base est un rapprochement France-Allemagne : mais il ne faut peut-être pas trop le dire pour pouvoir le faire'.⁵⁵

The meetings in Geneva were also used to give a final push during the difficult intergovernmental negotiations of the Schuman Plan. The Schuman Plan provoked a strong 'now-or-never' feeling among Christian democrats, as they all very well knew that the growing chance of a future socialist SDN victory in Germany would possibly bring about a new European framework, including Labour Britain and no supranational authority whatsoever. Robert Bichet pleaded on 26 February 1951 for Germany and Belgium to reconsider their hesitation towards the final negotiations of the Schuman Plan:

Il serait déplorable que la seule tentative concrète de faire l'Europe échoue, alors que nos amis sont au pouvoir dans le pays intéressés. Alors, notre Europe aura échoué, et la main passera aux autres. Je fais donc appel aux deux réfractaires : Allemagne et Belgique, et je leur dis : si au départ vous situes le problème sur le plan des intérêts particuliers, il n'y aura jamais d'Europe. ... Les 6 pays qui participeront au Plan Schuman ont aujourd'hui au pouvoir, à des postes de responsabilité, des démocrates chrétiens. Si le plan Schuman n'est pas signé, vous aurez dans moins de deux ans des renversements de majorité et l'Europe qui ne se sera pas faite se fera alors sous l'égide socialiste. ... Je crois qu'il faut une certaine dose de dirigisme pour faire l'Europe. Mais le problème n'est ni doctrinal, ni économique : il faut la priorité du politique. Je me tourne donc vers les opposant et leur demande de cesser cette opposition.⁵⁶

This speech came at a crucial moment when Germany and Belgium showed strong hesitation just before the final signing of the ECSC treaty in 1951, and though we shouldn't exaggerate the effectiveness of this particular diplomatic intervention, it illustrates how the Geneva meetings were used to convince participants to reconsider their policy preferences.

⁵³ Wolfram Kaiser, 'Informal Politics and the Creation of the European Community: Christian Democratic Networks in the Economic Integration of Europe', in: Wolfram Kaiser, Brigitte Leucht and Michael Gehler, *Networks in Regional Integration, Governing Europe 1945-83* (New York 2010).

⁵⁴ Ibidem, 96.

⁵⁵ CHAN, FRB, AP 519/10, Geneva Circle, protocols, 10 June 1949, Geneva.

⁵⁶ CHAN, FRB, AP 519/10, Geneva Circle, protocols, 26 February 1951, Geneva.

1.4 The European Movement

The European Movement was in no sense the result of Christian democratic internationalism, but it is worth mentioning, as the NEI was one among several other pro-European pressure movements taking part in the European Movement. Therefore, the NEI, and Robert Bichet in particular, participated in the preparatory work for the Hague Congress, the Congress itself, and the European Movement. All those efforts became a crucial force in the run-up to the foundation of the Consultative Assembly in 1949, and eventually the European Assembly, the European Charter of Human Rights and the European Court of Human Rights. It also shows how French Christian democrats did not limit their work on European integration to only transnational Christian democratic initiatives, and tried to participate actively in the broader movement of European pressure groups. We start with explaining the origins of the Movement, as it is somewhat more complicated than the singular initiatives described above. We will follow with an examination of German and French participation, and the contribution of French Christian democrats, in this Movement. Our analysis shows that French Christian democrats were eager to work in the context of a broader European federalist movement, but also that it remained difficult for them to advocate a confessionally inspired vision for a future Europe in this broader network. This was not really problematic, however, as much of the work of the European Movement fundamentally corresponded to the European vision of the NEI.

After the war a variety of new transnational pro-European pressure groups emerged: the European Union of Federalists (EUF), the Socialist Movement for the United States of Europe (MSEUE), the European League for Economic Co-operation (ELEC), the European Parliamentary Union (EPU), the United Europe Movement (UEM), the French counterpart Conseil Français pour l'Europe Unie and the Nouvelles Équipes Internationales (NEI). The EUF, ELEC, UEM, and the Conseil Français pour l'Europe Unie grouped together in a more effective Joint International Committee of the Movements for European Union in November 1947, with the main intention to set up a conference for representative Europeans to be held at the Hague in spring 1948.⁵⁷ The NEI and the EPU joined those efforts at the end of 1947 and finally, a few months after the Hague Congress, all the pro-European pressure groups united in the larger European Movement (including the MSEUE but with the exception of the EPU) under the honorary presidency of Léon Blum, Churchill, De Gasperi and Spaak, the Presidency of Duncan Sandys and the Vice-Presidency of Robert Bichet.

The contribution of the Hague congress and the European Movement to the European integration process has been almost unanimously downplayed in research on the early post-war European integration period. The Hague Congress and the European Movement led to the signing of the

⁵⁷ Lipgens and Loth, *Document on the History of European Integration IV*, 326.

statute of the Council of Europe in May 1949 and the inaugural session of the Consultative Assembly on 19 August 1949, which in turn eventually resulted in the signing of the European Convention on Human Rights in November 1950. This was followed by the foundation of a European Commission of Human Rights and the supranational European Court of Human Rights in January 1959. So even though one of the fundamental pillars of the European Union, namely the rule of law, can be traced back to the Hague Congress, it is still argued by many that European integration and the institutionalization of supranationalism can only be explained through the intergovernmental cooperative process in the security field, with the Brussels Treaty and later NATO, and in the economic sphere through the OEEC and eventually the ECSC.⁵⁸

Institutionalized supranationalism did not exist before the establishment of a Higher Authority in the ECSC, so much of this historical account is true. However, to downplay the influence of the Hague Congress and the European Movement is also to fail to acknowledge what kind of impression those initiatives left on those key figures who were designated to play crucial roles in the intergovernmental negotiation process (which had yet to start), but also on public opinion, which was particularly targeted in the work of



Hague Congress in the Ridderzaal, The Hague 7-11 May 1948 (4)

these different movements. Many testimonies of important political figures describe the uniqueness of the Congress and the strong feeling of an unprecedented European élan that they experienced there. Robert Bichet wrote: 'Les quelques centaines d'hommes et de femmes qui s'étaient rassemblés constatant la situation commune de leurs patries, comprirent qu'un immense effort de rapprochement s'imposait à ces peuples d'Europe sortant de la tragédie hitlérienne et qu'ils étaient liés par une communauté de destin'.⁵⁹

It is in this strain of thoughts that Walter Lipgens' work has convincingly argued that the Council of Europe indeed:

[..]eventually proved to be immobile when confronted by the unforeseeable rigidity of Britain's opposition to any real supranational political commitment in Europe' and that it was 'eclipsed by Monnet's 'back-door' technocratic approach to supranational integration', but nevertheless successfully placed 'the fundamental issue of supranationalism firmly at the center of the Europe debate, which official intergovernmental action had hitherto failed to do, and without which

⁵⁸ Ibidem, 320.

⁵⁹ Robert Bichet, *La Démocratie Chrétienne en France, Le Mouvement Républicain Populaire* (Besançon 1980) 254.

even Monnet's more judicious approach would not have gained an audience'. Besides, Lipgens argues, 'its main creation, the European Consultative Assembly, ... set an historic precedent in transnational political unity of action. In a more popular and convincing way than either the Brussels Treaty or the OEEC, it bridged the gap between nations previously at war, it broke the ice existing between France and Germany, it expressed as had never been done before a common identity and sense of purpose in Europe, and thereby boosted the psychological and moral breakthrough between peoples without which the present-day European Community - for all its faults - could not have been built.⁶⁰

French MRP politicians participated in the EPU, EUF, the Conseil Français pour l'Europe Unie and the NEI, and sometimes adhered to different movements at the same time.⁶¹ Examining the NEI in the broader spectrum of pro-European pressure groups demonstrates that the NEI was one among many other pro-European pressure groups, and not the only transnational pro-European pressure group adhered to by French Christian democrats.

The Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) only became a full member of the Council of Europe in May 1951. Thus far, only a German delegation of fifty persons had been permitted to participate at the Hague Congress, where they were not allowed to intervene. Konrad Adenauer gave a speech to the Consultative Assembly in December 1951 in which he described the adherence to the European Convention as a part of the German people's commitment to 'European values' for 'a bitter and very dangerous experience has taught our people that it is necessary to expend all one's energies to maintain, develop and defend the culture of the West, if it is to survive'.⁶² Churchill's proposition in August 1949 to admit a German delegation to the Council of Europe had been rejected by British and French delegates, and German involvement was only agreed upon after the European Movement's efforts, which proposed a European convention of human rights as a means of ensuring the peaceful integration of Germany into the Council of Europe.⁶³ Thus, the European Movement only played a minor role in bringing about real-life Franco-German encounters and reconciliation before the Schuman Plan, but it did play a crucial role in the eventual incorporation of



Pierre-Henri Teitgen congratulates Konrad Adenauer as Germany joins the Council of Europe on 2 May 1951 (5)

⁶⁰ Lipgens and Loth, *Document on the History of European Integration IV*, 320-321.

⁶¹ Bacharan-Gressel, 'Les organisations et les associations pro-Européennes', 65 ; François de Menthon for example was a MRP politician, participated at the Hague Congress, was chairman of the Legal Committee of the EPU and participated at the NEI congresses.

⁶² Birgit Schwelling (ed.), *Reconciliation, Civil Society, and the Politics of Memory: Transnational Initiatives in the 20th and 21st Century* (Bielefeld 2012) 138.

⁶³ *Ibidem*, 135.

Germany into the Council of Europe, not a minor achievement.

The NEI remained the only pro-European pressure group that linked European unification to a transnational Christian democratic identity. Therefore, it is interesting to examine if those Christian democratic principles in any way influenced the efforts undertaken by the European Movement. One possible channel by which those principles could have been promoted among the broader European Movement was through personalities like Robert Bichet, Pierre-Henri Teitgen and François de Menthon. Robert Bichet, initiator of the NEI and present at most meetings in Geneva, participated at the preparatory reunions in the run-up to the Hague Congress as well as the Hague Congress itself, then began a ten year career as vice-president of the European Movement, becoming one of the first French delegates at the Consultative Assembly in August 1949. In this position Robert Bichet was able, together with Duncan Sandys and other important figures in the European movement like Paul van Zeeland, Henrik Brugmans, Joseph Retinger, Michel Rasquin and Raoul Dautry, to decide on the course of an extraordinary pro-European movement with real influence on an intergovernmental level. It was also in this position that Bichet expressed the importance of transnational Christian democratic networks in a speech about the work done by the NEI in front of the European Movement International Council in Brussels on 25 February 1949.⁶⁴

Political entrepreneurs like Robert Bichet skillfully positioned themselves on different levels, and among different audiences with different kinds of powers, in order to augment the impact of their vision for a future European framework. Other French Christian democrats supported this tactic, and MRP politician Albert Gortais called at a Geneva Circle meeting in December 1948 for more of this kind of multilevel involvement:

En tant que parti le MRP tout en soutenant à fond l'action gouvernementale évoqué par Bidault a résolu depuis des mois d'engager ses membres à fond dans une participation active aux organisations privées pour l'Europe unie qui prennent de plus en plus d'importance dans l'opinion etc. ... les organisations politiques d'inspiration chrétienne ne se contentent pas de plaider pour l'idée européenne dans l'abstrait mais s'efforcent de lui donner consistance et un contenu concret.⁶⁵

Like Robert Bichet, several other MRP members participated at the NEI congresses and/or the Geneva meetings while simultaneously securing important positions in other pro-European movements. France sent the largest delegation to the Hague Congress, with 153 delegates. The MRP was best represented compared to other French political parties, with seventeen delegates. From

⁶⁴ Archives historiques des Communautés européennes, Florence, Villa Il Poggiolo. Collections, COL. Walter Lippens, WL. WL 89 : http://www.cvce.eu/en/obj/address_given_by_robert_bichet_25_february_1949-en-e00cfe3e-7910-4ddb-81b0-d862f5ba22e5.html

⁶⁵ CHAN, FRB, AP 519/10, Geneva Circle, protocols, 22 December 1948, Geneva.

this group we know with certainty that besides Robert Bichet, François de Menthon, Pierre-Henri Teitgen (at that time Minister of Defense in the government of Robert Schuman), Germaine Peyroles and Maurice Schumann (President of the MRP), were also involved in the NEI and/or the Geneva meetings.⁶⁶ Pierre-Henri Teitgen, chairman of the Legal Committee of the European Movement, submitted in July 1949 the draft of a European Convention on Human Rights to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

However, there are only a very few examples of reports and resolutions set up by the Joint International Committee of the Movements for European Unity, and subsequently the European Movement, which explicitly refer to Christian democratic principles. The political report submitted to the Hague Congress by the International Committee, after careful deliberation and adaption by the member-groups of the International Committee (among which was the NEI), elaborates quite extensively about 'Spiritual Values' in the first part about principles and objectives:

Whether in the economic or the political field, the aim is not merely to build a defensive combination against bankruptcy or totalitarianism. An association resting solely on such negative foundations would possess no guiding principle nor power of endurance. The forces which alone can provide a solid and lasting basis for unity are moral and spiritual – our common belief in the dignity of man, our common heritage of civilization, our common pride in the contribution which Europe has made in the past to the progress of humanity, and our sense of continuing mission in the future. There is the inspiration that brings us, and will hold us, together.⁶⁷

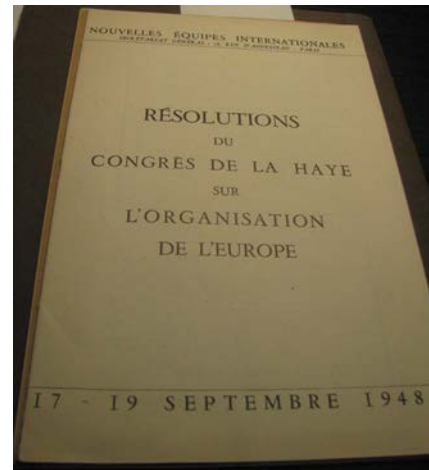
⁶⁶ Bernard Lachaise, 'La délégation Française au congrès de la Haye', in : Jean-Michel Guieu and Christophe Le Dréau (eds.), *Le Congrès de l'Europe à La Haye (1948-2008)* 151-168, see :151-158. For an exact list of French delegation see :

http://www.cvce.eu/en/obj/list_of_the_national_delegations_at_the_hague_congress_7_10_may_1948-en-5386a33f-398a-4c4b-a541-5b87ecdbb8fb.html (From: Archives privées Jean-Pierre Gouzy, Paris)

⁶⁷ International Committee: Congress of Europe – Political Report May 1948, EM Archives, File 'International Committee', Congress of Europe 7-10 May 1948; European Movement and the Council of Europe, London 1949, pp. 42-7. In: Walter Lippens and Wilfried Loth, *Document on the History of European Integration IV, Transnational Organizations of Political Parties and Pressure Groups in the Struggle for European Union, 1945-1950* (Berlin 1991) 334-335.

However, none of this comes back in the historic final Political Resolution adopted by the Political Committee on May 9th. Then in turn, the Economic and Social Resolution does mention that: ‘The exigencies of modern economic development must be reconciled with the integrity of human personality’, which reminds us of the Christian democratic principle of the sacredness of the human person. So, there are one or two examples where we can see the direct influence of Christian democratic internationalism on the broader European Movement, but they remain rather scarce.

In September 1948 NEI participants came together to discuss the Hague Congress and to draft political, cultural and social-economical resolutions on the organization of Europe. This document is particularly interesting, as it demonstrates that even though the NEI agreed upon the Resolutions of the Hague, it nurtured a much more ambitious and outspoken view on the role of Christian democracy in the process of European unification than the effort undertaken by the European Movement. In its Cultural Resolution, the NEI declared inter alia that: ‘La crise que traverse l’Europe se révèle être, avant tout, d’ordre spirituel et moral’ and that ‘L’unité européenne d’antan était axée sur son christianisme foncier. Sous la poussée de l’individualisme et dispersant l’âme de l’Europe, c’est le matérialisme qui s’est graduellement substitué à ce fondement chrétien’. It also affirmed that : ‘La véritable unité européenne ne se fera pas sans la restauration de l’esprit chrétien’. The Social Resolution illustrates particularly well that Christian democrats envisioned future European economies to be in line with one of the two fundamental anthropological principles on which the Catholic Social Teaching rests: ‘la mise en oeuvre d’une politique économique européenne directement inspirée de l’axiome de base de la doctrine sociale chrétienne que est le primat de la Personne Humaine, c’est-à-dire la primauté de l’humain sur l’économie’.⁶⁸



Congress report NEI September 1948 (6)

French Christian democrats did not restrict themselves to only the NEI congresses, and actively participated in the broader movement of pro-European pressure groups. Robert Bichet appears to have played an important role on different levels and expanded the work of the NEI beyond transnational contacts between European Christian democrats. This didn't result however in the confessionalisation of the broader European Movement as many other pro-European movements didn't share the confessional vision for a future Europe

⁶⁸ CHAN, FRB, AP 519/9, Resolutions NEI, 17-19 septembre 1948, Congrès de la Haye sur l'Organisation de l'Europe, The Hague.

discussed at the NEI congresses. We can imagine however that the NEI increased its reputation and influence at a national level, through the appointment of Robert Bichet as the Vice-President of the European Movement.

1.5 The Moral Re-Armament Movement

The last initiative of our analysis deserves attention as it stands out from the other initiatives for its rather original approach to Franco-German reconciliation, and is called the Moral Re-Armament Movement (MRA). Previously known as the Oxford Group, founder Frank Buchman renamed it the Moral Re-Armament Movement in 1938. The MRA contributed to early post-war Franco-German reconciliation by organizing events at the Caux Palace Hotel between 1946 and 1950, and through the rather personal and friendly contact that Buchman maintained with both Robert Schuman and Konrad Adenauer. The correspondence between Robert Schuman and Frank Buchman is particularly interesting, as it exposes why these kind of initiatives were considered beneficial in the run-up to the Schuman Plan.

Over the course of those four postwar years, approximately two thousand participants from France and over three thousand Germans took part in the annual conferences.⁶⁹ Both countries were represented by a heterogeneous group of ‘influencers’, including important personalities from the government, trade unions, industry (in particular the coal and steel sector), clergy, media and education.⁷⁰ The circumstances in which the



Caux Palace Hotel early 20th century (7)

conference were held made it, to put it rather mildly, a curious undertaking. The enormous Caux Palace hotel, with its majestic view on the Lac Lemman, created a certain fairytale-like setting, and the fact that participants had to engage in cooking and cleaning chores alongside each other, contributed to the atypical scenery and apolitical atmosphere.⁷¹

In addition, the inclusionary approach towards the Germans was quite revolutionary at that time, as one German participant, Peter Petersen, noted: ‘We were met by a French chorus with a German song ... We were already past masters at defending ourselves when we were

⁶⁹ Ibidem, 49. The information regarding participants is from the unpublished compilation “Survey: National Delegations at Caux 1946-1950” from the Caux Archives.

⁷⁰ Ibidem. (For exact numbers and names see Edward Luttwak)

⁷¹ Ibidem, 48. From verbal communications, Philippe Mottu and Michel Sentis of resident staff, January 6-8, 1992.

attacked. But here the doors were wide open for us and we were completely disarmed'.⁷² The following testimony gives us an impression of how those first encounters may have taken place. Georges Villiers, President of the French Employers' Federation, who represented Schuman at the conference of 1949, sat at the table with Hans Böckler, the head of the German trades unions, when Böckler started: 'We ought to be enemies on two counts – I am a German, you are French; you are the head of employers, I am a trade union leader,' to which Villiers replied: 'Yes, and there's a third count. Your countrymen condemned me to death; I was in a political concentration camp; I saw most of my comrades die around me. But that is all past. We must forget it. And personally, I would like to shake your hand'.⁷³

The central idea of the MRA at those conferences was that by engendering a heightened spiritual sensitivity among participants, and thereby inducing them to enter into a genuine and deep dialogue marked by a reciprocal sense of moral obligation, former enemies could eventually create an ideological common ground on which future relations could thrive.⁷⁴ In addition to these personal encounters, the programs of the conferences were filled with occasions in which victims from both sides were able to share their stories through personal testimonies as well as illustrative theater plays, and invocations and exhortations were made in the statements of Frank Buchman and other MRA's longtime members, who were highly experienced in the subtle art of unobtrusive spiritual persuasion.⁷⁵

These accounts may still evoke some kind of aversion among those who consider such non-rational and sectarian behavior not to be worth-mentioning in any self-respecting historical work on early post-war Franco-German reconciliation, were it not for the fact that Frank Buchman simultaneously nurtured close relationships with two key figures of this period: Robert Schuman and Konrad Adenauer. Schuman only visited Caux in 1953, but significant correspondence between Schuman and Buchman



Robert Schuman and Frank Buchman at Caux in 1953 (8)

⁷² Garth Lean, *Frank Buchman, A Life* (Great-Britain 1985) 350; Gabriel Marcel: *Fresh Hope for the World* (Longmans, 1960) 24.

⁷³ Report of the Caux Conference, 1949 (German edition, p. 45). In: Garth Lean, *Frank Buchman, A Life* (Great-Britain 1985), 378.

⁷⁴ Edward Luttwak, 'Franco-German Reconciliation: The Overlooked Role of the Moral Re-Armament Movement', in: Douglas Johnston and Cynthia Sampson(eds.), *Religion, the Missing Dimension of Statecraft* (Oxford 1994) 47.

⁷⁵ Luttwak, 'Franco-German Reconciliation',48.

in 1948⁷⁶, Schuman's preface for Buchman's book *Réfaire le monde* in 1950, and the award of the Croix de Chevalier of the Legion d'Honneur to Buchman in 1950 upon the proposal of Schuman, demonstrate that Schuman knew about the conferences, and in fact affirmed the added value of the efforts undertaken by Buchman. Schuman wrote in the preface of Buchman's book: 'What Moral Re-Armament brings us is a philosophy of life applied in action. ... It's not a question of a change of policy: it is a question of changing people'.⁷⁷

Again, no decisions or agreement about the coal and steel sector were made at the MRA conferences, and the MRA movement did not in any demonstrable way contribute directly to the Schuman Plan, nor to the following inter-state negotiations. However, the specific approach of Buchman appealed to Schuman precisely because it did what no formal political or economic agreement could achieve:

We must reach the masses so that the Pact will be sustained not only by the atom bomb, but by a change in the way of life of the Western world. In the economic field we have the Marshall Plan; in the political and military field the Atlantic Pact. Now we need to give fresh ideological content to the life of the millions of Europe. ... We all need a deep inner change in order to find the solutions to our major problems.⁷⁸

A few months later in October 1949, at a dinner with Buchman and Boucquey, Schuman expressed his concerns about his upcoming visit to Germany: 'One difficulty, is that I do not know whom to trust in the new Germany. Adenauer for instance, I have only just met,' to which Buchman replied: 'We have some excellent men in Caux and I can give you a dozen names.'. Schuman answered: 'I am going officially to Germany in the next weeks and I will look them up'.⁷⁹

Adenauer in the meanwhile had already visited Caux in September 1948, and supported the efforts of Buchman: 'I admit that I came with some degree of skepticism, but now I gladly admit that, after two days and after consideration of my impressions, I have been completely convinced of the great value of Caux'.⁸⁰ In June 1951 Adenauer wrote to Buchman:

It is my conviction, too, that men and nations cannot outwardly enjoy stable relationships until they have been inwardly preparing for them. In this respect Moral Re-Armament has rendered great and lasting services. ... Very soon after the war Moral Re-Armament reached out a hand to

⁷⁶ Caux Archives, Frank Buchman Papers 1873-1966, General Correspondence (Box 5-108), Box 81 Robert Schuman.

⁷⁷ Frank Buchman, *Réfaire le Monde* (La Compagnie du Livre 1950).

⁷⁸ At a dinner in March 1949 with Lille industrialist Louis Boucquey and Buchman's close colleagues Philippe Mottu and John Caulfeild. In: Philippe Mottu, *The Story of Caux* (London 1970) 118.

⁷⁹ Theophil Spoerri, *Dynamic out of Silence: Frank Buchman's relevance for today* (London 1976) 166-167.

⁸⁰ Hans Peter Mensing: *Adenauer Briefe 1947-1949* (Berlin 1984). In: Garth Lean, *Frank Buchman, A Life* (Great-Britain 1985), 356.

the German people and helped them make contact again with other nations. ... In recent months, too, we have seen the conclusion, after some difficult negotiations, of important international agreements. Here, also, I believe, Moral Re-Armament has played an invisible but effective part in bridging differences of opinion between negotiating parties, and has kept before them the objective of peaceful agreement in the search for the common good which is the true purpose of human life.⁸¹

We can conclude that both Schuman and Adenauer valued the work of Buchman, and cherished the ideal of Franco-German reconciliation through common experiences like those at Caux, which differed so much from the other political and economic initiatives at that time. Buchman knew very well that on a personal level, rationality fell short in addressing questions of guilt between perpetrators and victims right after the Second World War. Participants at Caux were therefore challenged to put their rationality aside, in order to engage in a softer approach to reconciliation, where higher ideals resulted in emotional reactions between victim and perpetrator that otherwise could not have been experienced.

1.6 Conclusion

In this part of the research we have tried to examine French participation in transnational initiatives with a confessional aspect, and sought to understand how a new approach to Franco-German reconciliation and European unity was fostered at those events.

In no sense did the initiatives contribute to the technocratic preparations of the Schuman Plan. Participants of the NEI congress and the Geneva Circle expressed ideas about common management of industries of basic products sporadically, but nowhere can we find propositions for an supranational control body before May 1950. This was, however, never the intention of the organizers of the initiatives. Those initiatives offered an approach to Franco-German reconciliation which no other conference or movement was able to offer at that time. The conferences at Caux, the NEI, and to a lesser extent the Geneva Circle, made the “crazy” option of uniting France and Germany in a new supranational community credible. They achieved this through shared beliefs on reconciliation and the need for the restriction of the powers of the nation-state. These ideas in turn were inspired by their shared confessional beliefs. Instead of worrying about the form of policy, Christian democrats on a transnational level were mainly preoccupied with the soul behind policy, and the soul of Europe.

⁸¹ “Message from the German Federal Chancellor, Dr. Konrad Adenauer, to Dr. Frank Buchman at the World Assembly for the Moral Re-Armament of the Nations, Mackinac Island, Michigan, 3 June 1951”, MRA archives, Tirley Garth House, Tarporley, England. In: Edward Luttwak, ‘Franco-German Reconciliation: The Overlooked Role of the Moral Re-Armament Movement’, in: Douglas Johnston and Cynthia Sampson, *Religion, the Missing Dimension of Statecraft* (Oxford 1994) 39.

There seems to have been a small group of French MRP politicians that, as early as 1946, started to get involved in transnational contact with other Christian democrats in Europe. They represented by no means the majority of MRP politicians, and their work was seen by many fellow party members as inconsequential or even irreconcilable with the republican values of French politics. Robert Bichet, with his close contact with Georges Bidault and others, appears to have played a major role in the NEI, the Geneva Circle and the European Movement, and can therefore be seen as a central actor in the transnational Christian democratic network.

All four initiatives sought to facilitate European unity through Franco-German reconciliation. Soon after the war, powerful French and German personalities were able to establish relations, where traditional intergovernmental diplomacy might have failed. All initiatives were in one way or another facilitated through shared confessional beliefs of the participants, but differed strongly in style and purpose. Members of the Geneva Circle approached Franco-German reconciliation and European unification much more through shared causal ideas, in contrast to the Caux conferences where French and German participants were encouraged to approach Franco-German reconciliation through shared confessionally inspired principled beliefs. The transnational and secretive character of the party contacts in Geneva enabled Georges Bidault and Konrad Adenauer to move beyond their official state responsibilities. It created opportunities for French and German Christian democratic party leaders with significant power at home, to be able to socialize, create mutual trust and exchange views about the policy road yet to be taken regarding Europe. Working through a common spiritual background at the NEI congress and the Caux conferences permitted participants to look beyond rational animosities and work towards higher ideals. The conferences at Caux stand out from the other initiatives, as they were initiated by an American and exhibited such an unapologetic connection between reconciliation and a common, spiritually inspired experience. The contribution of Christian democratic internationalism on the broader European Movement and the creation of the Council of Europe seem at first sight insignificant. Christian democratic values are rarely mentioned in the founding documents of the European Movement and the Council of Europe. Nevertheless, the work of the European Movement corresponded in many ways with the ideals put forward at the NEI congresses, and both only reinforced each other's ideals.

Part Two

French foreign policy on Germany and Europe 1946 - 1951

2.1 Introduction

The transnational initiatives discussed in Part One offered an ideational blueprint for Franco-German reconciliation, and created opportunities for socialization between French and German Christian democrats in the years after WWII. No official agreements were signed at the initiatives, nor did they contribute to regulations and policy concerning the Schuman Plan, and in no sense did the initiatives bring up the idea of a common market for coal and steel or the need for a supranational higher authority. How then can we claim that confessionally inspired ideas, alongside national interests, influenced Franco-German reconciliation in the run-up to the ECSC?

We believe that it is possible to convincingly support this claim by taking our analysis back to the national level, and by examining if and how these beliefs were able to inspire the ones in power at the Quai d'Orsay. We focus on two statesmen who were prominent Christian democrats, who participated, were informed about and approved of the initiatives described in Part One, and who were responsible of French foreign policy in the run-up to the signing of the Schuman Plan as ministers of Foreign Affairs and as heads of governments: Georges Bidault and Robert Schuman.

We argue that a closer look at their personal backgrounds demonstrates that the ideational blueprint for Franco-German reconciliation corresponded to both men's pre-war personal and political engagements, particularly after considering Robert Schuman's efforts for Franco-German cooperation in the broader context of his German education in the interwar years, and his personal devotion to Catholic faith. In this light, the argument of Alan S. Milward that France only came up with the Schuman Plan out of concerns about access to German resources exposes a rather one-dimensional approach to the origins of the ECSC. A personal portrait also increases our understanding of the leadership style of both men as ministers of Foreign Affairs and heads of government.

In the second part of this chapter we continue with an examination of moments and statements during their administration as ministers of Foreign Affairs that illustrate the convergence of the efforts of Christian democrats on a transnational level, and the instructions given at the Quai d'Orsay in the policy field of European unification and Franco-German reconciliation. For Georges Bidault, we argue that the anteriority of his preliminary contacts with German officials with regards to his official reorientation of policy on Germany at the Quai d'Orsay in 1948, and his proposal for a European Consultative Assembly on 19 July 1948, both show that he conducted policy that had previously been discussed or set-up in transnational settings in which French Christian democrats participated.

In the case of Robert Schuman, we argue that the transnational initiatives in no sense directly contributed to the final policy form of the Schuman Plan. The proposal for a supranational authority and the creation of a single market for coal and steel were a direct result of the preparatory work of civil servants like Jean Monnet. However, for Robert Schuman, those transnational initiatives did something that no expert working group could achieve. They confirmed his idealistic approach to Franco-German reconciliation, as well as contributing to a favorable context of mutual trust and a common purpose among French and German leaders, which were both indispensable in bringing the interstate negotiations and the leap of faith into supranational limbo to success.

2.2 Georges Bidault and Robert Schuman: education and early careers

In this part we examine the personal backgrounds of both Georges Bidault and Robert Schuman. We particularly focus on their religious background, as we expect that both statesmen were more likely to have taken the ideational aspect of Franco-German reconciliation seriously at the Quai d'Orsay if their worldviews were inspired by deep-seated religious beliefs. The education and the early careers of Georges Bidault and Robert Schuman reveal similarities, but also differences, in upbringing and character which can enrich our understanding of their work.

Georges Bidault (5 October 1899 – 27 January 1983) enjoyed a classic and Catholic secondary education in Bollengo, located in the Italian province of Turin, far away from his hometown of Moulins in central France. This is where he familiarized himself with the intellectual foundations of French Christian democracy, through the writings of Lacordaire and Montalembert.⁸² Bidault studied history and geography at the public university of the Sorbonne, thereby rejecting the possibility of a more confessional education at the renowned Catholic university in Lille surnamed *La Catho*. His time as a student in Paris enabled him to get involved in the work of l'Association Catholique de la Jeunesse de France (ACJF), which eventually resulted in contributions to the Christian democratic revue *Politique* in 1927. Later on, in 1931, during his teaching period at the prestigious Parisian school Louis-le-Grand, Georges Bidault adhered to the center Christian democratic party and predecessor of the MRP: Parti Démocrate Populaire (PDP) in 1931, and abandoned *Politique* in 1934 for another revue inspired by Christian democratic thought: *l'Aube* where he later became Editor in Chief.



Georges Bidault (9)

This pre-war period has been formative for Georges Bidault's participation in the Resistance as

⁸² Jacques Dalloz, *Georges Bidault, Biographie Politique* (Paris 1992) 11.

well as his post-war political career. The future MRP party elite was formed during these ten pre-war years as Georges Bidault got in touch with, among others, Robert Bichet, Francisque Gay, Maurice Schumann and even Robert Schuman.⁸³ It was also then that Georges Bidault developed a Christian democratic political vision, opposing radical individualism and the French nationalist, extreme right and monarchist political Catholicism represented by l'Action Française, while endorsing the reconciliation between French political Catholicism and Republican values. As a journalist, he exposed his vision of Franco-German reconciliation and rapprochement between Catholics of both countries in foreign policy analyses, and he actively participated in the work of Paris based Secrétariat International des Partis Démocrates d'Inspiration Chrétienne (SIPDIC).⁸⁴

Georges Bidault started his career at the Quai d'Orsay as part of the provisional government of Charles de Gaulle, with whom he had participated in the Resistance and which explains a lot of his postwar policy stances on Germany. Nevertheless, the pre-war period also exposes a man who was familiar with Christian democratic thought in politics and Christian democratic internationalism, long before the meetings of Geneva and the NEI congresses.

Two aspects of the personal background of Robert Schuman (29 June 1886 – 4 September 1963) stand out from everything else: his German education and his strong personal religiosity. Before his election as deputy of the Moselle in 1919, Schuman had lived as a German law student in Metz, Bonn, Munich and Berlin, only to become French in 1918 after the incorporation of Alsace-Lorraine with the Versailles Treaty. Very close to his pious mother, Robert Schuman enjoyed a comprehensive religious upbringing at home and at school. As a student he joined in 1904 the ultra-Catholic student association Unitas in Bonn, known for its popularity among theology students, and became an active lay advocate in various Catholic charity organizations like the *Volksverein* in Lorraine, a German movement preoccupied with Catholic social thought and charity work. After the tragic death of his mother in a car accident in 1911, Robert Schuman considered entering the priesthood, but eventually decided against, with his friend Henri Eschbach writing to him a month after the loss: 'je ne puis imaginer meilleur apôtre que toi ... Tu resteras laïque parce que tu réussiras mieux à faire le bien, ce qui est ton unique préoccupation'.⁸⁵



Robert Schuman (10)

Robert Schuman was exempted from front-line duties during the war due to medical reasons, and

⁸³ Ibidem, 34.

⁸⁴ Ibidem, 17.

⁸⁵ Raymond Poidevin, *Robert Schuman, homme d'État 1886-1961* (Paris 1986) 29.

with one foot in the legal profession and one foot in religious structures, he eventually left the Lorraine area for Paris in 1919. He joined the Christian democratic center Parti Démocratique Populaire (PDP) in 1931, for the social aspect as well as the appraisal of international cooperation and reconciliation in its political program. Driven by a ‘hostilité à la politique des blocs et des fronts qui, manœuvrés par les extrêmes, dressent une moitié du pays contre l’autre, paralysent le travail parlementaire et créent une atmosphère de guerre civile’, Robert Schuman adhered to the center party out of concerns for unity and appeasement in times of growing extremes in the run-up to the war.⁸⁶

After the war, Robert Schuman sent his application for MRP membership to Robert Bichet on 8 November 1945, and quickly became part of the party elite, where he was appreciated for his culture, serenity, political sensibility and the contrast of his diplomatic character with a note of malicious humor, and his slightly rustic and non-bourgeois tendencies.⁸⁷ Robert Schuman was an experienced member of the parliamentary financial commission before the war, and was appointed minister of Finance by Georges Bidault in 1946, where he opposed every form of dogmatic interventionism or doctrinal liberalism. He defended a liberalism slightly corrected by the state, which retained a role of ‘d’ordonnateur, de coordonnateur et d’arbitre’.⁸⁸

Robert Schuman entered the Quai d’Orsay as a person of multiple personalities. His professional and political experience had made him a sound and integer financial expert. His regional origins must have influenced his approach to the post-war German question differently than, for example, Georges Bidault, whose origins were far away from the German border. His religious education, activities as a layperson, his well-known book collection on philosophical and religious questions, as well as his self-study on Thomas Aquinas’ philosophy of nature and science, exhibit a man whose thought must have been heavily influenced by religious teachings.⁸⁹ A visit to his house in Scy-Chazelle only confirms the piety of his character. Books in his library on morals in politics, a picture with the Pope, a statue of Holy Mary next to his deathbed donated by his close colleagues from the European Parliamentary Assembly, and the overall simplicity of his interior confirm the genuineness of his religious beliefs.

⁸⁶ Ibidem, 85.

⁸⁷ Ibidem, 145.

⁸⁸ Speech Robert Schuman at a conference, 8 November 1947 in Brussels, *L’État contemporain dans la vie économique et sociale* (Grandes Conférences catholiques). In : Raymond Poidevin, *Robert Schuman, homme d’État 1886-1961* (Paris 1986) 156.

⁸⁹ Margriet Krijtenburg, *Schuman’s Europe: his frame of reference* (Dissertation Leiden University, 2012) 40.

2.3 Christian democratic internationalism and French foreign policy 1946-1952

2.3.1 Christian democrats in foreign affairs

On a national level, Christian democrats played a major directing role in French foreign policy. This was first of all a logical consequence of their participation in most governments of the Fourth Republic and the continuity of their presence at the Quai d'Orsay. Georges Bidault was minister of foreign affairs between June 1944 and July 1948, as well as from January 1953 until June 1954, with the exception of December 1946 and January 1947 during the government of Leon Blum. He was also head of government from 28 October 1949 until 24 June 1950. Robert Schuman led the government from 24 November 1947 until 19 July 1948, and succeeded Georges Bidault as the head of the Quai d'Orsay from 26 July 1948 until 23 December 1952. This means that both statesmen shared great levels of authority and responsibility on questions regarding French foreign affairs in the years preceding the signing of the Schuman Plan.

Furthermore, it appears as if both politicians in their position as ministers of Foreign Affairs were rarely challenged by their fellow MRP politicians, or by parliamentary scrutiny. Francisque Gay, a well-known MRP member in the government and parliament from 1945 until 1951 underscored this by writing in his 'Mémoire confidentiel': '... le MRP laisse à celui qui assume la direction du quai d'Orsay le soin d'arrêter avec ses services les lignes générales de sa politique. On ne veut pas être soupçonné d'imposer au gouvernement une politique étrangère ... Ne la compliquons pas [sa tâche] en formulant des exigences de doctrine'.⁹⁰ Bidault was known for being very discreet about his work in international affairs, but so was Schuman, who argued in front of the National Assembly that foreign policy should remain the responsibility of executive power, and that too much parliamentary scrutiny would harm the negotiation position of French diplomats.⁹¹ This restraint was facilitated by the fact that parliamentarians and the French public in general were not that interested in foreign policy questions, but interest increased again with the plan for a European Defense Community (EDC), which was rejected by the French parliament in 1954. Only eighteen of the seventy-eight questions of confidence between 1946 and 1956 concerned questions on foreign policy, and this included military affairs.⁹²

We now know that Georges Bidault and Robert Schuman participated, were kept informed or approved of the initiatives as described in Part One, we also know that the outcomes of those initiatives corresponded to their personal and confessionally inspired views on politics. Considering their high level of authority on matters regarding French foreign affairs between 1945 and 1952, we will now turn to an examination of moments and personal accounts in their administration as

⁹⁰ Francisque Gay, *Mémoire confidentiel* (Paris 1951) 93.

⁹¹ Emile-François Callot, *L'action et l'œuvre politique du mouvement républicain populaire* (Paris 1986) 109.

⁹² *Ibidem*, 111.

ministers of Foreign Affairs which expose some kind of relation to the work done by French Christian democrats in transnational initiatives.

2.3.2 Georges Bidault at the Quai d'Orsay

After the resignation of de Gaulle in January 1946, Georges Bidault initially steered France in the direction of coercive measures towards Germany and the 'Politics of Grandeur' of de Gaulle.⁹³ The main objective of this policy consisted of keeping Germany weak, through denying Germany any centralized institutions, the international control of the Ruhr, the permanent occupation of the Rhineland and the economic attachment of the Saar to France. These initial 'red lines' in French foreign policy towards Germany quickly appeared to be untenable, and only two years later, on 19 July 1948 at the conference of the Consultative Council of the Brussels Treaty in the Hague, George Bidault expressed the urgent need for a European Assembly and a customs union between the Benelux countries, Great-Britain, France and every other European country who wished to participate.⁹⁴ This proposal set in motion the negotiation process that eventually resulted in the signing of the Statute of the Council of Europe on 5 May 1949.

This was his boldest European statement thus far, and the last one he would make as a minister of Foreign Affairs, as he had to make way for his successor Robert Schuman. What then were the driving forces behind this drastic reorientation of French foreign policy regarding Germany and European unification? And more importantly, is it plausible that confessionally inspired transnational initiatives might have contributed to this shift in policy?

It is plausible insofar as Georges Bidault's efforts to cautiously initiate contact between French and German Christian democrats at the end of 1947 coincided and even preceded the shift in French official policy towards Germany. The repressive approach of the Quai d'Orsay towards the German economy came under pressure already by the end of 1946, mainly because of the more conciliatory approaches of the Benelux countries, as well as Great-Britain and the United-States, who at that time were working towards an economically and politically unified bizon. However, it would be more than a year before the French government realized that it had to completely revisit her policy on Germany with the London accords of spring 1948.

The unwillingness of the Soviet Union to cooperate with French demands for Germany became painfully clear at the start of 1947. Moscow did not give in on the French 'red lines' on Germany at the Moscow Conference of Council of Foreign Ministers in April, and alienation became even stronger after the rejection of the Marshall plan by Molotov at the London meeting with Bidault and

⁹³ Georges-Henri Soutou, 'Georges Bidault et la construction européenne 1944-1954', in : Serge Berstein, Jean-Marie Mayeur, Pierre Milza, *Le MRP et la construction européenne* (Paris 1993), 197-230, see : 198.

⁹⁴ Archives of Public Record Office in London (PRO) –Collection of l'Union Européenne Occidentale: WEU. DC 1 –Session restreinte du Conseil consultative de la Haye – 19 July 1949.

Bevin in June. Georges Bidault hinted subtly for the first time at a common European project at the Conference de Seize on 12 July 1947 in Paris: 'l'heure est venue de construire l'Europe', but by then a coordinated Europe only existed in economic terms.⁹⁵ Two months later, the Cominform created a new reality in the East. The schism of the failed London Conference in November 1947 put France once and for all in the Western camp, together with Great-Britain and the United States, and a four-partite agreement on Germany appeared to be impossible.⁹⁶ The Prague Coup in February only affirmed the growing threat of communism, and French policy towards Germany under Georges Bidault was definitively abandoned in the London agreements of March and April 1948.

It is in this context that Georges Bidault realized that stubborn behavior towards Germany would only result in the isolation of France; that the incorporation of Germany into an economically integrated Europe would soon become inevitable under American pressure, and that the security of Western Europe could only be assured in cooperation with the United States.⁹⁷ It is also in this context that Georges Bidault cautiously started to mention the need for a new Europe, which would incorporate a Western-German state. On the 13 February 1948, in front of the National Assembly, the minister expressed this renewed vision for the role of France in a Europe which would include Germany: 'La véritable, la valable et je dis presque la seule valable intercession entre les Allemands et l'Europe, c'est la France'.⁹⁸ At the signing of the Brussels Pact a month later he added: 'Le moment est venu d'aller vite et aussi loin que possible pour constituer ce qui reste d'Europe'.⁹⁹ And in front of the National Assembly on 11 June: 'Je dois dire qu'il serait sage que l'Allemagne fût, le temps venu réconciliée avec l'Europe et avec sa liberté, par la France... il faut édifier l'Europe et trouver pour cette Allemagne, dans cette Europe, une place qui lui convienne'.¹⁰⁰

Those first hints at a reorientation of French policy at the Quai d'Orsay regarding Germany followed almost directly after the participation of the first German delegation at the NEI congress at the end of January 1948 in Luxembourg, and the first contacts between Georges Bidault and Konrad Adenauer in March 1948. Even if Georges Bidault didn't participate in that NEI congress, we can say with certainty that he was kept informed, considering his pre-war experiences in the SIPDIC and his close relation to Robert Bichet.

Structural changes played a major role in the shift of German policy under Georges Bidault. He could not compete against the conditional American financial help and the communist threat. We

⁹⁵ Dalloz, *Georges Bidault*, 174.

⁹⁶ Gérard Bossuat, *La France, l'aide américaine et la construction européenne 1944-1954 I* (Paris 1992) 137.

⁹⁷ Soutou, 'Georges Bidault et la construction européenne 1944-1954', 215.

⁹⁸ Discours reproduit dans *Journal officiel de la République française, Assemblée nationale, Débats, 2^e séance du 13 février 1948*. In : Jean-Rémy Bézias, *Prélude au Conseil de l'Europe : La Déclaration de Georges Bidault à la Haye* (Nice 1996) 3.

⁹⁹ Dalloz, *Georges Bidault*, 189.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibidem*, 198.

cannot help but wonder, however, if those first secretive Franco-German contacts might have facilitated this shift. Georges Bidault sowed the seeds for several initiatives that were meant to foster European integration: the Organization for European Economic Co-operation (OEEC), signed on 16 April 1948, the Brussels Pact, signed on 17 March, and a customs union with Italy. None of those initiatives had the same impact as the Schuman Plan of 1950, but they did create a pro-European atmosphere at the Quai d'Orsay, in which Robert Schuman was able to build momentum in May 1950.

We can conclude however that Georges Bidault only really started to work towards European integration and Franco-German reconciliation once he had left the Quai d'Orsay. In the following years Bidault became a sincere European.¹⁰¹ This becomes clear from his efforts in the Geneva Circle in the following year, his membership and addresses at the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe in August 1949, and his efforts for European unification as Prime Minister between October 1949 and June 1950. However, it doesn't seem right to say that it was only a question of timing, and that if Georges Bidault had been a minister of Foreign Affairs in Robert Schuman's place, that he might have come up with his own 'Bidault Plan'. Georges Bidault was not interested when Jean Monnet presented what would become the Schuman plan. He had just launched a new plan in April, in which he foresaw a 'Haut-Conseil atlantique pour la paix dans lequel les grandes puissances pourraient coordonner les efforts des États-Unis et de l'Europe dans le domaine de la défense, de l'économie et peut-être plus tard de la politique'.¹⁰² This trans-Atlantic orientation of Bidault in 1950 shows that he had been working towards the same goal as Robert Schuman, but it would only be the latter who eventually dared to take the supranational leap of faith which resulted in the foundations of the European Union.

2.3.3 Robert Schuman at the Quai d'Orsay

The Quai d'Orsay was in urgent need of a new policy on Germany when Robert Schuman entered the ministry by the end of July. France had to find a way to deal with the inevitability of the resurrection of a new West-German state. No one at that time, however, could have predicted the road that France would eventually take on 9 May 1950. With the Schuman Plan, France irreversibly shifted from a policy aimed at keeping Germany weak, to a policy in which Germany was treated on the basis of equality. The idea to place Franco-German production of coal and steel under a common High Authority with real executive powers was 'un saut dans l'inconnu', as Robert Schuman

¹⁰¹ Soutou, 'Georges Bidault et la construction européenne 1944-1954', 215.

¹⁰² Georges Bidault, *D'une Résistance à l'Autre* (Paris 1965), extrait sur le plan Schuman : http://www.cvce.eu/obj/georges_bidault_d_une_resistance_a_l_autre_extrait_sur_le_plan_schuman-fr-fa58a5d0-9d13-43b3-875d-592a6dbb57a1.html.

confirmed to a journalist who questioned him on the uncertainty of his proposal.¹⁰³

There are many roads to take in explaining the origins of the minister's proposal. From an economic point of view, control over the German coal and steel sector remained an unanswered problem, and those concerns kept playing an important role in the run-up to and during the interstate negotiations. Luckily, there was Jean Monnet for the technical questions. Furthermore, Robert Schuman had witnessed the birth and failure of various agreements and organizations meant to bring about European unification through economic integration. Negotiations had resulted in an impasse and the abortion of the projects for a custom union with Italy (Francita), and later on with Italy and the Benelux (Finebel), and it appeared to be impossible to rise above the intergovernmental framework of the OEEC. As a result, Robert Schuman adopted a new tactic for the future, in which he would come up with a project resting on abstract principles, which he would subsequently present to countries and even non-contractual partners. In short, he would start negotiating after presenting the fundamentals of the agreement, and not before.¹⁰⁴ This tactic was successfully put into practice at the presentation of the Schuman Plan on the 9th of May, and the subsequent inter-state negotiations.

It is difficult to pinpoint in this economic and state-centered historiography when exactly Robert Schuman's personal religiosity and the initiatives discussed in Part One contributed to the foundations of the ECSC. This is especially because economic considerations played an important role in Schuman's approach to Germany. One of his statements on the possible loss of the German market in December 1949 illustrates this particular approach to Franco-German cooperation: 'sur le plan agricole voilà un marché de 48 millions d'habitants qui nous échapperait'.¹⁰⁵ Nevertheless, there are moments and personal statements that illustrate how confessionally inspired ideas mattered alongside national and economic interests in the run-up to the ECSC.

The transnational initiatives prepared the ground for the difficult interstate negotiations in the run-up to April 1951 by creating a much needed relationship of mutual trust and confidence between Georges Bidault and Konrad Adenauer, allowing them to overcome some of the most revolutionary propositions in the Schuman Plan. Furthermore, the NEI congresses, the meetings in Geneva and the Conferences in Caux (which were barely attended by English participants) were occasions to test and get used to the possibility of a future Europe without England. In addition, the Geneva Circle was a sort of parallel diplomatic channel, which was used by Robert Bichet in February 1951 to pressure Germany and Belgium to reconsider their uncooperative approach in the run-up to the Schuman Plan.

¹⁰³ Jean Monnet, *Mémoires* (Paris 1976), 447, in : Raymond Poidevin, *Robert Schuman, Homme d'État 1886-1963* (Paris 1986) 263.

¹⁰⁴ Raymond Poidevin, *Robert Schuman, Homme d'État 1886-1963* (Paris 1986) 239.

¹⁰⁵ Robert Schuman, *À la commission des Affaires étrangères du Conseil de la République*, 7 décembre 1949, in : Raymond Poidevin, *Robert Schuman, homme d'État 1886-1963* (Paris 1986) 255.

The confessional aspect not only facilitated the work of the transnational networks, it also played an important role in cultivating mutual trust, respect and above all a shared sense of purpose and determination between Robert Schuman, Konrad Adenauer and Alcide de Gasperi. All three were men of Catholic faith, all three were led by Christian democratic principles, and in 1958 Robert Schuman commented on the importance of this shared confessional identity in his inauguration speech as Doctor Honoris Causa of the Catholic University of Leuven:

Nous étions amenés, je dirais à l'improviste, à mettre sur place en œuvre sans préparation, sans nous être concertés dans d'autres circonstances, et nous l'avons fait chacun avec son tempérament, avec les contingences spéciales de sons pays, et nous avons eu la même inspiration, l'inspiration chrétienne ; nous avons eu confiance et cette persuasion nous l'avons tout trois, puisée dans la Foi qui nous inspire, dans l'Espérance qui nous anime, dans la Charité qui nous unit.¹⁰⁶

The confessional aspect in the run-up to the Schuman Plan is also important if we want to understand the political tactics of Robert Schuman, a man who admitted his own oratory weaknesses and who was known for his incredible humility and integrity. Robert Schuman was, according to Adenauer, a realist and idealist at the same time.¹⁰⁷ His strength lay with his ability to combine the pragmatic and realistic short time vision of a lawyer or financial expert with the more idealistic and holistic longer term imagination of a philosopher or even a priest. Jean de Bourbon-Busset, who had been the deputy director of Schuman's ministerial staff, called him a 'realiste mystique', and his metaphorical description of Schuman's modus operandi illustrates how Europe was built in the run-up to the Schuman plan:

Cela ressemble au passage d'un torrent. On fixe, au préalable, une direction générale. On éprouve ensuite la stabilité de la première pierre, puis on avance de pierre en pierre en ne perdant pas le souffle ni l'équilibre, en évitant de glisser ou de se laisser éclabousser. Comme le torrent est large il faut souvent faire halte mi-course, même en restant dans une position instable.¹⁰⁸

It is in this context that we should understand the efforts of the minister in bringing about the Council of Europe. The project for a European Assembly, launched by Georges Bidault, was one of the many stones in Schuman's crossing of the river towards the ECSC. Schuman realized very quickly that it would be impossible to surpass national sovereignty in a political union as envisioned by the Council of Europe. Nevertheless, he understood the implications and the

¹⁰⁶ Krijtenburg, *Schuman's Europe*, 186.

¹⁰⁷ Poidevin, *Robert Schuman*, 205.

¹⁰⁸ Jean de Bourbon Busset, France-Forum, novembre 1953, 5-6. In : Raymond Poidevin, *Robert Schuman, Homme d'État 1886-1963* (Paris 1986) 205.

necessity of such a preliminary step. For Robert Schuman, the Treaty of London signed on 4 May 1949 laid down the foundations: ‘...d’une coopération spirituelle et politique de laquelle naîtra l’esprit européen principe vaste et durable d’union’¹⁰⁹ and he defended this vision again in front of the National Assembly on 19 July:

Il ne s’agissait pas pour nous de dresser une définition scientifique de l’Europe. ... Elle devra se faire spirituellement avant de pouvoir s’unir territorialement. L’esprit européen doit précéder l’unification politique et même économique de l’Europe. Il en sera une base et l’élément vital. ... [l’Allemagne] y pourra être encadrée et entourée, moralement et spirituellement.¹¹⁰

Robert Schuman knew very well that more than policy alone was needed, as he expressed in the foreword of Franck Buchman’s book: ‘It is not a question of a change in policy: it is a question of changing people’.¹¹¹ The minister argued at a dinner with Buchman in October 1949 that policy alone would not close the deal: ‘Statesmen can propose far-reaching plans, but they cannot put them into effect without far-reaching changes in the hearts of people, that is your work, and it is the kind of work I would like to do for the rest of my life’.¹¹² It is in this train of thought that we need to look at the contribution of those confessionally inspired transnational initiatives. The Schuman Plan was launched when ideas about Franco-German reconciliation had been simmering for a long time under the political surface. The talking shops of federalist idealists, like those at the NEI, created from 1947 onwards a transnational humus, which resulted in a fertile political working ground in which revolutionary ideas such as those proposed by Robert Schuman were able to blossom.

A strictly economic or realist interpretation of the Schuman Plan fails to understand the broader beliefs on which the proposition was founded, and without which the Plan might never have succeeded. Jean Monnet writes in his *Mémoires*: ‘La proposition française est donc, dans son inspiration essentiellement politique. Elle a même un aspect pour ainsi dire moral. Dans son essence, elle vise un objectif très simple que notre gouvernement cherchera à réaliser sans se préoccuper, dans une première phase, des difficultés techniques’.¹¹³ The same ideal and moral purpose was expressed by Adenauer: ‘elle [Schuman Plan] appartient à l’ordre de la morale. C’est la responsabilité morale que nous avons à l’égard de nos peuples, et non la responsabilité technique que nous devons mettre en œuvre pour réaliser un si vaste espoir. L’accueil en Allemagne a été enthousiaste, aussi nous ne nous accrocherons pas à des détails’.

¹⁰⁹ Poidevin, *Robert Schuman*, 233.

¹¹⁰ Callot, *L’Action et l’œuvre politique du mouvement républicain populaire*, 147.

¹¹¹ Buchman, *Refaire le Monde*, V.

¹¹² Lean, *Frank Buchman*, 350.

¹¹³ Jean Monnet, *Mémoires* (Paris 1988) 365-366.

The case of Robert Schuman illustrates how principled beliefs on European unification and Franco-German reconciliation crystallized in transnational initiatives like the NEI, and how these beliefs provided road maps for Schuman in the run-up to ECSC. These ideas, expressed in the political atmosphere of Christian democratic internationalism, and Schuman's principled beliefs derived from personal faith, increased the minister's clarity about the end-goal of his policy (a longer term vision), and created more certainty about a plan which seemed to undermine national interests.¹¹⁴

2.4 Conclusion

There is some truth in Georges Bidault's observation about himself and Robert Schuman: 'Avec des nuances de jugement et de style, nous avons fait en substance tous les deux la même politique'.¹¹⁵ Those nuances in judgement and style already appear in their pre-war life. George Bidault was a bohemian journalist, compared to the priest-like celibate lifestyle of Robert Schuman. Georges Bidault wrote about Christian democratic principles applied in political life, Robert Schuman lived those principles out of personal devotion to, and faith in, a higher ideal.

Under Georges Bidault confessionally inspired ideas and networks may have facilitated the turn in German policy which became evident after the London Accords in spring 1948. The timing of his contacts with German counterparts and the NEI congress in Luxembourg affirms this, as they preceded the official turn in policy at the Quai d'Orsay of spring 1948. In his last few months as a minister, Georges Bidault had reoriented French responsibility in Europe by making it the necessary broker of the future incorporation of Germany. In this, he made the first small steps of an approach that would come to full maturity under Robert Schuman.

However, Robert Schuman did more than take up the work for a European Assembly that Georges Bidault had left him on his departure. His German origins and his strong personal faith made him the perfect architect of Franco-German reconciliation. Understanding the Schuman Plan as only the result of technocratic economic bargaining processes ignores the longer term and holistic vision of Schuman for Europe.

Robert Schuman did not join as many transnational meetings of European Christian democrats as Georges Bidault did, maybe because he didn't need to. It seems as if those efforts of European Christian democrats confirmed the destiny he had already chosen: to bring about peace between Germany and France.

¹¹⁴ Goldstein, 'Ideas and Foreign Policy: An Analytical Framework', 3.

¹¹⁵ Dalloz, *Georges Bidault*, 302.

Conclusion

This research approached the Schuman Plan by examining the ideological side of the European integration process, namely the effect of confessional ideas in the run-up to the signing of the Schuman Plan. We started with the question of how the participation of French Christian democrats in confessionally inspired transnational networks for European unification contributed to the development of French foreign policy regarding Germany in the run-up to the signing of the ECSC Treaty on April 1st 1951?

Even though many French politicians harboured a love-hate relationship with these initiatives, and only a minority of the MRP participated at the gatherings, they still offered opportunities for Franco-German reconciliation which could not have been created by regular inter-state contacts. The NEI, the Geneva Circle and the conferences at Caux facilitated the exchange and the concretization of a Christian democratic vision for a united future Europe based on Franco-German cooperation, and they created on different levels relations of mutual trust among French and Germans.

But how then did those initiatives possibly contribute to the development of foreign policy favouring Franco-German cooperation at the Quai d'Orsay? Those initiatives inspired and confirmed the beliefs of Georges Bidault and Robert Schuman about future Franco-German cooperation in a united Europe. Both statesmen participated in, were kept informed about and approved of the Franco-German contacts established as soon as 1946. They made the "crazy" option of uniting France and Germany in a new supranational community credible, through shared confessionally inspired beliefs on reconciliation and the need for the restriction of the powers of the nation-state and they increased relations of mutual trust. Something that was difficult to obtain in economic and technocratic interstate bargaining processes.

The timing of the Franco-German contacts initiated by Georges Bidault in 1947 shows that a willingness for Franco-German reconciliation preceded his official policy at the Quai d'Orsay. This in turn might have facilitated the transition of Georges Bidault's repressive German policy into a European agenda in which France would eventually lead the way to the incorporation of Germany. For Robert Schuman, but also Konrad Adenauer, the transnational initiatives, together with the creation of the Council of Europe and the work of non-confessional pro-European pressure movements, created a kind of moralistic, now-or never feeling which was needed to bring the difficult interstate negotiations for the Schuman Plan to a success. The common Christian democratic identity of the leaders of the six core-Europe countries removed uncertainty about each other's policy preferences, and created a common purpose inspired by higher ideals. This enabled them to look beyond national security and economic interests.

To get a more complete understanding of French Christian democratic internationalism in the early European integration process, it would be interesting to look at the role of French Christian

democrats in the run-up to the European Defense Community (EDC). The EDC was proposed by the French in 1950 and rejected in the National Assembly in 1954, meaning the Christian democrats failed to repeat the achievement of two years earlier. Such research, in addition to what has been done here, would give a comprehensive portrait of the actions of French Christian democrats in the early European integration process.

This research aimed at including confessional inspired ideas, in a mainly state-centred and functionalist post-war European integration historiography, by showing how those ideas have mattered alongside interests in the run-up to the ECSC. It has done so by bringing together fragmented literature on the NEI, the Geneva Circle, the NEI as part of the European Movement and the Moral Re-Armament Movement and by linking those initiatives to the work of Georges Bidault and Robert Schuman. By no means does this research conclude that confessional ideas, instead of national interest, mattered in the run-up to the Schuman Plan as we remain well aware of the other economic and geopolitical dynamics at play in this period. Nevertheless, the findings contribute in increasing our understanding on how efforts on a transnational level might have enhanced the preparedness of national actors to compromise on national sovereignty, as well as their willingness to develop foreign policy in favor of Franco-German cooperation.

In a broader perspective, this research shows that it is possible and reasonable to include religion in studies of foreign policy and diplomacy and therefore challenges the secular bias in the academic field of International Relations and European Studies. In addition, this research has the potential to broaden debates about the Christian roots of the European Union as well as discussions on the principle of *laïcité* in French politics.

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- Bichet, Robert, *La Démocratie chrétienne en France. Le Mouvement Républicain Populaire* (Besançon 1980).
- Centre Historique des Archives Nationales (CHAN), Paris, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine, Archive Privée (AP) 519, Fond Robert Bichet (FRB), boxes 9 and 10.

Pictures

- Photo on cover of the dissertation taken at a visit at the house of Robert Schuman in Scy Chazelles : the Schuman Plan exposed on the desk of Robert Schuman. Robert Schuman took the plans of Monnet home at Scy-Chazelles where he had studied them before taking the initiative for the European Coal and Steel Community.
- (1) Robert Bichet: [http://www2.assemblee-nationale.fr/sycomore/fiche/\(num_dept\)/785](http://www2.assemblee-nationale.fr/sycomore/fiche/(num_dept)/785)
- (2) Le Problème Allemand NEI Congress report: AN 519 AP/9
- (3) Pierre-Henri Teitgen at the Tours NEI congress:
<http://www.gettyimages.nl/detail/nieuwsfoto's/congress-of-tours-tours-septembre-1953-lors-du-congr%C3%A8s-nieuwsfotos/166489876#congress-of-tours-tours-septembre-1953-lors-du-congrs-les-nouvelles-picture-id166489876>
- (4) Hague Congress May 1948 Ridderzaal:
http://www.cvce.eu/en/obj/the_opening_of_the_congress_of_europe_in_the_hague_7_may_1948-en-28a24dbf-370f-41dc-98ee-fc36eda97e1e.html
- (5) Pierre-Henri Teitgen congratulates Konrad Adenauer:
http://www.cvce.eu/obj/adhesion_de_l_allemande_au_conseil_de_l_europe_strasbourg_2_mai_1951-fr-24be5b53-aefd-4ac1-a21c-c8e514bd1a9f.html
- (6) NEI congress report September 1948: AN 519 AP/9
- (7) Caux Palace Hotel
- (8) Robert Schuman and Frank Buchamn at Caux 1953: http://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/caux-initiatives-of-change-foundation_a-force-for-mediation/42260330
- (9) Georges Bidault 21 July 1948 outside the Quai d'Orsay:
http://www.cvce.eu/en/obj/georges_bidault-en-8641a109-71e6-4e1b-8781-1cd0b382e89f.html
- (10) Robert Schuman: <http://one-europe.net/pour-l-europe-by-robert-schuman>