




ARTICLE

Personalism and European Integration: Jacques Delors and the Legacy of the 1930s

Benedetto Zaccaria 

Department of Political Science, Law and International Studies, University of Padova, Padova, Italy
benedetto.zaccaria@unipd.it

This article addresses the influence of personalism – an anti-liberal, anti-socialist intellectual movement which developed in France in the 1930s – on the process of European integration during the European Commission presidency of Jacques Delors (1985–95). The received wisdom is that the personalist tradition contributed to shaping the early developments in European integration in the 1950s but its influence later declined with the consolidation of the bipolar equilibrium in Europe. Instead, this work shows that personalism gradually re-emerged during the mid-1970s and 1980s and inspired the Commission's search for an anti-individualist European social model, the supranational democratisation of the integration process and the continental vision of European integration after 1989.

Introduction

This article addresses the influence of personalism – an intellectual movement which developed in France in the 1930s advocating a ‘third way’ between liberalism and socialism¹ – on the process of European integration during the European Commission presidency of Jacques Delors (1985–95).² This period, which was marked by the economic liberalisation of the Single European Act (1986) and the ensuing ‘Europe 1992 initiative’,³ has traditionally been described as the apex of the ‘neoliberal turn’, which, since the ‘shock of the global’ of the mid-1970s,⁴ had meant a gradual decline of the so-called ‘Keynesian consensus’ and made the European Economic Community (EEC) one of the drivers of neoliberal globalisation.⁵

In fact, recent studies have highlighted that the emergence of this neoliberal shift was not ‘a teleological path towards the adoption of pure market-oriented policy prescriptions’⁶ as it co-existed with a

¹ Jean-Louis Loubet del Bayle, ‘Le mouvement personnaliste français des années 1930 et sa postérité’, *Politique et Sociétés*, 17, 1–2 (1998), 219–37.

² George Ross and Jane Jenson, ‘Reconsidering Jacques Delors’ Leadership of the European Union’, *Journal of European Integration*, 39, 2 (2017), 113–27; Piers Ludlow, ‘Jacques Delors (1985–1995): Navigating the European Stream at Full Flow’, in Jan Van der Harst and Gerrit Voerman, eds., *An Impossible Job? The Presidents of the European Commission, 1985–2014* (London: John Harper Publishing, 2015), 173–96.

³ Mark Gilbert, *Surpassing Realism: The Politics of European Integration Since 1945* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 155–86.

⁴ Niall Ferguson et al., eds., *The Shock of the Global: The 1970s in Perspective* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010).

⁵ See, for instance, Francesco Petrini, ‘Integrazione e conflitto. Per una storia materialista della costruzione europea’, *Ventesimo Secolo*, 20, 1 (2021), 10–35; Wolfgang Streeck, *Buying Time: The Delayed Crisis of Democratic Capitalism* (New York: Verso, 2014), ch. 3; John Gillingham, *European Integration 1950–2003: Superstate or New Market Economy?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 79–146; Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe’s Twentieth Century* (New York: Penguin Books, 1998), 408.

⁶ Roberto Ventresca, ‘Neoliberal Thinkers and European Integration in the 1980s and the Early 1990s’, *Contemporary European History*, 31, 1 (2022), 31–47, here 34. A linear narrative is also challenged in Aurélie Andry, Emmanuel

plurality of economic cultures advocating alternative social and neo-mercantilist policies.⁷ This article further demonstrates the non-linearity of the EEC's 'pro-market' turn by focusing on an additional and under-researched variable affecting European integration in the late 1980s, namely personalism. By doing so, the article challenges recent interpretations of European integration 'in light of capitalism',⁸ which, by following a traditional socialist vs liberal interpretative approach based on a spectrum of policy options ranging from state regulation to market liberalisation, downplay the influence of 'third way' alternatives.⁹

Indeed, according to current European integration historiography, 'third way' projects of personalist inspiration only concerned the emergence of Christian Democratic Europeanism between the mid-1940s and the establishment of the EEC in the late 1950s.¹⁰ Accordingly, personalism and personalists have no mention, let alone political or intellectual agency, in studies dealing with European integration in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s.¹¹ The only – limited – exception are studies on European federalist movements, which involved a minority branch of 'integral' federalists of personalist inspiration, including intellectuals such as Alexandre Marc and Denis de Rougemont.¹²

Personalism also appears in historical accounts focusing on Delors's intellectual background to make sense of his close attention to the social dimension of European integration.¹³ However, these works – including Alessandra Bitumi's in-depth article on Delors's quest for a European social model¹⁴ – do not interpret Delors's personalism as an expression of a broader revival of the personalist tradition within the Community framework and beyond during the 1980s and early 1990s.

Contrary to received wisdom, in this work I show that after a gradual decline during the 1960s personalism started to revive in the Community framework in the 1970s and later affected the Commission leadership in the mid and late 1980s. In particular, I show that the collapse of communist regimes in 1989 and the apparent triumph of liberal capitalism marked the apex of a personalist revival within a close yet highly influential circle of Commission representatives, for whom

Mourlon-Druol, Haakon Ikononou and Quentin Jouan, 'Rethinking European Integration History in Light of Capitalism: The Case of the Long 1970s', *European Review of History*, 26, 4 (2019), 553–72; Quinn Slobodian and Dieter Plehwe, 'Neoliberals Against Europe', in William Callison and Zachary Manfredi, eds., *Mutant Neoliberalism: Market Rule and Political Ruptures* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2019), 89–111.

⁷ Laurent Warlouzet, *Governing Europe in a Globalizing World: Neoliberalism and its Alternatives Following the 1973 Oil Crisis* (New York: Routledge, 2017).

⁸ Andry et al., 'Rethinking'.

⁹ The notion of a 'third way' was indeed part of the personalist tradition since its outset in the early 1930s. In this regard see Steve Bastow, 'Third Way Discourse in Interwar France', *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 6, 2 (2001), 169–89. The anti-materialist roots of the personalist 'third way' distinguish it from the social-democratic 'third way' which started to emerge in Europe in the late 1960s and which is not addressed in this article.

¹⁰ The reference works here are Rosario Forlenza, 'The Politics of the *Abendland*: Christian Democracy and the Idea of Europe after the Second World War', *Contemporary European History*, 26, 2 (2017), 261–86; Antonin Cohen, 'Why Call It a "European Community"? Ideological Continuities and Institutional Design of Nascent European Organizations', *Contemporary European History*, 27, 2 (2018), 326–44. On the influence of personalism on Catholic politics and visions of European integration between the 1930s and 1950s, see also Giorgio Campanini, *Cristianesimo e democrazia. Studi sul pensiero politico cattolico del '900* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 1980).

¹¹ Personalism is not mentioned in the most popular European integration history textbooks, including Kiran Klaus Patel, *Project Europe: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020); Wilfried Loth, *Building Europe: A History of European Unification* (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2015); Wolfram Kaiser and Antonio Varsori, *European Union History: Themes and Debates* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Gilbert, *Surpassing Realism*.

¹² Jean-Pierre Gouzy, 'Le Fédéralisme d'Alexandre Marc et le combat pour l'Europe', *L'Europe en Formation*, 355, 1 (2010), 13–32.

¹³ Julien Barroche, 'La subsidiarité chez Jacques Delors. Du socialisme chrétien au fédéralisme Européen', *L'Harmattan*, 23, 3 (2007), 153–77; Charles Grant, *Delors, Inside the House that Jacques Built* (London: N. Brealey, 1994). Delors himself extensively dealt with his personalist roots in several writings, including Jacques Delors, *Changer: Conversations avec Claude Glayman* (Paris: Stock, 1975); idem, *L'unité d'un homme: Jacques Delors. Entretiens avec Dominique Wolton* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 1994).

¹⁴ Alessandra Bitumi, "'An Uplifting Tale of Europe": Jacques Delors and the Contradictory Quest for a European Social Model in the Age of Reagan', *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*, 16, 3 (2018), 203–21.

European integration became the testing ground for a European ‘third way’. Their quest for a European palingenesis would deeply affect three major domains: the search for a European ‘anti-individualist’ social model; the supranational democratisation of the integration process; and the building of a continental *Grande Europe* (Greater Europe) through an enlarged supranational Community.

This article concludes that Delors’s effort to shape a ‘personalist’ course of European integration was not successful, but understanding his political engagement is crucial to make sense of previously neglected aspects of European integration in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

The first aspect of this concerns the anti-liberal roots of the Commission’s effort to shape European integration as a collective project confronting the then triumphant model of liberal capitalism. Crucially, one can hardly find in Delors’s reflections any actual distinction between ‘liberalism’ and ‘neoliberalism’. In line with the tenets of Catholic social doctrine, the heart of Delors’s anti-liberal stance was its rejection of the individualistic tenets of liberal capitalism, which he considered to be leading to exaltation of individual self-actualisation.¹⁵

A second aspect regards the long-term personalist roots of what has been described as an ‘uplifting tale’ of Europe. Indeed, this study draws on, and further expands, Bitumi’s argument about Delors’s ‘moral narrative’ of European integration,¹⁶ showing that it was in fact the last chapter in a decades-long anti-materialist anti-liberal political struggle of Christian inspiration which, after it emerged in France in the 1930s and timidly re-emerged after the economic, social and monetary crises of the 1970s, would find fertile ground in the European Commission *milieu* after the crucial turn of 1989. This is essential to understanding the historical rationale for the Commission’s institutional engagement in narrating a ‘progressive story of European integration’ in the 1990s and 2000s.¹⁷

This article has a chronological structure in order to appreciate how the political dimension of personalism survived the Second World War and went through the Cold War years. After a first section addressing the origins and tenets of personalism, the work focuses on its revival in the 1970s (section two), its gradual emergence during Delors’s first mandate as Commission president (section three) and the Commission’s hopes for a personalist turn in European integration after 1989 (section four). Section five shows how Delors’s disillusioned hopes in the post-Maastricht period paved the way for the Commission to engage in a ‘spiritual’ renewal of European politics, following the legacy of 1930s personalism. This study draws on Delors’s archives and other private archival collections of Community officials and federalist activists of personalist inspiration stored in the Historical Archives of the European Union (EU) in Florence.

Personalism and Personalists from the 1930s to the Cold War

Personalism never established itself as an organic political doctrine. Instead, it was an intellectual movement originally embraced by a loose group of French personalities with different cultural, political and religious backgrounds.¹⁸ What they had in common was that they were engaged in a search for an anti-liberal anti-socialist ‘third way’. They believed in the transcendental dimension of the human ‘person’, in contrast to the materialist conceptions which had dominated the second half of the nineteenth century on which both liberal capitalism and socialist collectivism drew. Their main reference points were the *Ordre Nouveau* (ON) (New Order) movement established by the

¹⁵ On the long-term Catholic critique of liberalism, see Carlo Invernizzi Accetti, *What Is Christian Democracy? Politics, Religion and Ideology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 53–79.

¹⁶ Bitumi, “Uplifting Tale”, 210.

¹⁷ Mark Gilbert, ‘Narrating the Process: Questioning the Progressive Story of European Integration’, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 46, 3 (2008), 641–62; Wolfram Kaiser, ‘One Narrative or Several? Politics, Cultural Elites, and Citizens in Constructing a “New Narrative for Europe”’, *National Identities*, 19, 2 (2017), 215–30. Neither Gilbert nor Kaiser address the influence of the personalist tradition on the ‘progressive’ narrative of European integration.

¹⁸ Jean-Louis Loubet del Bayle, *Les non-conformistes des années 30. Une tentative de renouvellement de la pensée politique française* (Paris: Seuil, 1969).

Russian-born philosopher Alexandre Marc in 1931 and the journal *Esprit* founded by the French philosopher of Christian inspiration Emmanuel Mounier a year later.¹⁹ Both *ON* and *Esprit* aimed to react to a sense of crisis of civilisation which had gradually crept across Europe after the end of the First World War²⁰ and was later fostered by the disruptive economic recession which followed the Wall Street collapse of 1929, the downfall of the European treaty system and the crisis of capitalism and liberal democracy.²¹ Against what they perceived as a decadent, selfish, atomised bourgeois society,²² the French personalists aimed at a moral renewal in which each ‘person’ could fully develop within different yet inter-related communities combining spiritual education with political empowerment and autonomy.²³ Here ‘spiritual’ should be linked to the neo-Thomist philosophy of Jacques Maritain – one of the inspirers of French personalism.²⁴ Maritain advocated the ‘primacy of the spiritual’²⁵ and reaffirmed the centrality of the ‘person’ versus the state (against Marxism) and production and consumerism (against capitalism).²⁶

In the political domain, the French personalists embraced the tenets of Catholic social thinking. Beyond anti-materialism,²⁷ these primarily concerned the principle of subsidiarity,²⁸ which had entered the lexicon of political Catholicism in the encyclical *Quadragesimo anno* (1931) to reaffirm the belief, already established in Pope Leo XIII’s *Rerum Novarum* (1891), that the state should not interfere in the activities of the ‘intermediate corps’.²⁹ At the same time, Marc was greatly influenced by Joseph Proudhon’s model of federal and decentralised democracy, which in turn reflected the tradition of French libertarian socialism.³⁰

Indeed, their dismissal of both capitalism and collective socialism made personalist thinkers closer to the model of a corporatist decentralised ‘communitarian economy’ based on expert arbitration (rather than parliamentary representation) which French economist François Perroux theorised in the late 1930s and early 1940s.³¹ Perroux’s vision would have a decisive influence on

¹⁹ On the relationship between Marc and Mounier see Catherine Préviti, ‘Alexandre Marc’s Battle for a New Order: French *Fédéralisme* on the Eve of European Federalism (1928–1942)’, in Robert Belot and Daniela Preda, eds., *Visions of Europe in the Resistance: Figures, Projects, Networks, Ideals* (Bruxelles: Peter Lang, 2022), 191–210; Gilda Manganaro Favaretto, *Il federalismo personalista di Alexandre Marc (1904–2000)* (Milano: Franco Angeli, 2006), 45–62; Christian Roy, *Alexandre Marc et la Jeune Europe 1904–1934: L’Ordre Nouveau aux origines du personnalisme* (Nice: Presses d’Europe, 1999); John Hellmann, *The Communitarian Third Way: Alexandre Marc and the Ordre Nouveau 1930–2000* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 2002); John Hellmann, *Emmanuel Mounier and the New Catholic Left, 1930–1950* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981).

²⁰ See Oswald Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (München: Beck, 1923); Thomas Mann, *Der Zauberberg* (Berlin: S. Fischer Verlag, 1924); Julien Benda, *La trahison des clercs* (Paris: Grasset, 1927); Nicolas Berdiaev, *Un nouveau Moyen Age* (Paris: Plon, 1927).

²¹ Loubet del Bayle, ‘Le mouvement personnaliste’, 219–37; Thomas Keller, ‘Katholische Europakonzeptionen in den deutsch-französischen Beziehungen’, in Hans Manfred Bock, Reinhart Meyer-Kalkus and Michel Trebitsch, eds., *Entre Locarno et Vichy. Les relations culturelles franco-allemandes dans les années 1930*, vol. I (Paris: CNRS Editions, 1993), 219–39.

²² Jacques Maritain, ‘Lettre sur le monde bourgeois’, *Esprit*, Mar. 1933; Emmanuel Mounier, *Révolution personnaliste et communautaire* (Paris: Montaigne, 1935).

²³ Ferdinand Kinsky, *Fédéralisme et Personnalisme* (Paris: Presses d’Europe, 1976), 32.

²⁴ Giorgio Campanini, ‘Maritain and Mounier: impegno intellettuale e proposta politica’, in Giuseppe Pietrobelli and Cristina Rossitto, eds., *La crisi della cultura politica contemporanea e il pensiero personalista* (Padova: Libreria Editrice Gregoriana, 1980).

²⁵ Jacques Maritain, *Primaauté du spirituel* (Paris: Plon, 1924).

²⁶ Jacques Maritain, *Humanisme intégral* (Paris: Aubier, 1936).

²⁷ During the 1930s, the common materialist roots of individual liberalism and communism were openly denounced in Pius XI’s encyclicals *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931) and *Divini redemptoris* (1937).

²⁸ According to the ‘principle of subsidiarity’, the functions of higher levels of government should be as limited as possible and should be subsidiary to those of lower levels. See Barroche, ‘La subsidiarité’, 154–6.

²⁹ Invernizzi Accetti, *What Is Christian Democracy?*, 53–79.

³⁰ Bertrand Vayssière, ‘Alexandre Marc: Personalism at the Service of Europe’, *The Federalist*, 44, 2 (2002), 123–42.

³¹ François Perroux, *Capitalisme e communauté de travail* (Paris: Librairie du Recueil Sirey, 1938). On the controversial relationship between French personalists and the Vichy regime see Préviti, ‘Alexandre Marc’s Battle for a New Order’.

Jean Monnet – who inspired the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) project in 1950, including the design of a supranational ‘High Authority’ – and on his closest collaborators in the French *Commissariat Général du Plan* (General Planning Commission) after the end of the Second World War.³² Both Maritain and Mounier would also contribute to fostering the idea of the *Abendland* – i.e. the Christian West – in the minds of the main post-war Western European Christian Democratic leaders, from the French Robert Schuman to the West German Konrad Adenauer and the Italian Alcide De Gasperi.³³

Indeed, since the late 1930s personalism had emerged as a transnational phenomenon which went well beyond the French political context, becoming a reference point for European Christian Democrats³⁴ – particularly in Italy³⁵ – and also shaping political Catholicism beyond Western Europe, for instance in Latin America³⁶ and Poland,³⁷ and affecting the ‘human rights’ discourse within the frameworks of the newly-established United Nations and the Council of Europe in the post-war years.³⁸

However, from the mid-1950s the influence of French personalism gradually declined as parliamentary democracy emerged as the unchallenged political model in the western half of Europe.³⁹ Within this framework – which was deeply affected by the polarising logic of the Cold War – Christian Democrats across Europe shifted towards ‘the capitalist pole of the third way spectrum’.⁴⁰ The political dimension of personalism, including its anti-liberal and anti-capitalist tenets, was therefore marginalised in national political arenas. In France from the late 1950s to the 1960s, personalist ideas were primarily embraced by a loose group of intellectuals and academics who focused their efforts on the philosophical sphere under the influence of Paul Ricœur and Jean Lacroix (a co-founder with Mounier of *Esprit*)⁴¹ in sheer opposition to the then dominating philosophical ‘schools’ of Marxism, existentialism and structuralism, which rejected the transcendental tenets of personalism.⁴² There was a similar dynamic in the Italian scene, where the rigid Cold War framework confined the personalist tradition to the philosophical domain and the religious sphere, as is shown by its notable influence on the works of the Second Vatican Council (1962–5) under the aegis of Pope Paul VI, who had contributed to spreading Maritain’s philosophy in Italy during the 1920s and 1930s.⁴³

³² Cohen, ‘Why Call It a “European Community”?’, 328.

³³ Forlenza, ‘The Politics of the *Abendland*’.

³⁴ Jan-Werner Müller, *Contesting Democracy: Political Ideas in Twentieth Century Europe* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011), 135–8.

³⁵ Bjørn Thomassen and Rosario Forlenza, ‘Catholic Modernity and the Italian Constitution’, *History Workshop Journal*, 81, 1 (2016), 231–51; Renato Moro, *La formazione della classe dirigente cattolica (1929–1937)* (Bologna: il Mulino, 1979), 99–103; Paolo Pombeni, *Il gruppo dossettiano e la fondazione della democrazia italiana (1938–1948)* (Bologna: il Mulino, 1979), 42–4.

³⁶ Olivier Compagnon, *Jacques Maritain et l’Amérique du Sud* (Villeneuve d’Ascq: Presses universitaires du Septentrion, 2003).

³⁷ See, for instance, Piotr H. Kosicki, *Catholics on the Barricades: Poland, France, and ‘Revolution’ 1891–1956* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018).

³⁸ Samuel Moyn, ‘Personalism, Community, and the Origins of Human Rights’, in Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 85–106.

³⁹ Martin Conway, *Western Europe’s Democratic Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020); Invernizzi Accetti, *Christian Democracy*, 139–68. On the trajectory of personalism in France see Michel Deneken, ‘Meurt le personalisme, revient la personne: la voix d’Emmanuel Mounier’, *Le Cahier philosophiques de Strasbourg*, 31 (2012), 376–7.

⁴⁰ Invernizzi Accetti, *Christian Democracy*, 153.

⁴¹ Andrea Giambetti, *Ricœur nel labirinto personalista* (Milano: Franco Angeli, 2013); Jean Lacroix, *Le personalisme comme anti-idéologie* (Paris: Presses univ. de France, 1972).

⁴² Edward Baring, ‘Humanist Pretensions: Catholics, Communists, and Sartre’s Struggle for Existentialism in Postwar France’, *Modern Intellectual History*, 7, 3 (2010), 581–609; Edith Kurzweil, *The Age of Structuralism: Lévi-Strauss to Foucault* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980).

⁴³ Luigi Stefanini, *Personalismo Sociale* (Roma: Studium, 1952); Augusto Del Noce, *Il Problema dell’Ateismo* (Bologna: il Mulino, 1964); Armando Rigobello, *Il personalismo* (Roma: Città Nuova, 1975). On Del Noce, see in particular Rosario Forlenza and Bjørn Thomassen, ‘Christianity and Political Thought: Augusto Del Noce and the Ideology of

Instead, after the Second World War, Marc and several of his former fellows in *L'Ordre Nouveau* focused their engagement at the European level and became the reference point for the personalism-inspired so-called 'integral federalism'.⁴⁴ Although their 'European' outlook had been vague during the 1930s, their involvement in the French resistance led them to embrace federalism as the political dimension of personalism. This 'federalist' turn was developed in particular by Marc, who became the first Secretary General of the *Union des fédéralistes européens* (Union of European Federalists), the inaugural congress of which, held in Montreaux on 27–31 August 1947, revealed the influence of personalist and 'third way' ideas concerning the relationship between intermediate communities (towns, regions, etc.) and the central state, the distribution of economic wealth, corporatist representation at the supranational level, participation of workers in the management of enterprises and the idea that sectoral economic agreements among nation-states would never offer the basis for a genuine European federal union. However, after the first major congress of European federalists held at The Hague in 1948, Marc's radical ideas were marginalised by Altiero Spinelli's 'Hamiltonian' federalism, which was more focused on the institutional aspect of European unification and less interested in the spiritual, cultural and social dimensions advocated by Marc.⁴⁵

During his marginalisation in the 1950s, Marc committed all his energy to a rear-guard struggle focusing on the educational domain, especially through the *Centre International de Formation Européenne* (CIFE), which he founded in 1954 after the failure of the European Defence Community project to educate citizens of all professions about the idea of a federal Europe.⁴⁶ A similar cultural turn was undergone by Denis de Rougemont, one of Marc's closest fellows at the *Ordre Nouveau* and one of the most vocal representatives of post-1945 integral federalism as director of the *Centre Européen de la Culture*, founded in Geneva in 1949.⁴⁷

This is not to say that personalist ideas disappeared from the first Community institutions, in particular the ECSC's High Authority and later the European Commission, as was witnessed by the presence of officials and politicians who shared a personalist background. Beyond Jean Monnet, they included, for instance, Max Kohnstamm,⁴⁸ Jacques-René Rabier⁴⁹ and Émile Noël.⁵⁰ However, until the late 1960s this personalist background had limited political impact. This is confirmed in studies published by Stefanie Pukallus and Katja Seidel on the origins of the Commission's political engagement: in neither case is the influence of the personalist tradition in the period between the mid-1950s and the late 1960s even mentioned.⁵¹

Christian Democracy in Post-War Italy', *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 21, 2 (2016), 181–99; Guido Formigoni, 'La lezione di Maritain e l'esperienza di Lazzati. Azione cattolica e azione politica', *Humanitas*, 66, 2–3 (2011), 429–60.

⁴⁴ Alain Greilsammer, *Les mouvements fédéralistes en France de 1945 à 1974* (Nice: Presses d'Europe, 1975); Jean-Pierre Gouzy, 'The Saga of the European Federalists During and After the Second World War', *The Federalist*, 46, 1 (2004), 12–46.

⁴⁵ Vayssiere, 'Alexandre Marc'. On the relationship between Marc and Spinelli see Favaretto, *Il federalismo*, 123–39.

⁴⁶ Gouzy, 'Le Fédéralisme'.

⁴⁷ On de Rougemont see Bruno Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont: De la personne à l'Europe* (Paris: L'Age d'Homme, 2000).

⁴⁸ Kohnstamm was Secretary to the High Authority of the ECSC and Vice President of the Action Committee for the United States of Europe from 1956. He was also founding president of the European University Institute in Florence (1976–81). On Kohnstamm see Anjo Harryvan and Jan Van Der Harst, *Max Kohnstamm: A European's Life and Work* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2001).

⁴⁹ Rabier was a member of Jean Monnet's Cabinet in the ECSC (1953–5), Director General of 'Presse et information' at the European Commission (1970–3) and founder of the Eurobarometer in 1973. He bore witness to his personalist roots and links with Mounier and Perroux in 'Interview with Jacques-René Rabier', June 1998, Oral History, INT 609, Historical Archives of the European Union, Florence [hereafter: HAEU].

⁵⁰ Noël was the first Secretary General of the European Commission from 1958 to 1987. On Noël's personalist background see Catherine Préviti, 'A propos des archives Émile Noël: aux origines d'une carrière européenne (1922–1958)', *Journal of European Integration History*, 10, 2 (2004), 77–92.

⁵¹ Stefanie Pukallus, *The Building of Civil Europe 1951–1972* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 1–62; Katja Seidel, *The Process of Politics in Europe: The Rise of European Elites and Supranational Institutions* (London: Bloomsbury, 2010).

The 'Crisis' of the 1970s: New Hopes for a Personalist Revival?

The turning point of 1968–9 – marked by a mounting wave of social and political unrest and an evolving debate on the 'crisis of democracy'⁵² – paved the way for the re-emergence of 'third way' ideas which echoed the tenets of personalism. It was again in France that integral federalists (from Marc to de Rougemont) and Catholic members of the Socialist Party belonging to the *deuxième gauche* perceived that the epiphenomena of the 1930s crisis – insecurity, violence, unemployment, inflation, moral decadence, youth revolt, a widespread sense of Kafkaian alienation in a world dominated by the technical – were re-emerging in 'post-industrial' society.⁵³ They looked for new models of political and economic subsidiarity, new forms of industrial democracy and the humanisation of working conditions through direct participation by workers in the management of enterprises. This convergence is shown, for instance, by the revival of *Esprit* as the leading intellectual journal of the 'second left',⁵⁴ and by the common attention that representatives of the *deuxième gauche* and integral federalists devoted to the Yugoslav model of workers' self-management, which was regarded as a 'third way' between liberal capitalism and collective socialism.⁵⁵

Echoes of this 'self-management' discourse also arrived in Brussels, as the question of industrial democracy was considered by Raymond Rifflet – an integral federalist militant and Director General for Social Affairs of the European Commission who had entered the European Commission in 1967 – to be an essential part of the EEC's social policy in the early and mid-1970s.⁵⁶ These ideas also resonated in the 'Report on European Union' drafted by the Christian Democrat Belgian Prime Minister Leo Tindemans in December 1975 in close cooperation with Commission officials of 'personalist' inspiration, such as Rabier.⁵⁷ Among other things, the Tindemans report argued that

the task of the present generation is to seek a transition to a post-industrial society which respects the basic values of our civilisation and reconciles the rights of the individual with those of the community. If we fail our democracies will be at risk and our children will inherit a decadent society.

It also called for a gradual re-discovery of the subsidiarity principle in Community affairs, in that it advocated

the development of individual personal responsibility in the social and economic sphere by associating workers with the decision making, the management of profits of undertakings, by greater freedom in the organisation of work, by more openness, decentralisation and consultation in public administration.⁵⁸

⁵² See, for instance, Michael J. Crozier, Samuel P. Huntington and Joji Watanuki, *The Crisis of Democracy. Report on the Governability of Democracies to the Trilateral Commission* (New York: New York University Press, 1975); Campbell Balfour, *Participation in Industry* (London: Croom Helm, 1973).

⁵³ Kinsky, *Fédéralisme et Personnalisme*.

⁵⁴ Michael Scott Christofferson, *French Intellectuals Against the Left: The Antitotalitarian Moment of the 1970s* (New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2004). On the evolution of *Esprit* in the post-war period, see Michael Winock, *Histoire politique de la revue Esprit* (Paris: Seuil, 1975).

⁵⁵ Benedetto Zaccaria, 'Learning from Yugoslavia? Western Europe and the Myth of Self-Management', in Michel Christian, Sandrine Kott and Ondrej Matejka, eds., *Planning in Cold War Europe: Competition, Cooperation, Circulations (1950s–1970s)* (Berlin-Boston: De Gruyter, 2018), 213–35; Frank Georgi, *L'autogestion en chantier: les gauches françaises et le 'modèle' yougoslave (1948–1981)* (Nancy: Arbre bleu Éditions, 2018), chapters 5, 6, 7.

⁵⁶ Bertrand Vayssièrè, 'Pour une politique sociale européenne: les espoirs et les déceptions de Raymond Rifflet à la direction générale des Affaires sociales (1970–5)', *European Review of History*, 26, 2 (2019), 284–304.

⁵⁷ Note de Jacques-René Rabier à Carlo Scarascia Mugnozza, 11 Sep. 1975, Fond Emanuele Gazzo, 121, HAEU.

⁵⁸ Leo Tindemans, *Report on European Union* (29 Dec. 1975), available at: https://www.cvce.eu/en/education/unit-content/-/unit/02bb76df-d066-4c08-a58a-d4686a3e68ff/63f5fca7-54ec-4792-8723-1e626324f9e3/Resource#284c9784-9bd2-472b-b704-ba4bb1f3122d_en&overlay (last visited 11 May 2022). On the emergence of the subsidiarity principle in the

However, the political influence of ‘third way’ European integration personalist networks was still limited. Famously, the Tindemans Report presented an agenda for change which clashed with protectionist national agendas.⁵⁹ At the beginning of the 1980s, French personalism only gained public notoriety due to the polemics fostered by Bernard-Henri Lévy⁶⁰ and later Zeev Sternhell⁶¹ on the relationship between personalist intellectuals and the Vichy regime, and the alleged admiration of Nazi plans for a ‘*collectivité organique*’ (organic collective) in an equivocal ‘*Lettre à Hitler*’ published by *Ordre Nouveau* in November 1933.⁶² Marc and de Rougemont rejected Lévy’s allegations and emphasised the harsh criticism in *Ordre Nouveau*’s letter of Hitler’s ‘inhuman and absurd’ regime.⁶³ Also the leading liberal intellectual Raymond Aron publicly criticised Lévy’s anti-personalist theses, but in doing so he acknowledged the marginal impact that personalism had had on France’s recent political history. As he commented in *L’Express*, ‘The communitarian and anti-individualistic ideologies of the 1930s never emerged outside the inner circles of the Parisian intelligentsia’.⁶⁴

The French presidential election of April/May 1981 seemed to offer a new perspective on the ‘revival’ of integral federalism, marked as it was by the success of the socialist leader François Mitterrand and the entry of the *deuxième gauche* in governing positions. As Marc wrote to his close friend Rifflet – who had meanwhile become a special advisor to European Commission President Gaston Thorn (and later to Jacques Delors)⁶⁵ – Mitterrand’s election might offer ‘the possibility of a new European deal’.⁶⁶ Marc acknowledged that this was perhaps an illusion, but everything should be done to turn it into reality. In a similar letter to Michel Rocard, one of the leading figures in the *deuxième gauche*, Marc wondered if ‘the change which has occurred in France will allow, as I wish, the process of European unification to be unblocked’.⁶⁷ This wishful thinking was also openly expressed in a letter to Émile Noël, the then highly influential Secretary General of the European Commission, on 14 May 1981. From the tone of correspondence between Marc and Noël, it seems that Marc considered Noël to be a close partner in his struggle for ‘new European politics’.⁶⁸ In a new letter to Noël dated 2 June 1981, Marc emphasised their ‘common cause’ to exploit the ‘change’ in French politics ‘to try to push forward, as quickly as possible, our great cause’.⁶⁹ As we shall see later, this close ‘partnership’ would be confirmed in the 1980s and 1990s. However, Marc’s hopes seemed to be disillusioned by the continuous *impasse* in European integration in the early 1980s and by Mitterrand’s radical programme of deficit spending and nationalisations, which seemed to threaten France’s participation in the newly-born European Monetary System (EMS).⁷⁰

Marc’s expectations slightly revived in June 1984 after the European Council of Fontainebleau marked the re-launch of integration prospects, especially in the fields of budgeting, agriculture and enlargement, and through the decision to establish two ad hoc committees focusing on institutional questions (the Dooge Committee) and ‘A People’s Europe’ (the Adonnino Committee). However, a

1970s see Kees Van Kersbergen and Bertjan Verbeek, ‘The Politics of Subsidiarity in the European Union’, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 32, 2 (1994), 215–36.

⁵⁹ Gilbert, *Surpassing Realism*, 136–8.

⁶⁰ Bernard-Henri Lévy, *L’idéologie française* (Paris: Grasset, 1981).

⁶¹ Zeev Sternhell, *Ni droite ni gauche. L’idéologie fasciste en France* (Paris: Seuil, 1983).

⁶² ‘Lettre à Hitler’, *L’Ordre Nouveau*, 5 (15 Nov. 1933), 33–2. See Favaretto, *Il federalismo*, 141–8.

⁶³ Marc to Jean-François Revel [Director of *L’Express*], 21 Jan. 1981, Fond Alexandre Marc [hereafter: AM], Folder 311 [hereafter AM-311], HAEU. Translated by the author from the French.

⁶⁴ Raymond Aron, ‘Provocation’, *Express*, 7, 13 Feb. 1981. Translated by the author from the French.

⁶⁵ Bertrand Vayssière, *Européiste et eurocrate: la vie fédéraliste de Raymond Rifflet* (Toulouse: Presses universitaires du Midi, 2018).

⁶⁶ Marc to Rifflet, 15 May 1981, AM-311, HAEU. Translated by the author from the French.

⁶⁷ Marc to Rocard, 27 May 1981, AM-311, HAEU. Translated by the author from the French.

⁶⁸ Marc to Noël, 14 May 1981, AM-311, HAEU. Translated by the author from the French.

⁶⁹ Marc to Noël, 2 June 1981, AM-311, HAEU. Translated by the author from the French.

⁷⁰ Serge Berstein, Pierre Milza and Jean-Louis Bianco, eds., *François Mitterrand. Les années du changement (1981–1984)* (Paris: Perrin, 2001).

real discontinuity was only marked in July 1984 by the appointment of the then French Minister of Finance Jacques Delors as president of the European Commission.⁷¹

Personalism in the Commission Leadership: Delors's First Mandate

Delors fully belonged in the French personalist tradition.⁷² He had started his career at the *Banque de France* in 1945 and later moved to the *Commissariat Général du Plan* as head of the service for social affairs (1962–9) and General Secretary 'à la Formation permanente' (1969–72).⁷³ A militant member of the *Confédération française des travailleurs chrétiens* (CFTC) since 1950, in 1959 Delors had founded the 'Citoyens 60' club within the framework of the *La Vie Nouvelle* (the New Life) personalist movement.⁷⁴ Between 1971 and 1972 he was special assistant to French Prime Minister Jacques Chaban-Delmas and inspired Chaban-Delmas's project for a *Nouvelle Société* (New Society) based on relaunching social dialogue after the dramatic turning point of May 1968. As he would later note in a letter to Paul Fraisse, president of the *Association des Amis d'Emmanuel Mounier*, the core of his political engagement was

to fight against the established disorder by locating the root of the evil: individualism. When the crisis arose in the early 1970s, I always thought that beyond its economic and geopolitical aspects, as Mounier said, the disorder was and is, above all, spiritual.⁷⁵

In 1974 he joined the Socialist Party, and soon became a leading member of the *deuxième gauche*. This marked the beginning of his European engagement as an elected member of the European Parliament (EP) in 1979 – where he chaired the Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee – and later as Minister of Finance (1981–4). As a representative of the reformist wing of the Socialist Party, he supported the EMS project as a response to the widespread challenges of inflation and unemployment.⁷⁶ In 1983 he was one of the leading actors of the so-called '*tournant de la rigueur*' (the 'turn to austerity'), as he convinced Mitterrand to abandon the policy of state spending and intervention inaugurated in 1981, in order to face the pressure of international financial markets and keep France in the EMS. As Delors's participation in the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) project in the late 1980s would demonstrate, this '*tournant*' showed Delors's belief in the social virtues of price stability, to be attained at Community level.⁷⁷

Indeed, French personalist circles regarded Delors's appointment as Commission president as an opportunity to reinvigorate the Europeanist dimension of their work. This emerges from a letter sent by Claude Blondel – who worked as special advisor at the *Ministère du Travail* (Ministry of Labour) and was a son of Charles Blondel⁷⁸ (a French Christian Democrat who had cooperated with Mounier in the 1930s⁷⁹) – to Marc on 2 February 1985. In this letter, Blondel reflected on the long-drawn-out deadlock in the integration process and the sense of historical decadence he was feeling:

I do not know if we are heading for a disaster, but I strongly feel that we are experiencing an acceleration of history which leaves Europeans little time to react. I believe that several people

⁷¹ On the circumstances of Delors's appointment see Grant, *Delors*, 83–5.

⁷² See *supra*, footnote 13.

⁷³ Helen Drake, *Jacques Delors: Perspectives on a European Leader* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 37–9.

⁷⁴ See Grant, *Delors*, Chapters 1–4.

⁷⁵ Rencontre permanente avec Emmanuel Mounier, 1 Apr. 1985, JD–24, HAEU. Translated by the author from the French.

⁷⁶ Grant, *Delors*, 44.

⁷⁷ The most recent interpretations of Mitterrand's 1983 turn tend to contest its 'neoliberal' character. See Florence Descamp and Laure Quennouëlle-Corre, eds., 1983, *un tournant néolibéral?*, *Vingtième Siècle*, 138 (2018).

⁷⁸ On Claude Blondel's biography see https://www.persee.fr/doc/inrp_1295-1234_2000_ant_1_2_3207 (last visited 21 June 2022).

⁷⁹ R. William Rauch, Jr., *Politics and Belief in Contemporary France: Emmanuel Mounier and Christian Democracy, 1932–1950* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1972), 209.

right now are becoming aware of this development. Have you ever met Jacques Delors? I think it would be very important for you to have a meeting with him.⁸⁰

A letter sent by Marc to Blondel on 14 March 1985 and direct correspondence between Marc and Delors reveal that the two met in Brussels and that Marc's impressions were enthusiastic: 'The meetings I had after our encounter largely confirmed what J.D. told me in Brussels. It seems that a real chance – fragile admittedly – will present itself to Europe these days, probably in Milan'.⁸¹ Echoes of a common personalist *bataille* (battle) (in Marc's words) also emerge in a letter sent by Marc to Delors on 13 March (following their meeting in Brussels), in which Marc noted:

The very importance of the subjects we have touched on partially justifies the ardour which I put into defending my theses, which, moreover, for the most part were our common theses. Personalism obliges [...] I will therefore remain at your entire disposal for all the services in my competence that you could desire, because in the difficult battle which is unfolding it will be necessary to mobilise all the available forces.⁸²

As Marc noted in a letter to a fellow militant federalist in September 1985, he was aware of the limits of the battle for what he described as 'a federalist and therefore regionalist Europe, and a socialist one (in the Proudhonian and non-political sense of the term)'.⁸³ This long-term prospect needed time and an enlightened *avant-garde*: 'It is better to start slowly, with few men but who know where they want to go and on which paths than to leave in haste, then argue and tear each other apart, and then disappear without glory'.⁸⁴ Marc's support for Delors should therefore be interpreted as recognition of a leader of such a political '*avant-garde*', which in turn echoed the 'aristocratic' tradition of *L'Ordre Nouveau*.⁸⁵

This may help us to understand what might retrospectively appear to be a contradiction between the single market project promoted by Delors's first Commission – which paved the way for the Single European Act in 1986 – and Marc's personalist outlook. Indeed, the market and monetary dimensions seemed to be marginal in Marc's reflection (which is hardly surprising given the personalist belief in the 'primacy of the spiritual'). Conversely, he paid increasing attention to Delors's battle to strengthen the Commission vis-à-vis the national governments ('which constantly talk about Europe but do nothing to build it'⁸⁶). This was in unsurprising continuity with Monnet's belief in the centrality of the High Authority's supranational character, a view that Delors had personally defended in 1980 as a newly elected member of the European Parliament:

When I listen to a parliamentarian saying: 'we must directly address the European Council and therefore neglect the Commission', I shout: 'Don't you dare'.⁸⁷ Because it is up to us, parliamentarians, to defend the prerogatives of the Commission, which must remain the engine of European cooperation.⁸⁸

⁸⁰ Blondel to Marc, 2 Feb. 1985, AM-312, HAEU. Translated by the author from the French.

⁸¹ Marc to Blondel, 14 Mar. 1985, AM-312, HAEU. Translated by the author from the French. Marc was referring to the European Council meeting to be held in Milan in June 1985, which marked a new step towards institutional reform and a 'people's Europe', according to suggestions in the Dooge and Adonnino reports of 1984.

⁸² Marc to Delors, 13 Mar. 1985, AM-312, HAEU. Translated by the author from the French.

⁸³ Marc to de La Crau, 26 Sept. 1985, AM-312, HAEU. Translated by the author from the French.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ In this regard see Pascal Balmand, 'Intellectuel(s) dans l'Ordre Nouveau (1933–1938): une aristocratie de prophètes', in Danielle Bonnaud-Lamotte, Jean-Luc Rispail and Jean Albertini, eds., *Intellectuel(s) des années trente: entre le rêve et l'action* (Paris: Éditions du Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1989), 172–84.

⁸⁶ Marc to Delors, 17 June 1985, AM-312, HAEU. Translated by the author from the French.

⁸⁷ 'Casse-cou' in the original French version.

⁸⁸ Colloque France Forum: L'avenir de la Communauté Européenne. L'Europe et ses Problèmes Institutionnels, Fond Robert Toulemon, Folder 29, HAEU. Translated by the author from the French.

Crucial to Delors's views in this regard was also his previous experience at the *Commissariat Général du Plan* under the direction of Pierre Massé (who had in turn been inspired by Jean Monnet), who had stimulated the economic 'planning' initiatives carried out by European Commission vice-president and commissioner for economic affairs Robert Marjolin in the 1960s. Both Massé and Marjolin inspired Delors's conviction that the effects of a globalised economy needed 'counter-strategies' at the Community level.⁸⁹ Accordingly, during his first mandate (1985–8), Delors's political engagement mainly focused on social dialogue and the development of the EEC's social, regional, research and environmental policies to balance the economic disequilibria of the single market project and create an organised 'common economic space offering more conditions for growth and employment'.⁹⁰

This approach also affected Delors's attitude towards the EMU project, in which he was involved as the chairman of the committee of central bankers which was set up after the Hannover European Council in June 1988 to propose 'concrete steps leading to this union'. Despite the multiple intellectual influences which came into play during the works of the Delors Committee,⁹¹ several elements included in its final report were consistent with the personalist background of the Commission president.⁹² First, the political goal of price stability, which Delors regarded as a precondition to foster employment and cohesion,⁹³ against the turbulence of market forces and the 'deceptive euphoria of ultra-liberalism'.⁹⁴ Second, Delors's insistence on the independence of the European System of Central Banks (ESCB) as the central institution of the future EMU, to be organised in a federal form, which reflected Monnet's belief in the executive autonomy of experts to be detached from parliamentary control and party dynamics. Third, the stress on macroeconomic coordination at Community level, which also echoed the French 'planning' tradition. Fourth, the open reference of the Delors report to the principle of subsidiarity to regulate the relationship between the ESCB and national budget policies. Overall, Delors's view of the Community as an 'area of solidarity' and his stress on the cohesion goal of monetary union would deeply affect the negative judgement of several 'neoliberal thinkers' towards the EMU project, as recent research has shown.⁹⁵

However, an outspoken personalist agenda did not develop in Brussels during Delors's first mandate. Delors was aware that the Commission's prerogative of legislative initiative and law enforcing were limited by the collegial nature of the Commission – which he chaired as a '*primus inter pares*' – and by the intergovernmental constraints of the Community institutional system, which required careful

⁸⁹ Éric Bussière, 'Jacques Delors et l'Europe: Vers la politisation des enjeux économiques (1985–1995)?', *Studi storici*, 1 (2021), 159–87.

⁹⁰ Lorenzo Mechi and Antonio Varsori, 'European Social Policy', in Vincent Dujardin et al., eds., *The European Commission 1986–2000: History and Memories of an Institution* (Luxembourg: Publication office of the European Union, 2019), 403–20.

⁹¹ Éric Bussière and Ivo Maes, 'Towards Economic and Monetary Union', in Dujardin et al., eds., *The European Commission*, 229–56. On Delors's 'blurred' vision of Economic and Monetary Union, see Dermot Hodson, 'Jacques Delors: Vision, Revisionism, and the Design of EMU', in Kenneth Dyson and Ivo Maes, eds., *Architects of the Euro: Intellectuals in the Making of European Monetary Union* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 212–32.

⁹² Committee for the Study of Economic and Monetary Union, *Report on Economic and Monetary Union in the European Community* (Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 1989).

⁹³ Jacques Delors, 'Renforçons la coopération monétaire pour stimuler l'emploi', *Handelsblatt*, 31 Dec. 1985, JD-37, HAEU. The regional cohesion and social goals featured prominently in the 1987 report *Efficiency, Stability, and Equity*, which was produced by a study group led by the federalist-oriented Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa – who would be the *rapporteur* of the Delors Committee – at the request of Delors and the Commission. See Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa, *Efficiency, Stability and Equity: A Strategy for the Evolution of the Economic System of the European Community* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988). Padoa-Schioppa was not personally linked to personalism, although as a federalist militant he was close to Delors and several federalists of personalist inspiration, including Kohnstamm and Noël. He was also deeply inspired by Monnet's Europeanism. In this regard see Andrea Becherucci, 'Un *civil servant* italiano ed europeo. Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa e le sue carte', in Mario De Prospero and Salvatore Mura, eds., *Il governo dei migliori. Intellettuali e tecnici al servizio dello Stato* (Verona: QuiEdit, 2020), 403–24; Fabio Masini, 'Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa: EMU as the Anchor Stone for Building a Federal Europe', in Dyson and Maes, eds., *Architects*, 193–211.

⁹⁴ 'Delors: "Notre système monétaire a les moyens de résister à la tempête"', *Paris Match*, 4 Nov. 1987, JD-65, HAEU.

⁹⁵ Ventresca, 'Neoliberal Thinkers'.

bargaining with other European institutions – in primis the European Council.⁹⁶ Delors therefore focused on the ‘*Europe de la nécessité*’ – namely the single market project – leaving political questions – i.e. ‘*L’Europe de l’idéal*’ – in the background.⁹⁷ It was only in the turning point of 1989 that Delors’s personalism took a turn towards a more genuinely political character.

A European Palingenesis after 1989?

Far from seeing Europe’s 1989 with Francis Fukuyama’s jubilant optimism,⁹⁸ Delors’s judgement of the collapse of Eastern European socialist regimes was affected by a feeling that the process would mark the triumph of the very neoliberal trends in economics, politics and society which he regarded in eschatological terms as ‘the root of the evil’.⁹⁹ This led him to rediscover ‘*L’Europe de l’idéal*’ and publicly campaign in favour of a personalist ‘third way’. As will be noted below, the leading actors in this process were Delors and his closest circle in the Commission services. But while the specific link to personalism was confined to a small minority within the Commission, the philosophy’s roots in both Catholicism and trade unionism meant that they could mobilise support from the majority of his commissioners and appeal to the political leaderships of the member states, who in the wake of the fall of the Berlin Wall seemed to share a widespread enthusiasm towards the future development of political integration.¹⁰⁰

The first element in Delors’s post-1989 personalist engagement was outspoken criticism of the individualistic basis of liberal capitalism.¹⁰¹ Following the tradition of Mounier, Delors blamed Western societies for the cult of hedonism and the consumer economy, while at the same time aiming to rediscover a political dimension in which the ‘person’ could fully develop from the local to the supra-national level.¹⁰² This was part of a ‘personalist’ battle against ‘a society of exclusion’, which Delors first condemned in a speech in Bruges in October 1989¹⁰³ – a response to Thatcher’s renowned address the year before on the same platform. This was a ‘historical’ speech for Delors, which, as was also noted by the contemporary press, marked a shift towards plain federalist engagement.¹⁰⁴ The first part of the speech celebrated both de Rougemont’s integral federalism and Mounier’s personalism, presenting a transformative agenda for the politicisation of European integration, as a palingenesis to rediscover ‘an ethic of the person, of society and of the human adventure’ in order to ‘promote our conception of the human person and his integrity’. Delors’s personalist outlook was reiterated in a roundtable entitled ‘*Refaire la Renaissance*’ (Remaking the Renaissance),¹⁰⁵ held in the municipality of Chatenay-Malabry on 30 November 1990 to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of Mounier’s death. Delors participated in person in this initiative, which he regarded as ‘a happy sign of the times’.¹⁰⁶ During the roundtable he publicly stressed that a parallel could be drawn between the 1930s and the post-1989 period: ‘We have the same impression of disorder, of disorder of minds,

⁹⁶ Ross and Jenson, ‘Reconsidering’; Ludlow, ‘Jacques Delors’.

⁹⁷ Intervention du Président Delors au comité national élargi de la FGBT, Bruxelles, 19 Feb. 1988, JD-71, HAEU.

⁹⁸ Francis Fukuyama, ‘The End of History?’, *The National Interest*, 16 (1989), 3–18.

⁹⁹ See *supra*, footnote 75.

¹⁰⁰ See Loth, *Building Europe*, 310–22.

¹⁰¹ ‘Jacques Delors: le discours du libéralisme économique est inacceptable’, *Alternatives économiques*, Nov. 1990, JD-1061, HAEU.

¹⁰² Intervention de Jacques Delors, ‘Democratie 2000’, Lorient, 8 Sept. 1991, JD-640, HAEU.

¹⁰³ Séance d’ouverture de la Quarantième année académique du Collège d’Europe, Discours de Monsieur Jacques Delors, Bruges, 17 Oct. 1989, JD-900, HAEU.

¹⁰⁴ See, for instance, Boris Johnson, ‘Europe Must Unite Faster, Says Delors’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 18 Oct. 1989; ‘Delors, the History Man’, *The Economist*, 21 Oct. 1989; Giles Merritt, ‘Delors Uses the Stick on Europe’, *Herald Tribune*, 25 Oct. 1989; Scott Sullivan, ‘Delors’s Design for Europe: The Single Market Is only One Step toward Unity’, *Newsweek*, 30 Oct. 1989; Herbert Kremp, ‘Delors warnt’, *Die Welt*, 20 Oct. 1989; Philippe Lemaître, ‘M. Jacques Delors réclame un nouvel engagement politique pour la construction européenne’, *Le Monde*, 19 Oct. 1989.

¹⁰⁵ This was the title of Mounier’s first article published in *Esprit* in Oct. 1932.

¹⁰⁶ Delors to Madame Mounier, undated letter, JD-201, HAEU.

faced with a kind of collapse of ideologies'. Linked to this pessimistic portrayal was Delors's belief in the need to make a qualitative change in the integration process to overcome the market dimension which had characterised his first Commission presidency in order to 'rediscover the commitment about which Emmanuel Mounier spoke, and that is why there is still a little personalist and communitarian air in this overly capitalist Europe that we are building'.¹⁰⁷

In concrete terms, this meant rediscovering a European social model founded 'on a combination of the market with its limitations and the intervention of public institutions and social dialogue'.¹⁰⁸ The search for such a 'model' had already emerged in the 1970s in the context of the first Community initiatives in the social field, and Delors himself had set social dialogue as one of the primary goals of his first mandate.¹⁰⁹ However, it was in 1989 that the social sphere became the core of the Commission's outspoken effort to counterbalance the social drawbacks of market liberalisation.¹¹⁰ In fact, beyond the price stability and regional cohesion goals of the EMU project – which have been considered above – this goal was set by the second Delors Commission in October 1989 in its proposal for a 'Community Charter of Fundamental Social Rights',¹¹¹ which was approved in December 1989 at the Strasbourg European Council (but not by the United Kingdom). This decision paved the way for the launch of an 'Action programme' to implement the Charter, including proposals for directives in fields such as working conditions, equal opportunities, youth unemployment, consultation and participation of workers in the management of enterprises, etc.¹¹² During the intergovernmental conferences which were to lead to the 1992 Treaty on European Union, the Delors Commission was also actively engaged in European social dialogue in order to give priority to collective bargaining discussions between social partners on social issues.¹¹³ A prominent role in this field was played by Jean Degimbe, a Christian-Democratic Belgian who headed the Directorate General for Social Affairs between 1976 and 1992. Degimbe was politically close to Delors and shared a common background in the '*jeunesse ouvrière chrétienne*' (Christian working youth). Indeed, the two had met in the 1950s within the framework of the CFTC.¹¹⁴

Overall, at the core of the Commission's involvement in the social sphere in the early 1990s was the notion of 'solidarity' – a traditional tenet of Catholic social thinking – as an antidote to the phenomenon of social exclusion. As Delors was to argue in early 1992:

The duty of the Community and the Commission is to attract attention to this fact. In a society where there is a crisis of values, a falling away of participation in social organisations, unions and voluntary associations, it is very difficult to come to the aid of people who wish no more than to participate in society. But to participate in society needs an effort which is both quantitative and qualitative, an effort of mobilisation.¹¹⁵

The second element in the post-1989 communitarian 'third way' concerned Delors's acknowledgement of the crisis of liberal-democratic practices at the national level. This criticism was a traditional

¹⁰⁷ Table Ronde du 30 novembre 1990: La Pensée d'Emmanuel Mounier aujourd'hui en Europe et en Amérique latine, JD-201, HAEU. Translated by the author from the French.

¹⁰⁸ Jacques Delors, 'Conclusions: Defending the European Model of Society', in *Combating Social Exclusion: Towards a Europe of Solidarity* (Brussels, 1992), 49. Available at <http://aei.pitt.edu/41469/1/A5569.pdf> (last visited 10 May 2022).

¹⁰⁹ Antonio Varsori, 'Alle origini di un modello sociale europeo: la Comunità europea e la nascita di una politica sociale (1969–1974)', *Ventunesimo Secolo*, 5, 9 (2006), 17–47.

¹¹⁰ In this regard see Bitumi, 'Uplifting Tale', 210.

¹¹¹ 'Community Charter of Fundamental Social Rights', COM(89) 471 final, 2 Oct. 1989, DORIE 297, HAUE.

¹¹² Commission of the European Communities, COM(89) 568 final, Communication from the Commission concerning its Action Programme relating to the implementation of the Community charter of basic social rights for workers, Brussels, 29 Nov. 1989. Available at: http://aei.pitt.edu/1345/1/Social_charter_COM_89_568.pdf (last visited 10 May 2022).

¹¹³ Mechi and Varsori, 'European Social Policy'.

¹¹⁴ Entretien avec Jean DEGIMBE par Lorenzo Mechi à Bruxelles, le 16 février 2016, Oral History collection, HAE. Available at: https://archives.eui.eu/en/oral_history/INT1002 (last visited 10 May 2022), 6.

¹¹⁵ Jacques Delors, 'Conclusions: Defending the European Model of Society', 49. Translated by the author from the French.

tenet of French personalism, which Delors emphasised even after 1989 made democracy ‘the only game in town’.¹¹⁶ For Delors, this was a historic opportunity to revive the public debate on the democratic character of the Community in view of the launch of the intergovernmental conference on political union which had been agreed on by the EEC member states at the Dublin European Council in April 1990. Delors agreed to reinforce the co-decision powers of the European Parliament and to make the Commission and Parliament operate in tandem, understanding the limits of a technical power detached from popular support. As for the institutional dimension of the future EU, the Commission advocated a ‘tree’ structure to tie the foreign policy and home affairs dimensions to a community – i.e. supranational – trunk. Drawing on the Parliament’s ‘investiture and control’, the Commission would become the core of a political union in which decisions on foreign and internal affairs would be adopted on the basis of majority voting.¹¹⁷ Finally, according to Delors and the Directorate General for economic and financial affairs (DG II), the EMU project – including the creation of a new institution, the European Central Bank – would be an integral part of the member states’ commitment to political union.¹¹⁸

However, institutional reform would not be enough. It was in fact the overall politicisation of the integration process which would be the key to shaping a European *demos* which should be engaged in ‘European’ politics at the local, regional, national and supranational levels.¹¹⁹ Crucial to this goal was, once again, the principle of subsidiarity, which Delors aimed to make the flagship of his Commission presidency to ‘democratise’ European institutions. In his view, the attribution of competences to the Community would have to be confined specifically to those areas in which collective decision-making was necessary: all policy functions which could be developed at national, regional and local levels would remain within the competence of the member states.¹²⁰ Indeed, while Delors made no outspoken criticism of the liberal-parliamentary model between 1990 and 1992, since his 1989 Bruges speech he had insisted on the rediscovery of ‘bottom-up’ and ‘decentralised’ democracy, echoing the ‘communitarian’ views of the 1930s, i.e. ‘reconstruction from below, starting from small units naturally based on the solidarity of interests and the convergence of feelings’.¹²¹

At the core of Delors’s reflections on the democratisation of the integration process was the *Cellule de Prospective* (Forward Studies Unit), the Commission’s think tank established by Delors in 1989. The *Cellule* was directed by Jérôme Vignon, a former member of Delors’s cabinet and a faithful interpreter of the president’s personalist outlook. The bottom-up approach was exalted in an internal report on the relationship between economic and political development produced by the *Cellule* in early 1992. This report stressed the limits of liberal constitutions and defined elections as ‘a necessary, but insufficient, condition for democracy. Elections provide occasional, even periodic, opportunities to ratify or reject the government’s approach, but they do not permit ongoing participation by the public in the formulation and implementation of policies that most affect them’. Instead, the report concluded that ‘the creation of civil society, the institutions capable of cultivating basic democratic norms, is a fundamental goal of participatory development’.¹²²

¹¹⁶ Ido de Haan, ‘Restrained Democracy and Its Radical Alternatives after 1989: The Threefold Crisis of Democracy in the “Former West”’, in Eleni Braat and Pepijn Corduwener, eds., *1989 and the West: Western Europe since the end of the Cold War* (New York: Routledge, 2020), 231–46.

¹¹⁷ Benedetto Zaccaria, ‘Jacques Delors, the End of the Cold War and the EU Democratic Deficit’, *Journal of European Integration History*, 2 (2020), 294–5.

¹¹⁸ Commission des Communautés Européennes, DG des affaires économiques et financières, L’objectif d’union économique et monétaire, Brussels, 5 Sept. 1990, JD-174, HAEU. See also the contribution by the Commission to the Intergovernmental Conference on Economic and Monetary Union, European Commission, *Economic and Monetary Union* (Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 1990).

¹¹⁹ ‘Jacques Delors: “Ralentir serait aussi grave que renoncer”’, *Profession Politique*, 16 Nov. 1990, JD-547, HAEU.

¹²⁰ Barroche, ‘La subsidiarité’.

¹²¹ Séance d’ouverture de la Quarantième année académique du Collège d’Europe, Discours de Monsieur Jacques Delors, Bruges, 17 Oct. 1989, JD-900, HAEU.

¹²² Forward Studies Unit, no. 445/92, Democracy, Development, and International Peace: Toward a Strategy of Participation and Respect for the Other, Brussels, 27 Feb. 1992, BAC/44/2004/228. Translated by the author from the French.

It was this very attitude which made the Commission president openly take a position for a ‘federal’ outlook which was not limited to the institutional dimension but considered federalism ‘the most advanced form of democracy’ grounded on the principles of solidarity, social justice and subsidiarity – all definitions which echo Delors’s intellectual debt to Marc and de Rougemont.¹²³ This approach would influence academic analyses focusing on the EU as a supranational polity based on democratic practices ‘beyond modernity’ (i.e. beyond a strictly liberal national platform),¹²⁴ which Stefan Borg and Thomas Diez have recently ascribed to the tradition of integral federalism.¹²⁵

The third element emphasising the influence of the personalist ‘third way’ tradition on the Commission was the notion of *Grande Europe*, which was crucial in Delors’s post-1989 reasoning, focusing on a palingenetic transformation of the European continent. This palingenesis would involve the ‘two Europes’ (Western and Eastern) in a common direction of spiritual renewal which had originally marked the rise of political opposition in Poland under the influence of Pope John Paul II,¹²⁶ and in Václav Havel’s Czechoslovakia: ‘We must acknowledge that the cultural message, and I would say the spiritual message, is that it was the countries of the East which brought it’.¹²⁷ In fact, this outlook would influence the Commission’s attitude to the enlargement process in late 1991, when internal reflection within its services started to shape this institution’s stance vis-à-vis the pressing accession requests coming from Mediterranean, EFTA and east and central European countries. Internal debates within the Commission bore witness to Delors’s initial reticence regarding rapid enlargement without previous institutional arrangements to prevent the ‘dilution’ of the future EU.¹²⁸ However, the prospect of enlargement was considered inevitable.¹²⁹ This was also the role that Delors and his fellow commissioners attributed to the Community as the centrepiece of the future European architecture.¹³⁰ This was particularly stressed by Vignon in a draft paper which was later published under the signature of Delors as a preface to de Rougemont’s volume *28 siècles d’Europe*.¹³¹ This paper focused on the ‘civilising vocation of Europe: the European Union can provide the world with an exemplary model of political organisation, prefiguring new forms of interdependence’.¹³²

In early 1991, a working group named *Grande Europe* was established within the *Cellule* to focus on the nature of the future European architecture. The documents it produced on future enlargements and the democratisation of central and eastern European countries stressed the continental

¹²³ Intervention du Président Delors au Parlement Européen dans le débat sur l’Union Politique, Strasbourg, 12 June 1991, JD–598, HAEU. See also Barroche, ‘La subsidiarité’, 158.

¹²⁴ See, for instance, John Gerard Ruggie, ‘Territoriality and Beyond: Problematizing Modernity in International Relations’, *International Organization*, 47, 1 (1993), 139–74. Academic attention to the EU as a sui-generis post-national polity would continue during the 2000s, especially in view of ‘constitutionalising’ the EU. In this regard see Sergio Fabbrini, ed., *Democracy and Federalism in the European Union and the United States: Exploring Post-National Governance* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005).

¹²⁵ However, Borg and Diez neglect the personalist roots of this vision and the role played by Delors in it. See Stefan Borg and Thomas Diez, ‘Postmodern EU? Integration between Alternative Horizons and Territorial Angst’, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 54, 1 (2016), 136–51.

¹²⁶ On the influence of French personalism on Karol Wojtyła and the first democratic prime minister in Poland after 1989, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, see Kosicki, *Catholics on the Barricades*.

¹²⁷ ‘Un Nouvel Horizon. Regards sur la France’ (Paris), Verbatim de allocution de Jacques Delors, 8 Nov. 1990, JD–193, HAEU. Translated by the author from the French. Indeed, as Tony Judt noted when considering the rise of dissident movements in Eastern Europe during the 1970s, ‘Mounier’s intellectual heirs in the circle of writers in the journal *Esprit* would be among the first in Western Europe to publish and celebrate Havel and his fellow dissidents’. Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 493, footnote 4.

¹²⁸ See the debate in the Commission in Commission CE-PVs spéciaux, COM(91), PV 1070, 2ème partie, 24 July 1991, BAC/259.80, Historical Archives of the European Commission, Brussels [hereafter HAEC].

¹²⁹ Eirini Karamouzi, Angela Romano and Aline Sierp, ‘The Opening of Accession Negotiations with the Countries of Central and Eastern Europe’, in Dujardin et al., eds., *The European Commission*, 528.

¹³⁰ Commission CE-PVs spéciaux, COM(90), PV 1009, 2ème partie, 25 Apr. 1990, BAC/259.80, HAEC.

¹³¹ Denis de Rougemont, *28 siècles d’Europe* (Paris: Christian De Bartillat Editeur, 1990).

¹³² Note pour le Président, Commentaires de ‘28 siècles d’Europe’, Cellule de Prospective, no. 1278/90, 27 July 1990, JD–1044, HAEU. Translated by the author from the French.

responsibility of the Community, with a special focus on bottom-up, trans-regional cooperation and town-twinning initiatives and programmes in the educational and academic sectors.¹³³ This was a ‘communitarian’ approach to democratic processes which reflected a social conception of the public good, overcoming a strictly pluralist or liberal interpretation of democracy.¹³⁴

The *Grande Europe* group would influence the first inter-service document on enlargement, which was coordinated by the Commission’s Secretary General and was first circulated in October 1991 on the eve of the Maastricht European Council. It defined enlargement as both ‘desirable and inevitable’ and stressed the need to reform the Community towards ‘a federal structure based on the principle of subsidiarity’.¹³⁵ Within this framework, a feeling emerged within the Commission services involved in the enlargement process, from the Secretariat General to the Directorate General for External Relations (DGI) and the *Cellule*, that the Commission should evolve into an ‘environment maker’ rather than continue being an ‘environment taker’ (as it had mostly been during the previous enlargement rounds).¹³⁶

Nöel, whose influence on Delors continued after he departed from Brussels in 1988 to be appointed president of the European University Institute (EUI) in Florence, would actively contribute to the Commission’s internal reflections on the question of eastern enlargement, suggesting that the Commission had a historical responsibility to steer the post-1989 European architecture.¹³⁷ During Nöel’s presidency – and under the patronage of the European Commission General Directorate for Audiovisual Media, Information, Communication and Culture (DG X) (in particular, the administrative unit dealing with ‘Relations with higher education establishments and research institutes’, headed by Jacqueline Lastenouse) – the EUI hosted an academic *Réseau International des Historiens et de Chercheurs du Fédéralisme-Personnalisme* (International Network of Historians and Researchers on Federalism-Personalism), which was established on the initiative of Marc, involving militant federalists, academics and young researchers.¹³⁸

What Was Left? A ‘Spiritual’ Renewal of European Politics

Historians have acknowledged the limits of Delors’s second and third mandates (1989–95) and the Commission presidency’s gradual loss of influence vis-à-vis the member states after the ‘heyday’ of the single market project. Several factors accounted for this loss, including the limited concessions made by the national governments for a further politicisation of the integration process – which was reflected in the intergovernmental dimension of the second and third ‘pillars’ of the Maastricht Treaty.¹³⁹ The European Commission itself became the target of emerging Eurosceptic forces which regarded the European executive as the embodiment of undemocratic power.¹⁴⁰ At the same time, the principle of subsidiarity suffered from divergences among member states on its effective

¹³³ Cellule de Perspective, Note au Dossier, La ‘Bottom up approach’ appliquée à la Grande Europe, Brussels, 20 Nov. 1991, BAC/220/2006/151, HAEC; Directorate General for Science, Research and Development, Bottom-up approach to integration in the ‘Grande Europe’, Brussels, 8 Nov. 1991, BAC/220/2006/151, HAEC.

¹³⁴ Forward Studies Unit, Note for the File, Reform in Eastern Europe: Prerequisites for Membership, Theories of Democracy, 19 Nov. 1991, BAC/220/2006/151, HAEC.

¹³⁵ Secrétariat général, Note à l’attention de M. J. Vignon, Avant-projet de rapport du groupe de réflexion ‘élargissement’, Personnel, 31 Oct. 1991, BAC/220/2006/162, HAEC.

¹³⁶ Forward Studies Unit, no. 1809/92, Some remarks on the wider Europe. Remarks made by Cornelis van Rij, member of the Forward Studies Unit, 28 Oct. 1992, BAC/220/2006/154, HAEC. Cornelis van Rij was one of the most active members of the *Cellule*, working alongside Vignon in the ‘Grande Europe’ group. He was the grandson of Cornelis van Rij, a homonymous leading Dutch federalist.

¹³⁷ ‘Réflexions sur l’élargissement de la Communauté à la plus grande Europe’, Report by Nöel to Delors’s Cabinet, undated but Jan. 1992, BAC/229/2006/162, HAEC.

¹³⁸ Marc to Nöel, 21 Dec. 1992, AM–60, HAEU.

¹³⁹ Ross and Jenson, ‘Reconsidering Delors’.

¹⁴⁰ Kevin Featherstone, ‘Jean Monnet and the “Democratic Deficit” in the European Union’, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 32, 2 (1994), 149–70.

application and its flawed reception by the general public.¹⁴¹ Finally, the economic and monetary crises of 1992–3 appeared to threaten the entire EMU project, including its political, social and cohesion implications.¹⁴²

Against this background, the Commission presidency continued its struggle to implement a ‘personalist’ agenda in the three domains highlighted above: the search for a European social model; the democratisation of the integration process beyond the purely liberal dimension; the making of a supra-national *Grande Europe*.

In the first domain, strengthening social policies was the crucial aim of the Commission, which focused on preparing several directives proposed in the 1989 social action programme, including on working conditions, the protection of pregnant workers and European Works Councils. The last major initiative adopted by the Delors Commission in the social field was the 1993 White Paper on ‘Growth, competitiveness, employment’,¹⁴³ which focused on the double aim of economic efficiency and social protection by enhancing educational and vocational training systems at the EU level in order to respond to mounting unemployment in the member states and to relaunch the role of the Commission in the social field to safeguard the European social model.¹⁴⁴

However, this effort clashed with what Delors himself had defined – during a meeting of the *Cellule* in July 1992 – as the member states’ indifference to the Commission’s agenda: ‘Current political activity and policy can only be described today as “... *la misère de la politique* ...” [the misery of politics], to the extent of even putting into question democracy, democratic representation and principles, thereby preventing any political project’.¹⁴⁵ This required active political mobilisation on the part of the European Commission leadership aiming at what Vignon defined as ‘a renewal which should be ethical rather than institutional’. Accordingly, Vignon wondered how the Commission could contribute ‘to restoring the respectability of politics’. His answer to this question included an explicit criticism of a liberal conception of democracy, in that he suggested investing the Commission with a ‘creative pedagogy which [...] is required for a new generation of political leaders – so that they cease to be a photocopy – with no vision for the future – of the majority that elected them’.¹⁴⁶

Lastly, the ambitious plan for a *Grande Europe* met the limits of a rapid enlargement process which was not paralleled by a simultaneous institutional reform. The result – as Delors argued in early 1992 – would be a diluted union and an enlarged market lacking a clear-cut political dimension.¹⁴⁷ In an internal note in March 1992, Pascal Lamy (who headed Delors’s cabinet) also lamented the incapacity of the member states to resolve the enlargement vs deepening dilemma, which continued to be based on a contradiction: ‘On the one hand, a small, rich, petty and efficient Europe; on the other, a greater Europe, an area of peace and solidarity in words, but weak’.¹⁴⁸ Beyond the enlargement question, the diplomatic failure of the member states to mediate in the Yugoslav crisis was regarded as proof of the limits of the international personality of the newly established Union.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴¹ Piers Ludlow, ‘Subsidiarity: The Emergence of a New Community Term’, in Dujardin et al., *The European Commission*, 158–9.

¹⁴² Bussière and Maes, ‘Towards Economic and Monetary Union’, 240–2.

¹⁴³ COM(93) 700 final, 5 Dec. 1993, ‘Growth, Competitiveness, Employment: The Challenges and Ways Forward into the 21st Century’, White Paper, *Bulletin of the European Communities Supplement*, No. 6, 1993.

¹⁴⁴ Mechi and Varsori, ‘European Social Policy’.

¹⁴⁵ *Cellule de Prospective*, no. 1665, Main points made by President Delors, Shaping Factors meeting, Thursday, 16 July, 28 July 1992, JD–1712, HAEU.

¹⁴⁶ *Cellule de Prospective*, no. 1665, Annexe 3, Messages prospectifs pour la Communauté européenne, JD–1712, HAEU. Translated by the author from the French.

¹⁴⁷ Service du Porte-Parole, Propos du président sur l’élargissement lors d’un entretien avec John Palmer, Brussels, 12 Mar. 1992, BAC/220/2006/162, HAEC.

¹⁴⁸ Le Chef de Cabinet du Président, Note pour le Président, élargissement: panorama, 16 Mar. 1992, BAC/220/2006/162, HAEC. Translated by the author from the French.

¹⁴⁹ Benedetto Zaccaria, ‘Le ragioni di una presenza. La Cee/UE e le crisi jugoslave degli anni Novanta tra storia e interpretazione’, in Elena Calandri, Giuliana Laschi and Simone Paoli, eds., *L’Europa adulta. Attori, ragioni e sfide dall’Atto Unico alla Brexit* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2020), 275–96.

Overall, the personalist turn which Delors had advocated since 1989 did not materialise in concrete terms, but some of the activities of the Commission services – particularly in the fields of information and education – reflected a political engagement which continued to follow Delors's thinking. Already in October 1992 Delors had set up the *Témoin* association – which recognised the need for open political engagement, starting with France, to contrast populist movements and focus on greater democratisation of political processes. The new frontier was 'a deepening of political, economic and social democracy'.¹⁵⁰ From 1992 onwards with the open support of the European Commission services, European studies academic networks became increasingly active in encouraging a 'political' view of the EU as a collective supranational polity. This was the case, for example, of several international conferences organised by the European Community Studies Association under the patronage of the Commission from mid-1992.¹⁵¹ Recurrent topics in these conferences were the prospect of European federalism and the democratic deficit of EU institutions, which was debated during a major conference held in Brussels in 1994 devoted to '*Fédéralisme, subsidiarité et démocratie*' (Federalism, subsidiarity, democracy).¹⁵²

Delors participated in this conference, and openly argued that the prospect for Europe would be a turn towards a federal model, the only solution for the decadence of democratic practices in the member states.¹⁵³ The conference gathered several leading academics who would be highly influential in the field of European studies during the late 1990s and 2000s, keeping close contacts with Delors and the *Notre Europe* foundation (now the *Institut Jacques Delors*), which Delors established in 1996. Among them were, for instance, the lawyer Renaud Dehousse (grandson of Belgian integral federalist Fernand Dehousse¹⁵⁴), who participated in the EUI-based research group 'Club of Florence'¹⁵⁵ and would later become president of the EUI (2016–), the historian René Girault, who in 1989 had launched a research project on 'European identity and conscience in the XX century'¹⁵⁶ supported by *l'Action Jean Monnet* (which Lastenouse had contributed to establishing in 1989 with the crucial help of Noël¹⁵⁷), the political scientist and human rights activist Antonio Papisca from the University of Padova (then a member of the *Conseil universitaire pour l'Action Jean Monnet*¹⁵⁸), who in the early 1990s forecast the crisis of nation-states and Europe's federal future, and who espoused Maritain's 'integral humanism',¹⁵⁹ and the Geneva-based integral federalist Dusan Sidjanski, author of the 1992 book '*L'Avenir fédéraliste de l'Europe*' and close collaborator of de Rougemont at the *Centre Européen de la Culture* since 1956.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁰ 'Rencontres de Lorient, L'utopie démocratique, La question sociale au cœur du renouveau démocratique', 4 Oct. 1992, JD-1778, HAEU.

¹⁵¹ Emanuele Torquati, 'L'azione Jean Monnet, unicum nelle iniziative della Commissione Europea per l'università', in Antonio Varsori, ed., *Sfide del mercato e identità europea. Le politiche di educazione e formazione professionale nell'Europa comunitaria* (Milano: Franco Angeli, 2006), 138.

¹⁵² Commission Européenne, Le Cabinet du Président, Note à l'attention du Président, 29 Mar. 1994, JD-1381, HAEU.

¹⁵³ Intervention du Président Delors lors de la 2ème Conférence ECSA-WORLD, Bruxelles, 5 May 1994, JD-1381, HAEU.

¹⁵⁴ On Fernand Dehousse see Umberto Tulli, 'Which Democracy for the European Economic Community? Fernand Dehousse versus Charles de Gaulle', *Parliaments, Estates and Representation*, 37, 3 (2017), 301–17.

¹⁵⁵ In Delors's definition, this was 'a discussion group made up of friends who were of great assistance to me during my ten years' presidency of the European Commission, giving me encouragement and advice and even actively cooperating with me'. See Delors's 'Foreword' in Renaud Dehousse, ed. (for the Club of Florence), *Europe: The Impossible Status Quo* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997). Among the members of the 'Club of Florence' were Padoa-Schioppa, Kohnstamm and Noël.

¹⁵⁶ René Girault, ed., *Identité et conscience européennes au XXe siècle* (Paris: Hachette, 1994). On Girault's relations with the European Commission's DG X see Antonio Varsori, 'From Normative Impetus to Professionalization: Origins and Operation of Research Networks', in Kaiser and Varsori, *European Union History*, 16.

¹⁵⁷ Noël to David Williamson (Secretary General, European Commission), 1 July 1991, Émile Noël Fond, 2051, HAEU.

¹⁵⁸ European Commission, DG X, À l'attention du Conseil universitaire pour l'Action Jean Monnet, 4 Nov. 1991, EN-2051, HAEU.

¹⁵⁹ Antonio Papisca, 'Dallo stato confinario allo stato sostenibile', *Pace, diritti dell'uomo, diritti dei popoli*, 4, 3 (1992), 9–34.

¹⁶⁰ Dusan Sidjanski, *L'Avenir fédéraliste de l'Europe. La Communauté européenne des origines au traité de Maastricht* (Paris: PUF, 1992).

Dialogue with the academic world and federalist movements of personalist inspiration was actively cultivated by the European Commission leadership and the Commission services dealing with information under the aegis of Lastenouse,¹⁶¹ fostering a ‘moral’ discourse on European integration as a palingenetic project. This ‘exceptionalist’ narrative shaped discourse on and perceptions of the European Union well beyond Delors’s presidency.¹⁶² What this article has highlighted is the direct link between this narrative and the anti-liberal tradition of French personalism. If, as Judt argued, the ‘true enemy’ of *Esprit*’s intellectuals was liberalism,¹⁶³ after 1989 it was once again liberal capitalism – given its individualistic and materialist premises – seen as the road to Europe’s spiritual and political decline.

Conclusions

This article has explored the influence of personalist ideas on the European integration process with a specific focus on the European Commission presidency of Jacques Delors. Existing scholarship has shown that the French personalist tradition of the 1930s contributed to shaping the design of the ECSC in the early 1950s but later declined with the consolidation of the bipolar equilibrium in Europe. However, as this article has emphasised, this tradition started to resurface in the immediate aftermath of the economic and political crises of the 1970s, although this revival mainly concerned individual integral federalist figures – above all Marc – and the French *deuxième gauche*. The appointment of Delors as Commission president in 1984 seemed to mark a resumption of personalist ideas in European integration. Delors’s background was regarded by a loose network of personalists as an opportunity to re-launch the integration process well beyond the institutional and market dimensions, making it the starting point for a federalist revival involving the social sphere and a spiritual, i.e. anti-materialist, renewal of European politics.

However, it was only after 1989 that Delors perceived the possibility of a personalist relaunch of European integration as a palingenetic process which should challenge the triumph of economic neo-liberalism. Delors and his closest circle within the Commission developed a public discourse which aimed in three complementary directions: the search for a European model rejecting the individualistic basis of liberal capitalism; supranational democratisation of the integration process; and the design of *Grande Europe*. The three aims were not achieved during Delors’s second and third presidencies: the conclusion of the Maastricht Treaty in February 1992 was marked by a clear-cut intergovernmental turn which meant the decline of Delors’s palingenetic hopes.

Crucially, the legacy of the post-1989 ‘personalist’ discourse promoted by the Commission leadership did not fade away or disappear from the public narrative on European integration. Indeed, ideas such as the search for a European social model, the struggle for the supranational democratisation of the integration process and the search for a ‘continental’ scheme of integration were to shape the European Commission’s political engagement during the 1990s and 2000s.¹⁶⁴

As this article has shown, this engagement was inspired by a tightly knit group of highly influential Commission representatives, officials and people working alongside the Commission, who de facto saw themselves as an ‘enlightened élite’. In Delors’s mind, Brussels should become the political hearth of a personalist revolution which, echoing the personalist tradition of the 1930s, should be above all

¹⁶¹ See, for example, DGX’s support for the international conference on ‘personalist federalism’, which took place in Tübingen from 24 to 26 Mar. 1994. The proceedings of this conference were published, again with the support of DGX, in Ferdinand Kinsky and Franz Knipping, eds., *Le fédéralisme personnaliste aux sources de l’Europe de demain* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1996).

¹⁶² Bitumi, ‘Uplifting Tale’.

¹⁶³ Tony Judt, *Past Imperfect: French Intellectuals, 1944–1956* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 17.

¹⁶⁴ The reference work here is Mario Telò, *Europe: A Civilian Power? European Union, Global Governance, World Order* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006). See also Thomas Diez and Nathalie Tocci, *The EU, Promoting Regional Integration, and Conflict Resolution* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

spiritual. This might help explain the limits of this struggle, which lacked a specific political and economic agenda supported by the national leaderships.

Finally, this article has contextualised Delors's presidency well beyond the limited institutional history of European integration, to which it has been traditionally confined. It has described Delors's personalist battle as just one chapter in a broader and longer-term political tradition of Christian inspiration going back to the 1930s which aimed to oppose the materialist grounds of socialism and, especially after 1989, liberal capitalism.