

ALLIANCE OF THE CENTRE/RIGHT PARTIES IN EUROPE

(paper by Douglas Hurd)

The prospect of direct elections to the European Parliament in 1978 or later makes it essential to review the work in hand for the creation of an alliance of Centre and Right Parties in Western Europe. The Socialists already have an alliance and the Liberals are trying hard to create one. Unless we can do the same, or better, our electoral campaign for the EP will suffer. Worse, the Conservative Party would run the risk after the elections of finding itself isolated, with a few stray friends, outside the mainstream of European parliamentary politics, with little influence on its development.

Substantial work in this field has of course been accomplished by Peter Kirk and his colleagues at Strasbourg, and by the International Office at Central Office under Lady Elles. But a major diplomatic effort is now required which goes beyond anything previously attempted by the Party. It will inevitably need the encouragement and participation of senior members of the Party.

There are infinite complications and cross currents affecting almost every country. But the central fact is that there does not yet exist an adequate working alliance between the Christian Democrat and the Conservative Parties in Western Europe. There are several reasons for this, some of which ought to have receded in history but have not. The Christian Democrats are suspicious of the name Conservative, and some of them cherish the idea that the confessional basis of their parties and trade union support would be corrupted by too close an identification with us.

The German CDU probably hold the key. They are largely free from these inhibitions and they are the only major party which acknowledges a close relationship with all those eligible for the alliance.

The CDU are conducting in parallel two sets of negotiations:

i) For several months they have been negotiating with ourselves and representatives of Scandinavian, Swiss and Austrian parties, a draft charter and statutes for a European Democratic Union open to Conservative and Christian Democrat parties across western Europe. Peter Kirk has considered the documents and sees no objection to the proposal. The Conservatives would retain the right to stand for direct elections under their own name in Great Britain, under this arrangement.

The annexes I and II to this paper give the present texts of these two documents. A further negotiating meeting is to be held in Vienna at the end of April. There is also to be a meeting of Party leaders in September to which Mrs. Thatcher has been invited.

ii) The CDU is also involved in negotiations with the strictly Christian Democrat parties within the EEC for the possible formation of a united party which might be called the European People's Party. These negotiations may yet succeed, but our latest information from the CDU is that

they have run into difficulties. If these negotiations do succeed, the result would be a much closer knit arrangement than the Union referred to at (i).

The CDU assure us that whatever the result of the negotiations at (ii) they will work hard for all concerned to participate in the European Democratic Union.

The position in France is too complicated to describe here in detail. Suffice it to say that we have reasonable contacts with the different parties of the French Majority and our aim, though it will be hard to achieve, must be to coax them all into the proposed Union, even though President Giscard's own party, the Independent Republicans, at present belongs to the Liberal group at Strasbourg.

A possible strategy for the Conservative Party would thus be as follows:

a) To continue and perhaps conclude at Vienna in April the negotiations for a European Democratic Union. We could probably accept the word Union provided that the documents are amended to make it clear that this is in fact an alliance of autonomous parties, each responsible for their own policies.

b) To give maximum help to the CDU in their diplomacy and indeed in the whole run-up to the German elections in October. The projected visit of Herr Kohl to Britain in July, at Mrs. Thatcher's invitation, could be of great importance in this.

c) To re-double our efforts to attract as many parties as possible, including the French, into the proposed Union. Although we should not exclude parties from countries outside the Community (which in general attach great importance to these links) we should concentrate on preparing for direct elections.

d) We should aim at a meeting of Party leaders next year on the widest possible basis, conceivably in London, to set a seal on the Union of Parties, on a manifesto in general terms for the direct elections, and on a campaigning strategy.

ANNEX 1

DRAFT STATUTES OF THE EUROPEAN DEMOCRAT UNION

(as amended in London on 12.2.75)

Article 1

The parties and political organisations of European states which accept the Charter of the European Democrat Union base their co-operation on the rules set out below.

Article 2

The purpose of their co-operation is:

- to strengthen inter-party relations;
- to co-ordinate their European policies;
- to establish common positions on all matters of mutual interest.

Article 3

(1) The name of this association of parties shall be "The European Democrat Union". (See Note 1).

(2) Its organs shall be:

- The Congress;
- The Political Committee;
- The Executive Bureau.

Article 4

(1) The Congress shall convene at least every three years. It shall approve the Charter of the EDU and lay down the policy guidelines. The Congress shall be convened by a resolution of the Political Committee which determines the time, place and agenda.

(2) The Congress takes place under the Chairmanship of the host national Party. The Congress shall adopt its own rules of procedure. The Political Committee takes part in every meeting held by the Congress.

Article 5

(1) The Political Committee formulates policies, taking into account the guidelines laid down by the Congress. It shall meet at least once a year.

(2) Its other functions shall be:

(a) To consider applications from and to admit to membership those who are referred to in Article 1.

(b) To terminate membership of Parties which support policies that run contrary to the aims and spirit of the Charter of the European Democrat Union.

(c) To determine the number of delegates which Parties may send to the Congress.

(d) To convene the Congress.

(e) To adopt a financial statute and pass the Budget.

(f) To adopt its own rules of procedure and to prepare rules of procedure for the Congress.

(3) The Political Committee shall be composed of the Chairman and the Secretary General or equivalent person of each member Party and the Chairmen of representative groups or organisations which apply for membership and are accepted, (see Note 2). Each member shall have one vote. The Political Committee shall take decisions unanimously. Decisions pursuant to Article 5, para. 2 (a) and (b) shall require a majority of three-quarters of the members present. The Chairman of the Political Committee shall be elected for a period of three years. The Political Committee may invite friendly Parties and organisations to send observers on a permanent or ad hoc basis.

(4) The Parties of the member states of the

- European Community
- Nordic Council
- EFTA
- Council of Europe

shall be encouraged to form sub-committees to deal with questions relating to these organisations.

These special bodies shall conduct their own activities in accordance with their own rules of procedure which shall be deposited with the Executive Bureau. The sub-committees shall report on their activities to the Political Committee at regular intervals and at least once a year.

#### Article 6

The Executive Bureau executes the policies determined by the Political Committee. It has up to eight members nominated by the Political Committee for a period of three years. The Chairman of the Political Committee shall be Chairman of the Executive Bureau. A Secretary General may be appointed to act under the direction of the Executive Bureau.

#### Article 7

These articles may be amended by a decision of Congress by a two-thirds majority of those present and entitled to vote.

Any proposed amendments must be circulated six months in advance.

#### Note 1

There was considerable discussion about whether European Democrat Union or European Democrat Alliance would be a more appropriate title. It was noted, that on the British Conservative side, there was some feeling that the word "Union" implied a closer association than might be thought desirable at this stage. On the other hand, representatives of other parties indicated that in their terminology, the word "Alliance" was only appropriate for describing associations between states e.g. the

North Atlantic Alliance. It was agreed that, on balance, the word "Union" did not present insuperable difficulties for any party and that accordingly the title European Democrat Union should be retained.

Note 2

There was considerable discussion about whether the Chairmen of the party groups in the Council of Europe, and the European Parliament and the International Chairmen of the women's, youth and student organisations should be entitled to be voting members of the Political Committee as of right. The organisations concerned would be the European Union of Women (EUW), the European Union of Women Christian Democrats (UEFDC), European Democratic Students (EDS), European Union of Young Christian Democrats (UEJDC), Democrat Youth Community of Europe (DEMYC). It was decided that it should be left to the Chairmen and Secretaries General of the member Parties to consider the application for full membership of such groups and organisations. Should full membership not be agreed, provision has been made so that these, as well as other organisations and friendly parties, could be invited to send observers either on a permanent or ad hoc basis.

Annex 2

DRAFT CHARTER OF THE EUROPEAN DEMOCRAT UNION

(as amended in London on 12.2.76)

1. We, the Parties united in the European Democrat Union, believe in the protection and promotion of:
- Human dignity and independence and guarantees for the freedom of the individual;
  - The rights and responsibilities of the citizen;
  - Respect for the rule of law;
  - Democracy and the constitutional state;
  - An open and tolerant, pluralistic society;
  - A socially orientated market economy.
2. The State should create conditions which will enable each individual to reach his full potential. It should also recognise individual achievement. The family is the basic unit in our society and individuals should be encouraged and assisted to accept responsibility for the welfare of their own families. The State must take measures to provide adequately for those who for one reason or another are unable to support themselves.
3. Personal freedoms and civil liberties, as laid down in the European Convention of Human Rights, are the very foundations of our society. We believe that these freedoms and liberties can be guaranteed only under a democratic system of government based on universal suffrage and freedom of association.
4. Economic policy should serve to safeguard and improve the conditions of human life. We believe that a socially-orientated market economy is the most effective instrument for achieving these goals and that it provides a necessary basis for a free society and a democratic political system. The role of the State should be to maintain the conditions necessary for the efficient operation of the economy. In particular we stress:
- Free choice of place of work;
  - Freedom of choice for consumers;
  - The importance of private ownership of industry;
  - The encouragement of competition;
  - The prevention of excessive concentrations of economic power;
  - The necessity of free trade unions as an integral part of the economic system;
  - The importance of a spirit of partnership among those who work together in industry.

5. The State should ensure that its youth have wide educational and cultural opportunities and that they are able to exercise the greatest possible choice. We uphold the cultural and traditional values of our European heritage upon which our civilisation is based.

6. We declare our support for the movement towards European unity which can ease tensions on our continent and solve economic and other problems which individual states cannot solve on their own. We realise however that the ultimate unity of Europe will be incomplete without all the countries of Europe.

We firmly recognise the right of each individual nation to preserve its national identity and safeguard its vital national interests.

7. The movement towards European unity serves the cause of world peace. We advocate a constructive partnership with the developing countries of the world, working towards the closing of the economic gap between rich and poor. Europe should thus be able to play an increasingly important role in international affairs, acting as an example and model for the co-operation and co-existence of free nations.