

THE EUROPEAN DEMOCRATIC UNION (E.D.U.)

(A Note by Douglas Hurd MP and the Baroness Elles)

1. Every year since 1967 representatives of the centre and centre-right parties of Europe have met together in an informal session known as "The Inter-Party Conference". Over the years participants have included the British and Scandinavian Conservatives, the German CDU and CSU, the Austrian OVP, the Belgian, Dutch and Italian Christian Democrats, the Maltese Nationalists, the Luxembourg PCS, and, more recently, the Portuguese CDS and the Greek New Democracy. From the start these meetings had two principal objectives for the Conservative party:

- i) to found a means of co-operation between centre and centre-right parties across Western Europe in order to influence the political future of the continent in our direction, in opposition to the Socialist International.
- ii) to organise a centre-right grouping within the EEC to fight successfully the direct elections to the European Parliament in 1978, or whenever they were to be held.

2. At the 1975 Inter-Party Conference, held in Munich, it was decided to take the first objective a stage further. There was thus convened in September of that year the first-ever Conference of Party Leaders. Ten parties were represented at the Klesheim Palace, Salzburg, with Mr. Whitelaw leading the Conservative delegation. The minutes record that "Mr. Whitelaw strongly agreed that all the like-minded parties of the Centre-Right should work more closely together and pledged the Party's full co-operation".

3. At first there were considerable difficulties. It was not immediately clear in some countries as to who the most appropriate partner might be. In others the connotations of the word "Conservative" still provoked hostile reaction. There was a feeling, too, that the Party lacked a specifically Christian tradition. In one or two instances the obvious partner was simply non-socialist rather than anti-socialist, and indeed in government was often to be found in coalition with socialists.

4. It thus became clear that some Christian Democrat parties, notably those of Italy, Belgium and Holland, were unwilling, unlike the German CDU, to commit themselves to any wider centre-right alliance. They were already organised both throughout Europe in the Union of European Christian Democrats (UECD) and as a Group inside the European Parliament. Early in 1976 all Christian Democrat

parties within the Community announced their intention of fighting the first Strasbourg elections on a common platform as the European Peoples Party (EPP).

5. In the spring of 1976 Douglas Hurd reported to Shadow Cabinet on these problems. It was conceded that our second objective was no longer practicable, at least for the first elections. We would seek to co-operate as closely as possible on an ad-hoc basis with EPP and would try to develop a more effective working arrangement between Conservatives and Christian Democrats in the Parliament and the Council of Europe. But it was agreed that our first objective remained as valid as ever and that we should press on with establishing EDU as a wider "umbrella" embracing centre-right parties both inside and outside the Community.

6. Faster progress was then made and many of the earlier difficulties began to disappear. First, Mrs. Thatcher, speaking in Hanover in June 1976, re-emphasised our commitment and set out our aim:

"Each of us, in our own countries, have our different problems. But many problems - of maintaining free economies, of combating threats to our way of life both from within and from without - we hold in common. It is to solve those problems and meet those threats that we should bring ourselves closer together. I am convinced that the Christian Democrat, Conservative and Centre parties in Europe should now join together in an effective working alliance.

I believe that this is a task of historic importance and one in which we should all invest our energies." (25th May 1976)

Publication of "The Right Approach" helped to clarify for our friends the Party's ideological position. The Conservative Group in the Parliament began to develop better links with the Christian Democrats, ensuring, for example, the election of Signor Colombo, an Italian Christian Democrat, as President of the Parliament in March 1977.

7. In the autumn of 1977 agreement was reached at the Inter-Party Conference to set up EDU as a formal working alliance. Originally the launch was arranged for December 1977 but was postponed, in order not to impinge on Christian Democrat sensibilities, until after EPP's founding congress in March 1978. A new date of 24th April was fixed, on which the Leaders of all the participating parties will meet in Salzburg and formally establish EDU by making a joint declaration and setting up a permanent organisation. (A list of those invited to Salzburg is attached at Annex 1.)

8. The final preparatory meeting, held on 21st March this year and attended by Dr. Taus (OVP), Dr. Geisler (CDU), Dr. Tandler (CSU), Lady Elles and others, reached agreement on the following points:

- i) EDU should be a "working association" with the minimum of institutionalisation for the time being.
- ii) Its principal forum should be an annual meeting of Party Leaders, one of them acting as Chairman for a two-year term.

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- iii) Close links should be maintained with those Christian Democrats who were not at this stage ready to join EDU, and representatives of EFP and the UECD should be invited to the annual meetings.
 - iv) Each annual meeting should devote attention to one major political issue of European relevance.
 - v) A small Secretariat should be based within the auspices of the Party holding the Chairmanship.
 - vi) Sub-committees of the Association would begin preparations for the first EDU Congress, at which a Charter and Statutes which would preserve the independence of each party would be formally adopted, and co-ordination of effort for the Strasbourg election campaign.
 - vii) Until then, the Association would operate under the framework of the preamble and declaration to be made by the Party Leaders at Salzburg. (The texts are attached at Annex 2).
9. The purpose of EDU was simply stated by Mrs. Thatcher in her Hanover speech:

"We are not aiming at a single monolithic party, but at an alliance of autonomous parties co-operating for a common purpose. For many years there has been a Socialist International. We do not need to copy their barren doctrines or ideological arguments. But we must match them in organisational strength if we are serious in our purpose, and determined to achieve our victory."

10. The benefits of EDU should be substantial. Across Europe the parties of the centre-right will be seen to have organised themselves into an anti-socialist, anti-communist alliance; through EDU we can give practical and concerted support to those of our friends beleaguered by the left, particularly in the newly restored democracies. And there will be other benefits: we have much to learn from each other in the formulation and presentation of policy (an example is the recent informal EDU seminar on family policy, attended by 15 parties from 14 different countries, which was able after two days work to produce an agreed statement of principles and which the Conservative delegation led by Peter Bottomley MP thought a most worthwhile and illuminating conference).

11. The launch of EDU will also be of significance for us at home. We will be seen to be developing our European outlook, as a party, yet we will not have made any of the ideological sacrifices which might be necessary if we were at this stage to go into a more explicit coalition with other non-socialist parties. After the first elections have been held, it will be time to explore anew the opportunities that exist both inside and outside the Parliament. EDU will also provide a valuable framework for us in building up relations with those parties that will be represented in the Parliament after the Community is enlarged to include Greece, Spain and Portugal.

12. For the first elections EDU will provide evidence to our electorate that we have support for our policies in the European Parliament from other like-minded parties.

12th April 1978

PARTIES INVITED TO SALZBURG

The following are invited:

OVP, PPTT	from Austria
Cons	Denmark
Cons, Swedish Peoples Party	Finland
CDU, CSU	Germany
Cons	Iceland
South Tyroler Party	Italy
Cons	Norway
CDS	Portugal
Cons	Sweden
Cons	U.K.

Representatives from UECD

Representatives from EPP

The following have been informally approached and will be sending representatives:

UDF	France ✓
PCS	Luxembourg
Nats	Malta
UCD	Spain
New Democracy	Greece ✓
Christian Democrats, CVP	Switzerland ✓

Note: RFR (France) has been approached, but it is not yet known whether M. Chirac will come.

DECLARATION

of the Working Association of Christian Democrat,
Conservative and other moderate centre parties
(European Democratic Union)

Preamble

The undersigned party chairmen or leaders of Christian Democrat,
Conservative and other moderate centre parties

- Having regard to their common philosophical heritage and their common convictions as to the place of man in society, democracy, liberty, the rule of law and social solidarity;
- Having regard to the threats imposed by the left and the right on the achievements of democracy in liberty and solidarity;
- Having regard to the important tasks in the course of the closer cooperation in Europe which make necessary a collaboration of our parties which is efficient, unbureaucratic and inspired by the same political convictions;
- Believing in an Europe strong enough to defend its peoples and its freedoms from those who seek to threaten them;
- Being convinced that the community of Europe remains a divided one and will be incomplete while some of its peoples are deprived of the rights and freedoms to which we subscribe;
- Declaring their commitment to democracy, to the rule of law, to the right to free elections and to the values of an open, pluralistic society where power is dispersed widely amongst free institutions and where the activities of the State are limited to the essential;
- Believing in the right of the peoples of Europe to enjoy basic personal freedoms and human rights, such as defined in the European Convention on Human Rights and in the European Social Charter;

- Rejecting the philosophy of totalitarianism which has brought so much suffering in the past and continues to restrict so many freedoms;
- Rejecting those totalitarian, materialistic and collectivist dogmas of marxist and other parties inspired by marxism which put more faith in the State than in the individual and his abilities;
- Believing that European society must be an open one, dedicated to creating conditions that will enable each individual citizen to reach his full potential and to carry out his responsibilities to his fellow men and women;
- Fledging themselves to work towards a truly democratic, ever closer union of all the peoples of Europe, building upon the strengths of the European Communities and their relations with the other countries of Europe, and recognising the right of each individual nation to preserve its identity and to safeguard its vital interests;
- Believing in the socially oriented market economy as well as social solidarity and partnership as the best pattern of conflict solution in society and as the best means of creating the wealth and material prosperity necessary to meet the legitimate aspirations of the peoples of Europe, and of tackling the social evils of unemployment and accelerating inflation;
- Rejecting the system of centrally administered economies and class conflict;
- Stressing the moral commitments of a free and open society, and the obligations of its Christian values, the family as the natural unit of society, as well as the responsibility of the strong towards the weak and less fortunate;
- Declaring that they will work to ensure that Europe never turns inwards on itself but uses its influence, achievements, and above all its political values for the greater good of the world, especially in those parts that are less developed economically and politically;

have agreed to create a working Association, hereinafter referred to as the European Democratic Union (EDU).

I.

- 1) The European Democratic Union shall consist of parties which adhere to the above principles;
- 2) Regional and other federations of such parties mentioned above may be invited to become members or observers;
- 3) Parties may also cooperate in the EDU as permanent or ad hoc observers; non-European parties may become observers to the working Association;
- 4) The annual conference of party chairmen or leaders shall decide upon the admission of members and observers. Observers shall have consultative status.
- 5) Membership in the EDU ends by withdrawal and by exclusion which is decided by a majority of 3/4 of the above conference.

II.

- 1) The European Democratic Union shall be concerned with the consideration of policies to meet problems which all or a considerable number of member-parties have in common and which represent an all-European interest, in particular
 - by establishing common positions on important European and world-wide policy problems;
 - by mutual aid and solidarity concerning the deliberation and solution of particular problems of individual countries or groups of countries.
- 2) The European Democratic Union shall achieve its purposes, in particular

- by the formulation of policies by the annual conference of chairmen or leaders
- by the setting-up of Sub-Committees to study and to make proposals on such topics as decided at the annual conference of chairmen or leaders.

III.

- 1) The European Democratic Union shall hold an annual conference consisting of the party chairmen or leaders and of the chairmen or leaders of other members and observers; the chairman of EDU shall convoke ad hoc meetings for exceptional reasons;
- 2) The annual conference of chairmen or leaders shall adopt their decisions by unanimity;
- 3) The chairman and the treasurer of the European Democratic Union shall be elected for 2 years by a simple majority by the members of EDU; the chairman shall be responsible for the administration; he appoints, for his term of office, the executive secretary;
- 4) The expenses of the chairman and the secretariat shall be paid by the members of EDU.

Done at Salzburg on April 24, 1978

the following party chairmen or leaders declaring the accession of their parties to the European Democratic Union:

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