Grey eminences and informal governance

Joseph Retinger's role in the process of European Integration

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1) Biographical background

I would like to begin with a short biographical background of Joseph H. Retinger before presenting three examples of his behind-the-scenes activities which have earned him the titles of „eminence grise of Europe“ and „Talleyrand without portfolio“ (C.D. Jackson). I will focus on two episodes surrounding the Congress of Europe in The Hague in 1948 where Retinger was one of the main organizers as well as on his activity in the Europen Movement. Although Retinger is perhaps best known as initiator of the Bilderberg Conferences, I will omit this aspect of his behind-the-scenes activities in this paper. For more background information on the Bilderberg Conferences I refer to my articles „Mosaiksteine zu einer Archäologie der Bilderberg-Konferenzen“ (Zieliński 2016) and „The Bilderberg Conferences as Transnational Informal Governance Network“ (Zieliński in print).

Joseph Retinger is one of the most enigmatic political figures of the 20th century. Although his memoirs were published by his long-time secretary, John Pomian, a couple of years after his death, they are very inaccurate on the factual level. In recent years several biographies have been published, sometimes shedding light on important moments in his life and his influence on international politics. Unfortunately, all of them have their weaknesses also. Right now me and my father are finishing our biography of Retinger based on newly evaluated archive material. The following is based on my archive research for this project.

Joseph (Józef) Hieronymus Retinger was born into a wealthy family of Jewish origin (his grandfather had converted to catholicism) in Poland in 1888. His father died six years later, the mother in 1902. As a young man he spent a lot of time in Paris in the bohemian circles and became a close friend (lover?) of André Gide whose „Immoraliste“ apparently described Retinger's life perfectly. Their relationship was so close that Gide, who was already famous at that time, proofread Retinger's PhD thesis at the Sorbonne. All his life Retinger was very proud that he was the youngest doctoral candidate at the Sorbonne ever when he was only 20 years old.
His political activities began during World War I. On the way to London he gets arrested in France on suspicions of spying (he had a Austrian-Hungarian passport at that time). He gets released after an intervention from a high ranking official of the Foreign Ministry, Philippe Berthelot. With little success he tried to find support for the Polish cause in London. In 1916 he participated in secret peace talks with Austria-Hungary. After the death of Popoe Pius X in August 1914, the Vatican tried to negotiate a peace treaty. One of the main protagonists was Włodzimierz Ledóchowski, since 1915 the 26th Superior-General of the Jesuits.

The secret peace negotiations – also known as Sixtus affair – began after the death of Emperor Franz Joseph and the coronation of Karl I. In the talks participated both secular and religious leaders, especially the brothers Sixtus and Xavier de Bourbon-Parma (who both studied at the Jesuit college Stella Matutina in Feldkirch, Austria and then in Carlsburg, Germany and were brothers-in-law of the Austiran-Hungarian emperor), Ottokar Czernin, the Foreign Minister of Austria-Hungary, British Prime Minister Herbert Asquith and his successor David Lloyd George. King George V was kept informed about the proceedings.

It was Boni de Castellane\(^1\) who motivated Retinger to join the negotiations while Władysław Zamyoski recommended him to Superior-General Ledóchowski. It is important to note that Retinger had joined the Jesuit novitiate in Rome as a teenager but apparently didn't become a member of the order (some authors nevertheless call him a Jesuit because of this episode).

Retinger's role in the negotiations was to mediate between Sixtus de Bourbon-Parma and Superior-General Ledóchowski. He travelled a lot between Switzerland, France and Austria, supported by Count Mensdorff-Pouilly, former Austrian ambassador in Paris. The negotiations failed after it became clear that Emperor Karl cannot make a decision without German involvement who were obviously opposed to the negotiations (especially since they weren't invited). I mention this episode in detail here because it is at the origin of Retinger's reputation as an agent of the Vatican which is relevant to his visit to Rome which I will analyse in this paper.

His involvement is probably also the reason why soon after he became persona non grata in France and Great Britain and was exiled from Paris in 1917 (possibly to protect more important participants). Between the World Wars he spent a lot of time in Mexico as assistant to President Morones. However, it is not quite clear if he was indeed helping the Mexican government or rather

\(^1\) The friendship between Retinger is interesting also in the context of his later cooperation with Edward Beddington-Behrens in the European Movement. Beddington-Behrens grew up in Paris where his parents were friends of de Castellane.
infiltrating them to help European oil companies secure their rights to Mexican oil fields – especially against American concurrents. He was certainly regarded as opposed to American interests because when he travelled to the United States in 1926 he was imprisoned. There is enough material in his personal archive to suggest that at least on some occasions he was in fact working for European corporations.

His involvement in world politics accelerates at the beginning of World War II. He helps the Polish General Sikorski flee from France to London and becomes his right hand. Joseph Retinger boasted to have been civilian with the most hours spent flying during World War II. Not only did he accompany the Polish prime minister in exile, Władysław Sikorski on all his trips – all except for that last, fatal one in Gibraltar\(^2\) – but also flew a number of other missions the details of which are unknown. Even his most famous mission when he parachuted into occupied Poland in spring 1944 bringing money and trying to negotiate something – what exactly will remain unknown, but it is very likely that he tried to convince the leaders of the Polish underground of the necessity of working together with the Soviets, even at the risk of losing Polish independence after the War.\(^3\)

On many occasions this mission is presented as the first – or even sometimes as the only – mission he did for the SOE. This seems highly unlikely for a number of reasons: First of all, I found in his archive in London a short letter, written shortly after his death in 1960 by a known British intelligence operative, Henry Kerby, to Retinger's secretary and 'partner in crime' Jan Pomian. Not only does he call Retinger in this letter by his war-time codename 'Salamander' but also recommends himself in case Pomian would need help 'tidying up things'. Another indicator is the fact that when Retinger and Prince Bernhard approached the Americans about their participation in the Bilderberg conferences, these were suspicious of him, assuming that he was working for the British Secret Service. This seems evident from the correspondence of C.D. Jackson and Allen Dulles among others (cf. Gijswijt 2007: 25 f.).

C.D. Jackson, the unofficial leader of the American delegation to the first Bilderberg conference(s), was very suspicious of Retinger in general and had been informed, according to Gijswijt, 'by people „who are in a position to know better than I“ that Retinger operated as a British secret agent.

\(^2\) A few weeks earlier, Retinger found something that looked like a bomb on Sikorski's plane. However, the subsequent investigation did not yield any results.

\(^3\) In this context it is interesting to note that he was Polish Chargé d'Affaires in Moscow in 1941 and on this occasion negotiated a treaty between Poland and the Soviet Union. His frequent contacts with representatives of the Soviet Regime raised suspicions that he might be a Soviet agent.
(...) In the same letter to Whitman, Jackson wrote that during his time as President of the National Committee for a Free Europe 'no matter where the rug was placed, whether New York, London, Paris, Munich, Rome, or what have you, Retinger always managed to crawl out from under it at the most awkward moment.“ (Jackson to Whitman, November 19 1954, Box 41, Ann Whitman File, International Series, DDEL, quoted in: Gijswijt 2007: 25) He appeared „to have complete carte blanche from Bernhard, and considerable freedom from movement from invisible sources of income“ (ibid). Hatch quotes Jackson's description of JHR as „a very difficult, very opinionated man who would not take no for an answer and often achieved his purpose by very devious means“ (Hatch, 213-214).

However, this intelligence connection is not the only explanation for the mystery surrounding this eminence grise. According to a report of the MI5, dated 29 July 1941, Retinger was a vice chairman of the Polish section of B'nai B'rith in London. B'nai B'rith is the oldest Jewish „service club“ in the world.4 Its historic roots stem from a system of fraternal lodges established in the second half of the 19th century. It was established in 1843 by German Jewish immigrants in London. After World War II it was quite influential on the highest levels of power: it was present at the founding of the United Nations in San Francisco and has taken an active role in the world body ever since, having non-governmental organizational (NGO) status at the UN since 1947 and, for many years, being the only Jewish organization with full-time representation at the United Nations. It has also worked extensively with officials in the State Department, in Congress, and in foreign governments to support the efforts of the OSCE.

All this contributes to the strong impression that Retinger would not have been able to conduct his activities especially after World War II if he was not a high-standing member of an informal power structure. In a recent biography, Bogdan Podgóński (2013) argues in the same direction. He considers especially Retinger's post-war activity on behalf of the European Integration as indicator of the existence of an informal hierarchy and Retinger's high position in this hierarchy: He held a speech at Chatham House in 1946 under the title „European Continent?“. Shortly after he started the ELEC with Paul van Zeeland which became part of the European Movement. In this function he was one of the main organisers of the Congress of Hague. Afterwards he was very active as Secretary General of the European Movement and later of the Bilderberg Conferences. All this is otherwise very hard to explain considering the fact that Retinger did not hold any official position

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4 There is very little literature about service clubs in general. A good introduction is Matthias Stickler's article about the Rotary Club in Germany (Stickler 2014). See also Charles 1993, Gradinger 2007 and Biedermann 2007.
after World War II and was himself neither a very rich banker or industrialist nor a member of the aristocracy. He is featured prominently on many photographs from the Congress in The Hague in May 1948, for example on a picture where Churchill with tears in his eyes sits in a chair surrounded by Paul Ramadier, Joseph Retinger, Raoul Dautry and Salvador de Madariaga.

His close ties to the Royal Institute of International Affairs and the Astor family are apparent also through the fact that during several years David Astor, the editor of the Observer, was paying him £500 yearly.

An important trait Retinger's was his uncanny ability to tell people what they wanted to hear – also about himself. For example when writing to Luigi Gedda from the Vatican's Catholic Action he would explain that he wasn't and could never be a member of any secret society like the Freemasonry. Shortly afterwards he would help organize the secret Bilderberg Conferences. Or when writing to Jens Hauge, the Norwegian Social democrat, he would present himself as left-wing. Because of this a certain caution is warranted when reading his memoirs, edited and published by his long-time secretary and confidant Jan Pomian. Many facts are not quite right when compared with actual events and letters. Nevertheless I would like to mention one episode which sheds an interesting light on Retinger's activities as Secretary General of the Bilderberg Conferences.

According to this account, in July 1956 Pomian and Retinger travelled to Ankara as representatives of the Bilderberg Conferences. Till then nobody from Turkey had participated in these conferences. Prince Bernhard, however, „was on good terms with Prime Minister Menderes“ and decided to send Retinger to Ankara for negotiations about a possible participation of Turkey in these conferences. Before taking off on a Safari he arranged a meeting through the Turkish Minister in The Hague. Retinger didn't understand everything on the phone so they went to Den Haag first to find out about „the arrangements and also to discover how much the Turks knew about the purpose of the visit. The Turkish Minister was most helpful and had organized everything very well, but although he seemed very impressed with the importance of the mission he knew little of what it was about or who on earth Retinger was. On one or two occasions he addressed Retinger as Professor, instead of his usual title of Doctor, but this seemed irrelevant.“ (Pomian 1972, my emphasis).

Apparently somebody assumed that since Retinger was the organizer of some important conference, he must be an academic, most likely a professor at some university. Wherever they went in Turkey they were greeted very friendly by everyone but always Retinger was being addressed as Professor.
After the meeting with the Foreign Minister they had to meet some professors at a university. At that moment it was too late to explain the misunderstanding so they went along, escaped as soon as possible, happy that nobody noticed (or at least that they weren't aware of it) the misunderstanding and went back to the hotel to order „the biggest whiskies“.

According to Pomian's account the visit proved „very successful, largely thanks to the help and understanding of a very able diplomatist [sic], Ambassador Nuri Birgi“. In 1959 the first Bilderberg Conference on Turkish soil took place. However, Pomian/Retinger forget to mention that „several of the Turkish hosts – among them Prime Minister Menderes – were executed a few months after the conference by the Turkish military“ (Gijswijt 2007: 5).

Nuri Birgi is generally an important figure in transatlantic informal governance circles, having participated not only in virtually all Bilderberg conferences between 1957 and 1977 (and a few ones later on) but also in the very secretive Vaduz Institute where he was a member during several decades (cf. Großmann 2014: 402). He is thus one of the very few persons (maybe the only one) to participate in both traditionally protestant-liberal oriented Bilderberg and traditionally catholic-conservative oriented Vaduz Institute. Is it more likely that he served as a liaison officer between these organisations or rather that both of them were not aware of his participation in the other meetings? Considering the fact that many participants belonged to the highest echelons of intelligence services, the second option is very unlikely. Anyway, it would be definitely interesting to take a closer look at this diplomat and his activities especially in the 1960s and 1970s.

2) Retinger, de Rougemont, Sandys and the Congress of Europe in The Hague, May 1948

Whether acting out of his own initiative (which is unlikely considering that he was constantly meeting politicians and other European and American elite members from the highest levels of power) or on directives from more powerful people who preferred to stay in the background (the most obvious link being to David Astor & co., although the connection to Jewish high financiers like Siegmund Warburg or Victor Rothschild cannot be excluded a priori – his archive in London is evidently incomplete and correspondence with certain people seems to be systematically missing (e.g. Colin Gubbins, Paul van Zeeland etc.).

Joseph Retinger was a skilled schemer/intriguer. He was involved in replacing Duncan Sandys by Paul-Henri Spaak as President of the European Movmeent in 1950. He was demanding Coleman's
resignation as chairman of the American section of the Bilderberg Steering Committee in 1954/55. Eisenhower was opposed but in the end Coleman suffered a heart attack, resigned between the first and second conference and was replaced by Dean Rusk, President of the Rockefeller Foundation and future Secretary of State in the Kennedy administration. Retinger's behind-the-scenes activity concerning the report of the Cultural Committee of the Hague Congress merits a closer look:

The cooperation and friendship between Retinger and Denis de Rougemont, the Swiss writer, begins in the year 1947. Retinger travelled with Sandys to the Congress of the UEF in Montreux in Switzerland which took place from 27 till 31 August. Rougemont had a passionate talk about the need for a European federation. It is not quite clear why Sandys and Retinger, representing the European Movement, decided to invite the federalists to cooperate with them in the organisation of the Congress of Europe in The Hague. Deering speculates that it was either because they thought „que les fédéralistes sont les véritables représentants d'une base qui aspire à la paix au travers de l'unité“ or they perceived them as „empêcheurs de danser en rond qui pourraient se révéler fort gênants s'ils ne sont pas neutralisés et donc associés à leur propre action“ (Deering: 114). Anyway, in November 1947 the federalists agreed to work together, although from the beginning they were sceptic about their possibilities of influencing the outcome of the Congress. And indeed their influence was contantly diminished, especially by Duncan Sandys, but also in general by proponents of inter-governmental or supranational solutions to the question of European integration. But this is not the topic of this chapter.

Denis de Rougemont chaired the Cultural Committee. Together with many prominent European intellectuals he prepared a manifesto which was read at the Congress. He was, however, unaware that his efforts were being undermined by Sandys who in the meantime had asked Salvador de Madariaga and Kenneth Lindsay to write separate texts. When Rougemont presented the fruits of his collaborative project to Sandys, he refused to accept it as a collective document and suggested to print it as one of three personal statements signed by Rougemont together with those by the two other authors. Rougemont was furious. But he did not give up.

He visited Retinger, 'his only political ally in London' as Deering describes him, who decided to help him. Deering interprets this help as sign that Retinger was not aware of Sandys' scheming against Rougemont. Retinger suggests to Rougemont to cancel his flight back and rewrite the document in a one night session. When they are finished, all traces of 'federalism' have disappeared. In the meantime Retinger called Duncan Curtis and asked him to pick up the reworked manuscript
at Rougemont's hotel early in the morning and bring it directly to the printing. In this way Retinger and Rougemont managed to place the manifesto in the official publication of the proceedings of the Congress of The Hague without Sandys' knowledge, much to his and the British' dismay. Apparently Retinger assumed all responsibility for this manoeuvre and there was nothing they could do since he was Secretary General of the European Movement. At least that's how Rougemont recalled the aftermath of this intrigue.

This involvement is a very good example of Retinger's independence from the British state. The same applies to his scheming against Sandys as President of the European Movement. In 1950 Retinger was instrumental, together with the ACUE, in replacing Sandys by Spaak (cf. Wilford 2003: 232 f. for details of this affair). Sandys was replaced by Spaak and the seat of the Secretariat transferred to Brussels while Retinger remained as the Secretary General. Wilford interprets this as elimination of „British influence ... from the leadership of the European Movement“ (Wilford 2003: 233). It is more likely, as some biographers have suggested, that Retinger was too independent a person to work for the British Secret Service but it is likely that on occasions when their goals coincided they would work together – Retinger's parachute jump to occupied Poland in 1944 being the most prominent example of such cooperation.

From the perspective of European integration as an open process, it is important to remember that at that time, it was not clear at all that European integration would result in a supranational structure. There were three main visions for a united Europe: the inter-governmental one, favored by the British establishment which was not keen at all to renounce sovereignty rights; the federalist one, favoured by the federalists who wanted a supranational entity but with strong nation-states and especially with the support of the populations; and the supranational one, favored by so called unionists, who were in favor of a new political authority which would pool sovereign rights from its member-states. There is little written evidence of Retinger's position on this point. However, when working on her biography of Denis de Rougemont, Jo Deering found an interesting document which clearly puts Retinger in the supranational camp:

On 29 March 1948 Retinger writes to de Rougemont (and later passes the letter on the members of the Coordination Committee of the Congress in Hague) and demands „une déclaration préparée par la Commission culturelle et approuvée par les deux autres commissions, qui définira le contexte culturel et spirituel de notre rassemblement et de nos activités conjointes“5 (Retinger to de...
Rougemont, 29 March 1948, quoted in Deering 1991: 256). He also demands the creation of supranational bodies „investis de certains droits souverains au lieu de demeurer au stade de projets d'assemblées consultatives“6. He goes on to cite van Zeeland's conception of a delegation of sovereignty. Obviously the European Union today would look quite different if the federalists would have succeeded in establishing a federal union.

3) Retinger's journey to Rome, October 1948

After this in-depth look at Retinger's behind-the-scenes activity regarding Denis de Rougemont and the Congress of Europe in The Hague I would like to turn to an unknown document I recently discovered in the Joseph Retinger archive in the Polish Library in London. I say unknown because I have never seen his Rome trip from Autumn 1948 mentioned in any literature on the topic so I'm assuming it is not known to the general or specialized audience. I believe that this was a very important journey in the context of post-Congress of Hague diplomatic negotiations between the Western European countries in the first phase of the Cold War (or what is often referred to as Early Cold War). Although not all contents of the meetings are mentioned in this report, it is nevertheless an important document and its close reading can certainly contribute to a better understanding of the backroom deals that helped launch the process of European integration after World War II.

The only mention of Retinger's attempts to negotiate with the highest levels of the Catholic Church in the Vatican is in Pomian's notoriously unreliable biography. He dates the first meeting between Joseph Retinger on May 1950. Based on the contents of the document I discovered, it seems more likely that he first met Luigi Gedda during his journey to Rome in October 1948. It is not quite clear whether this was also the moment of his first meeting with Msgr Montini. But for sure earlier than in 1950.

The two highest ranking politicians that Retinger met during his short stay in Rome were the Prime Minister Alcide de Gasperi and the Foreign Minister Carlo Sforza. I would like to begin by situating the political situation in Italy at that time with a quote from Elizabeth Wiskemann, a British spy: „At the end of the Second World War the Roman Catholic Church emerged as the only real victor, absorbing in Italy the former prestige of the discredited monarchy. (...) In Rome in 1945, 1946, 1947 I learnt quite new things. For instance I learnt that the Catholic Church had huge industrial

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6 define the cultural and spiritual context of our gathering and of our joint activities“ (my translation).
6 „endowed with certain sovereign rights instead of continuing at the level of projects for consultative assemblies“ (my translation)
interests – inevitably perhaps – and that certainly under Pius XI it led the battle in defence of property. (...) At the time of the Italian election of June 1946, and the referendum on the Monarchy, I found that priests were threatening simple peasant women in villages near Rome that their offspring for seven generations would burn in hell if they voted for the Marxist parties, or even for the Republic. (...) Alcide de Gasperi ... was in a sense the nominee of the Vatican which had protected him during the Fascist period. (...) I soon got to know Carlo Sforza well. His vanity was proverbial but it was the unspoilt vanity of a child although he was 74 in 1946 – he did not seem anything like his age. He was intelligent and enlightened [= freemason?], pleasingly balanced between zeal and sophistication. (...) de Gasperi and Sforza were both, from their different points of view, enthusiastic Europeans“ (Wiskemann 1968: 223-226).

Alcide de Gasperi was Retinger's first important interlocutor in Rome. At first he refused to meet Retinger because he was assuming that he was an associate of Paul van Zeeland and his European League for Economic Cooperation (ELEC, cf. Dumoulin/Dutrieue 1993) which was correctly perceived as close to traditionally liberal, i.e. Protestant interests. Only after Palumbo and Giacchero managed to convince de Gasperi's private secretary, Mino Cingolani, that Retinger wanted to speak with him as official representative of the International Committee of the Movements on European Unity [later renamed European Movement], an audience with the Prime Minister became possible. However, a written confirmation was necessary: „The private secretary asked in view of this apparent mis-representation that an official letter should be written by the Rome secretariat of the International Committee asking for an audience with the Prime Minister so that his office might have concrete evidence on their files that Dr Retinger was representing the International Committee as secretary general.“ A clear sign of the suspicions concerning Retinger's person and his intentions.

On Thursday, 21st October 1948, at 12:30 „Dr Retinger's meeting with the Prime Minister took place as arranged“ (my emphasis). The meeting was a success from the perspective of the authors of the report. As to its revealed contents, let me provide a longer quotation from the report:

„He promised Dr Retinger at the end of this meeting that he would give him an answer by 4 p.m. the following day as to whether he would be in a position to accept the invitation to become an Honorary President of the International Council of Europe. He asked Dr Retinger if he proposed to meet Count Sforza and on learning the [sic] Dr Retinger has asked for an appointment with Count Sforza he advised him not to refer to the question of the invitation to become an honorary president.
Dr. Retinger asked M. De Gasperi to give as much support as he could to the U.E.F. Congress in order that the Congress should not be a failure, since failure might have a bad reflection on the cause in general. M. De Gasperi expressed himself a bit worried about the U.E.F. Congress in view of the relative unimportance of the people promoting it.

The next day, Friday 22nd October 1948, Retinger was supposed to meet Foreign Minister Count Carlo Sforza at 4 p.m. However, Sforza also first refused to speak with him. His secretary said that before the end of the week no appointment was possible (they must have assumed that Retinger would not stay in Rome longer than that). Again they tried to use the service of de Gasperi's private secretary, however, „he warned Cdr Rodd that he did not think that Count Sforza wished to interview Dr Retinger at this juncture“. It seems that the reason were Sforza's objections towards de Gasperi but it is not obvious what exactly he objected to:

„It was learnt the following morning that the P.M. had consulted his cabinet and that a certain amount of opposition had come from Count Sforza. Evidently this opposition was overcome and the P.M.’s private secretary telephoned through his acceptance to the invitation personally to Dr Retinger at 4 p.m. as arranged.“ (my emphasis)

Again, despite the reluctance to meet Retinger _at all_, in the end both, de Gasperi and Sforza, met him exactly at the time when Retinger wanted to see them. I think this is an important indicator of the persuasiveness but also of Retinger's high standing in these circles at that time. A similar situation possibly occurred with Carandini although it is not quite clear from the report:

„Immediately after seeing the P.M. an appointment was made for Dr Retinger to see M. Carandini. The latter had been elusive up this moment.“ It is not clear how to interpret 'elusive' in this context – whether they couldn't reach him or whether he didn't want to communicate with them. However, considering the fact that de Gasperi and Sforza both weren't too keen to meet Retinger, I am assuming that it probably means the latter.

The conversation Retinger had with Spinelli is also very interesting considering the fact that Spinelli (and 'his' UEF) had a very different vision of European integration than either Sandys/Churchill or Retinger and his invisible friends. It was definitely the most heated conversation mentioned in the report (and also the one with most content mentioned). There were several points of dispute between Retinger and Spinelli: The information policy of the International Committee; the honorary secretariat in Rome (Astuto „an ex-Fascist“ and Rodd); the possibility of
Orlando becoming honorary president of a national Italian council; Carandini and his role in the MFI movement in Italy; the UEF Congress in Rome etc.

„Dr Retinger stressed once more the importance of trying to avoid controversial issues on the relationship between the U.E.F. and the International Committee which might in any way jeopardise the main policy of the United Europe cause. The meeting finally ended in a more friendly atmosphere and with Sg Spinelli confident that he would become the prime mover in constituting a national council.“

Much more interesting from a historical point of view are Retinger's meetings with Montini and Luigi Gedda. According to the report and contrary to what all accounts of the relationship between Retinger and Gedda mention (which are copied from Pomian's untrue account and place their first meeting in 1950) there was no apparent connection between Retinger meeting Gedda and Retinger meeting Montini. Our document says: „Mr Walsh (Eire Minister to the Vatican) arranged a meeting between Dr Retinger and Sg Gedda who is secretary general of the Catholic Action party in Italy. Their conversations developed along the line of assistance between the action party and the united europe cause. The catholic action party is not only represented in Italy but in all European countries and Dr Retinger thought that by keeping good contact with Sg Gedda there would be a useful background for propaganda for the Unied Europe Movement.“

In this context it is interesting to note that it was through the Irish Representative at the Vatican that this meeting was made possible. Retinger had a long history of contacts with Ireland dating back to his journey there before World War I.

With Montini who was Secretary of State at the Vatican at that time and later became Pope there was apparently more common ground for discussions:

„Dr Retinger next saw Msgr Montini with whom he had a very successful meeting. Msgr Montini asked to be kept closer in touch with the situation and in particular with M. Astuto whom he knew and liked. Dr Retinger asked if Msgr Montini would consider a Vatican representative on the International Council in the capacity of an associated member in a similar way as it was proposed for certain specific movements. Msgr Montini thought that this might be difficult but gave the impression to Dr Retinger that the request would receive consideration pointing out at the same time that the Vatican had no direct contact with the United Nations or the previous League of
It is interesting to note that this meeting took place BEFORE the meeting with Prime Minister de Gasperi. Unfortunately no information is given on the date of the meeting with Luigi Gedda. What is also interesting is that at the same time as Retinger was in Rome, the American Secretary of State, General Marshall was there also. On 18 October 1954 he met de Gasperi and Sforza and separately the President of Italy, Luigi Einaudi, and on the next day he had an audience with the Pope.

Let's confront Pomian once again with how things actually continued: In his account there was one short period when Retinger tried to get in touch with the highest level of power in the Vatican (as always on his own whim). After successful first talks in May 1950 suddenly a couple of months later the Vatican was not interested anymore in meeting Retinger. This might be true for Montini.. However, the archive material speaks a different story about his contacts with Luigi Gedda as the most recent letter between Retinger and Gedda that I could find in his archive in London was dated from July 11th 1955:

„J'ai été vraiment désolé de ne pas pouvoir vous voir à Rome. J'ai essayé je ne sais pas combien des fois de vous atteindre par téléphone, mais malheureusement je n'ai pu pas vous attraper. Je m'imagine que mon séjour était trop court pour nous permettre de nous rencontrer.

Il y a cependant des chances que je vienne à Rome de nouveau vers le 15 septembre pour assister au Congres des associations européennes-américaines, et dans ce cas-là je vous récrirai.

Veuillez agréer, mon cher ami, l'assurance des mes sentiments les meilleurs“ (Retinger to Gedda, 11th July 1955, found in his archive in London)

Apparently they had become 'friends' in the meantime. It is not clear, however, how their friendship developed and what they did together. A possible place were the Bilderberg conferences. According to Valérie Aubourg, Gedda was „the only Italian contacted by Retinger in 1952 when the idea of what would later become the Bilderberg Conferences emerged for the first time. However, Luigi Gedda declined to participate and thus no Italian took part in the first meetings.“ (Aubourg 2010: 41). This is not accurate. At the first meeting of the Steering Committee Italy was represented by
Alcide de Gasperi and Piero Quaroni (Gijswijt 2007: 11 f.). At the first Bilderberg Conference in May 1954 in the Netherlands, there were five participants from Italy in attendance and two more who were invited but were prevented from participating „due to illness“, namely Alcide de Gasperi (who died a few months later and whose paper at the conference was read by Senator Cafiero Canali, Gijswijt 2007: 46) and Piero Quaroni. Thomas Gijswijt, the author of the most comprehensive scholar work about the Bilderberg conferences to date, does not mention Gedda anywhere.

Let's have a look at who this Luigi Gedda was, who became so involved in transatlantic psychological warfare in the Cold War:

Luigi Gedda was a geneticist from Venetia, born in the year 1902. Since 1927 he worked at the University in Rome and became Professor for Genetic medicine in 1960. Between 1934 and 1946 he was President of the Youth Section of Catholic Action, president of the Men Section between 1946 and 1949 and finally President of Catholic Action between 1952 and 1959. He was a scientific racist and advocate of eugenics as well as a medical advisor to Pope Pius XI which provided him a direct link to the centre of power in the Vatican.

He is considered the 'mastermind' behind the Christian Democratic victory in the April 1948 elections. These elections are often cited as a prominent example of early CIA-involvement in Western European politics in order to prevent a communist victory. According to Richard Aldrich, a senior official of the Vatican, Luigi Gedda, created an organization of Catholic activists which helped to defeat the Communists in the elections of 1948. Gedda was supported by US officials in the US embassy in Rome and in the CIA, and the support increased when he began to promote the idea of 'Western Union', explaining that the Pope had now agreed that the Church should carry the

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7 After Retinger's death in 1960, de Rougemont prepared a booklet to honour his activity on behalf of European Integration, entitled „Hommage à un Grand Européen“. Quaroni's contribution is „L'avons-nous bien connu?“ and his answer is definitively negative: He realized that he never talked with Retinger about personal things or motives, only about „business“, i.e. European unification. Quaroni also mentions a very important trait of Retinger, namely his discretion. Apparently he would never mention the sources of his information even though „il connaissait tout le monde“. Also important was his ability to work in the background: „il savait travailler dans l'ombre et rester dans l'ombre. Il avait appris cette grande vérité ... que si l'on veut réussir quelque chose dans le grand jeu de la politique, il faut savoir renoncer à figurer au premier rang.“ (Quaroni 1961: 10). Later on Quaroni recalls how Retinger approached him regarding the Bilderberg Group: „J'avais assez vite compris où il voulait en venir, mais cela m'amusait de le voir développer sa technique: et j'avais décidé, pour une fois, de jouer au diplomate qui ne veut pas comprendre ou se compromettre. Je dois admettre que, du point de vue du métier, sa technique était superbe. Un polonais me l'avait dit un jour, il y a bien longtemps: Tout polonais a la conspiration dans le sang. D'abord une allusion très vague aux buts à atteindre: et puis, au fur et à mesure de ma compréhension gagnée, quelques détails, et puis avec une graduation savemment dosée, d'autres détails encore, puis quelques noms...“ (Quaroni 1961: 11).

8 For more on Luigi Gedda cf. Invernizzi 2012.
the banner for a federation of western European states'. After the US embassy in Rome concluded
that Gedda needed about $500,000, US officials debated whether the funding should be channelled
through the Marshall Plan (ERP) publicity fund or the CIA. “ (Aldrich 1997: 212). The actual
influence of the CIA, however, is disputed and recent „Italian-based scholarship has helped to
demonstrate that De Gasperi’s victory owed more to indigenous factors since the mobilization of
Italian society relied more on the DC [Christain Democrats] and particularly the Vatican, whose
efforts were based on a grassroots movement coordinated by Luigi Gedda’s Civic Committees,
which utilized the Church’s ‘capillary-like network of parishes and lay organizations’.82 “ (cf.
Gedda, Luigi. 18 aprile 1948: memorie inedite dell’artefice della sconfitta del Fronte
Milan:Mondadori, 1998.) According to del Pero for example, „the Christian Democrats were
strongly suspicious of the American backing of Gedds [sic] activities; see Dunn to Department of
State, memo, Sept. 19, 1950 (765.01 19-1950), General Records of the Department of State.“ (del
Pero 2001: 1309)

Gedda’s organisation, the Comitati Civici (civic committees), were among the groups initially
supported by the American embassy in Rome: „They were tied to the most reactionary circles of the
Catholic world, strongly opposed to Communism but also very distant from the reformism the
United States wanted to promote. It is likely that a sort of self-deception played its part in the
American decision to help Gedda and his Comitati Civici“ who were apparently deceived by Gedda
about his political views [?!]. There seems to be a more practical reason for the CIA-Gedda
connection: „The crucial factor was Gedda’s ability to present himself as one of the few in Italy who
knew how to use the techniques of psychological warfare. Gedda’s frenetic organizing zeal and his
knowledge of the most modern instruments of propaganda made him the local contact to whom the
United States looked in order to organize anticommunist psywar in Italy. His activism was a
contrast to the operational passivity of the Christian Democrats party“ (del Pero 2001: 1308)

Johannes Großmann, in his groundbreaking research on informal governance meeting points of the
transnational European conservatives, mentions Gedda as possible member or at least associate of
the highly secretive Le Cercle with strong ties to Western European intelligence services and the
Vatican and a big interest in questions of psychological warfare (‘action psychologique’ in French,
cf. ) („Notiz Strauß: „’Kontrolle in der Organisation durch uns. Vatikan einverstanden ([Luigi]
Gedda). Personeller Einfluß auf die Leute, die von der or]t her einkommen.““ Großmann 2014: 446)
The Western European Intelligence Services are also the background for the connection between Gedda and the Interdoc network with its anti-communist crusade. It is unclear, though, which role Gedda played in the end. But he was definitely in touch with Louis Einthoven, chief of the Dutch Domestic Security Service since 1946 during the phase of the emergence of this organisation (Scott-Smith 2012: 72 f.)

4) Retinger's evaluation of the successes and failures of the European Movement

The document entitled „Confidential, to be revised, Draft Notes on the European Movement Its Future Policy And Suggested Programme And on Changes to be Made within the Movement“ is not dated. However, based on its content it can be dated to the second half of 1954 because it mentions the failure of the EDC which was not ratified by the French parliament on 30 August 1954. This failure seems to be one of the reasons for this confidential evaluation. The author is Joseph Retinger. It is not clear who received this document; as it was found in Paul van Zeeland's private archive, he is the only recipient which can be determined with certainty.

The document begins with a list of the achievements of the European Movement, before addressing reasons for its decline as well as summarizing some criticism. It moves on to „Recall the general trend of the politics and tactics of the Movement“ before suggesting some general lines for the „future programme“, „tactics“, „change of structure, if necessary“, „change of seat of the International Secretariat“ as well as the „necessary changes implied by the resignation of M. Spaak“.

I will focus on some aspects on this document which are especially relevant against the background of the current state of research about the history and activities of the European Movement as well as its role in the European Integration. So far only one authoritative study of the EM exists based on archival documents: F. Rebattet's PhD thesis.

I will proceed with a list of the relevant points and moments in the document before addressing them one by one in more detail.

According to Retinger, „the main achievement of the European Movement ... rests on the fact that the idea of the unity of Europe was lifted from the sphere of Utopian dreams into that of practical
It was instrumental in creating the following institutions (Retinger uses the term “practical realities”): the Council of Europe and the Consultative Assembly; the European Payments Union and the Bill of Human Rights; the College of Europe at Bruges; the European Cultural Centre at Geneva, established by the European Movement conference at Lausanne in 1949 as well as the Youth Campaign (for the Council of Europe cf. Bitsch 1997; for the College of Europe cf. Mahncke 1999; for the European Youth Campaign cf. Norwig 2014, Palayret 1995).

During the first two years of its existence the European Movement (1947-1949) “concentrated its activities on politics, because only by having the approval of the leading politicians of the Western world could anything be achieved without too great delays” After the establishment of the Council of Europe it devoted “much of its time to the study of economics, education and mass propaganda“ (my emphasis). This was simultaneous with the change of the International Committee „into a policy-making body“ called European Movement.

During this first period, „the European Movement was, generally speaking rather under the inspiration of the Rightists tendencies, and the persons within the Movement who were responsible for its general tactics were Mr. Duncan Sandys“ and Retinger. The main reason was the opposition of the British Labour Party (which was the ruling party in Great Britain at that time) to European Unity.

„The second period was when the European Movement was trying to find the best way of implementing through practical means the general conception of the unity of Europe.“ „During this period the Conservative Government came into power in Great Britain and failed to follow up their promises, which everybody expected would be kept, to make European unity part of the official British policy in Europe.“ These were the last months of Duncan Sandys as chairman (who was forced to resign in 1950) and the first months of Paul-Henri Spaak as chairman. Retinger worked „very closely“ with both of them.

„The third period covers the time when the European Movement began to break away from the general principles of the Congress of Europe at the Hague. It supported, to the almost complete exclusion of all other activitation, the European Coal and Steel Community and the European Defence Community.“ The leadership was shouldered by Spaak alone while Retinger resigned as Secretary General and continued to „to support its general aims as Delegate General“.
The next part focuses on the criticism of the European Movement at the time of writing. This is based on discussions Retinger had with „many people in Europe and America“.

1) „lack of a program and a well-defined tactics. My opinion, which I expressed long ago, is that during the last two years the Movement made a mistake in putting all its eggs in one basket, viz., the defence of E.D.C., and concentrating on activities in the Six countries, doing practically no work in the other Western European countries.

2) during this period practically no propaganda was made or information put out which had any bearing on the unity of Europe as a whole. The only exceptions were two spectacular conferences, viz., the Second Westminster Conference, and the Parliamentary Conference in Paris, which was an outstanding success.

3) the activities of the National Councils as such inside their own countries are very slight“

4) There is also considerable criticism of the official reviews of the Movement, Nouvells de l'Europe and Europe Today and Tomorrow.

5) Seat of the Secretariat in Brussels – Retinger will suggest to move it to London or Paris.

6) „The European Movement had either not been interested in the bodies or institutions which it created, or has not followed them up. Neither has it taken part in their activities, which could sometimes have been advantageous. This criticism does not apply wholly to the College of Europe at Bruges which, although an autonomous body, is connected with the general activities of the European Movement by the fact that some members of the College are also members of the Movement.

On the other hand, the fact that both the Cultural Centre in Geneva and the Central & Eastern European Commission in Paris were dropped by the Movement has far-reaching and negative results.“

7) „the Executive Bureau as now constituted is no longer so representative of the European mind as it was formerly“ and „needs new blood“ for a number of reasons, the most important ones being that some members resigned after becoming ministers, others resigned for personal reasons and still
others are too old to be as active as necessary.

9) „the larger part of the money spent on the general activities of the European Movement goes either to the Youth Campaign or is earmarked for activities which are not always the objectives of the Movement.

The Executive Bureau is not in control of those funds, and officially knows neither their sources nor how they are spent.“

All these criticism called for a radical change of the European Movement.

„The object of the Movement as formulated by the Congress of Europe at The Hague was to achieve a unity of Europe in a constructive way, that is, we thought about the practical steps to be taken.“

„At The Hague it was agreed that the word 'Europe' did not represent a geographical, but a cultural entity“

The unity of Europe was considered a long-term project based on the following tactics:

1. To obtain the general consent in principle of the governments of Western Europe;

2. To inform the general public and to make some militant mass propaganda;

3. To create such instruments as could last over a long period of time, and to indicate a tactical line of conduct covering details.

Point 1 was achieved but due to the fact that the European Movement abandoned some of the institutions it helped to create, it finally failed on point 2 while point 3 was only partially realised.

„At the Congress of Europe at The Hague our policy was to seek the unity of Europe by any possible system, but using mean and instruments in accordance with the conditions prevailing at the time. That is why the words 'federation' and 'confederation' were always replaced by the words 'union' or 'unity'.“
„Considering that it was not only in the interest of Europe, but also in that of the United States, to see the establishment of an European Union, we did a great deal of work in the United States and achieved the formation of the American Committe on United Europe, which successfully 'sold' the idea of the unity of Europe to the American Government and people.“

„Since 1949 ... we have called ourselves the European Movement, to stress the fact that we are a policy-making body and not a tactical, opportunist, political association, considering the Movements to be laboratories of our tactics.“

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From the point of view of the topic of our conference I would like to focus in more detail on the following points: The criticism that the European Movement created (helped create?) institutions but then lost interest in them. The College of Europe has been an exception because of the overlapping memberships.

The question of the funding of the European Movement. This has been subject of a number of controversies in recent years after Rebattet's dissertation became available for the general public and interested reserchers found other documents confirming that the European Movement was largely financed by covert funds from the United States, mainly from the CIA. Retinger's statement that the Executive Bureau „officially knows neither the sources nor how [the funds] are spent“ provides an interesting new perspective: Apparently there was at least some unofficial knowledge of the source of these funds inside the Executive Bureau!

Especially interesting in this context is that Retinger appears to imply that in fact it was the European Movement which „achieved the formation of the American Committee on United Europe“ which „'sold' the idea of the unity of Europe to the American Government and people“. Of course we have to be careful to take this self-qualification as matter of fact. However, it is undisputed that the journey of the leadership of the European Movement (Sandys, Retinger, Beddington-Behrens) to the United States in the summer of 1948 had a decisive influence on American support for the European Movement (cf. Aldrich 1997: 190; Wilford 2003: 228). Up to that point they were supporting Coudenhove-Kalergis Pan-European movement. We will probably never find out, which arguments decided for Retinger (and his unnamed backers) and against
Coudenhove-Kalergi (Wilford suspects it was the success of the Congress in The Hague earlier that year while Aldrich thinks it might be related to the prestige associated with Sandys through Churchill) but keeping in mind the fact that at the Bilderberg conferences the European participants often succeeded in influencing American foreign policy it is too easy to speak of the European Movement as an instrument of the CIA or the United States. The interdependence between North America and (Western) Europe after World War II was more complex than the discourse about 'Americanization' sometimes portrays it.

Another important aspect, especially if we want to imply that some of the protagonists in the construction of Europe might have had aims which were different from the ideology they were propagating, is the question of semantical changes. Retinger tried to be very aware of which semantics were popular in the so-called public opinion at any given time and which were undesired. For example he notes that since the words 'supranational authority' (especially in connection with sovereignty) „are considered with disfavour by quite a number of people“ it would be better to speak of „pooling of sovereign rights“ as suggested by Macmaillan or Schumann's French formula: 'mise en commun des droits souverains'. Again it appears clear that Retinger was in favour of a supranational character of the European Union.

And last but not least there is the question of the collective identity, i.e. who is "we/us"? One possible explanation is that Retinger refers to the European Movement. However, if we take seriously the big ideological differences between the personalities and groups involved in this movement it is more likely that Retinger was instead referring to a smaller circle of like-minded persons.

5) Conclusion

The nature of the work of grey eminences makes it likely that their activities are hidden from public view. Until 2010 when Edward Cox published his biography of Fox Conner only one book with the title „Grey eminence“ existed: Published in 1942, in the middle of World War II as an account of the life of François Leclerc du Tremblay, also known as Père Joseph, written by Aldous Huxley (Huxley 1942). The term grey eminence refers to the fact that although Père Joseph never attained the title of a cardinal (referred to as 'his eminence'), he nevertheless was powerful enough to act and be considered one by his peers. According to Huxley the conflict which manifested at the time of the writing and publication of his book could only be understood if one went back in time to the
seventeenth century and the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648). We can only speculate whether Huxley had any particular contemporary grey eminences in mind when writing that book. But what we know with certainty is that Joseph Retinger was a grey eminence par excellence.

For a long time Joseph Retinger disappeared from history books and could be considered almost 'forgotten by history' (Suchoples 2009). Recently, in 2015, Wilfried Loth published an up-to-date account of the process of European Integration, called „Building Europe“. In the context of the ILECE/ELEC that he established together with Paul van Zeeland and especially of the Congress of Europe in The Hague where he was one of the main organizers, Joseph Retinger appears in the first chapter as „long-time colleague of Polish Prime Minister in exile Wladyslaw Sikorski“ (Loth 2015: 5). One can argue with the characterization of Retinger as Sikorski's „colleague“ but nevertheless this marks the first time to my knowledge that Retinger appears in an official history of European Integration. There is no mention of his work for/with the secret services, his connections to high-ranking people at that time and especially there is no mention of his activities as Secretary General of the European Movement, although the European Movement itself is mentioned (of course, the Bilderberg Conferences aren't even mentioned). I would argue that this is a clear sign that many historians are still uncomfortable when it comes to Retinger. What is interesting, however, is that finally it seems more convenient to mention him even in passing than not to mention him at all. This is most likely the result of other research – some of which has been referred to in my article – which clearly demonstrated the important role Retinger played in international politics especially between 1941 and his death in 1960.

Obviously it was Retinger's trip to Rome and his meeting with de Gasperi which led to the latter accepting the invitation to become honorary president of the European Movement. In retrospect this appears like one of the decisive moments in post-War European Integration: „the initiators of the

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9 Retinger is mentioned so seldom that it makes sense to cite the passages here:“Parallel to the UEM, an 'Independent League of European Co-Operation' (ILEC) was organized by Paul van Zeeland, a former Belgian prime minister [Loth forgets to mention that van Zeeland would become Foreign Minister in 1949. Also interesting would be to mention his brother Marcel van Zeeland who was very active at the Bank of International Settlements in the 1930s], and Józef Retinger“ (Loth 2015: 5).

„In practice, the decision on invitation policy [for the Congress of Europe] meant that Sandys and Retinger collected suggested names, decided who would actually receive an invitation and then also registered the acceptances.“ (Loth 2015: 10)

[Regarding de Rougemont's report of the Cultural Committee] „Passages that were all too federalist were removed from the proposal at the last minute after intervention by Retinger. (Unfortunately, de Rougemont does not indicate what exactly the corrections were that he had to make after a meeting on 26 April 1948 in London.)“ (Loth 2015: 17)
Congress in The Hague had actually succeeded in putting European unification on the agenda of Western European politics. Agreement ... on a common program allowed Sandys to bring together the various European organizations in a common 'European Movement' that was officially constituted on 25 October 1948 [i.e. just a few days after Retinger's meeting with de Gasperi] – with Léon Blum, Winston Churchill, Alcide de Gasperi, and Paul-Henri Spaak as prestigious honorary presidents:“ (Loth 2015: 18).

Based on the information presented here I would argue that it is possible to consider Retinger an 'unofficial diplomat' (Berman/Johnson 1977). However, I would not call him a „private diplomat“ (Knudsen 2016, referring to David Rockefeller) or „private politician“ (Podgórski 2013) because I do not believe that he was – at least since World War II but probably already since World War I – acting in his own interest. Retinger himself cultivated this aura of mystery. I would like to close this article with an anecdote: One day Denis de Rougemont asked Retinger: „Tell me, Joseph – they say that you are a free mason, an agent of the Intelligence Service, of CIA and of Vatican as well as a supporter of communism. Sometimes they even add that you are a Jew and a gay… . What am I supposed to tell them?“ „Tell them – laughed Retinger – that this is not all.“ (Pomian 1990 [1972]: 274).

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Appendix
List of people with whom Retinger met during his journey to Rome in October 1948:

Astuto  https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Riccardo_Astuto_di_Lucchese

Palumbo  https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pier_Fausto_Palumbo

Ruini  https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meuccio_Ruini

Orlando  https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vittorio_Emanuele_Orlando
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vittorio_Emanuele_Orlando

Montini  https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_Paul_VI
function at the time of the meeting:
   Secretary of State in the Vatican

function at the time of the meeting:
   Prime Minister of Italy

Carandini  https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicol%C3%B2_Carandini

Sforza  https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carlo_Sforza
function at the time of the meeting:
   Foreign Minister of Italy

Spinelli  https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Altiero_Spinelli

J. Walsh  https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Walshe
function at the time of the meeting:
   Eire Minister to Vatican
Luigi Gedda  
https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luigi_Gedda

function at the time of the meeting:

President Catholic Action [?]

Sir Victor Mallet  

Mr Michael Stewart  
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_Stewart,_Baron_Stewart_of_Fulham

Cdr Rodd  
https://www.geni.com/people/Gustaf-Guthrie-Rennell-Rodd-OBE/6000000011055854890 [no biography available, he was the father of:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tremayne_Rodd,_3rd_Baron_Rennell, the brother of
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Rodd,_2nd_Baron_Rennell and the son of
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rennell_Rodd,_1st_Baron_Rennell, all members of an old landed
gentry family]
Modern Governance: New Government Society Interactions. JEAN MONNET European Module Governance functions have drifted out of national control in the evolving EU system. Ben Rosamond. Theories of European Integration JEAN MONNET European Module Structure Agency debate Questions on the role of supranational institutions Why a group of principles would delegate powers to supranational institutions? Under what conditions might powers be delegated to the agents? What conditions are definitive for the pattern of delegation? The explicit effort to theorize about the process of European integration began within the field of international relations (IR), where neofunctionalism and intergovernmentalism long remained the dominant schools of thought. With the relaunching of the integration process in the 1980s and 1990s, however, IR scholars have begun to approach the study of the European Union using more general, and generalizable, theoretical approaches. This article examines the recent debate among realists, liberals, rational-choice institutionalists, and constructivists regarding the nature of the integration process. KEY WORDS Governance; institutionalization; integration; neo-functionalism; transnational society. In this article, we propose a theory of European integration, focusing on the process through which supranational governance - the competence of the EC to make binding rules in any given policy sector - has been constructed. We necessarily confront some of the most puzzling questions posed by the evolution of the Community.