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Introduction

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Introduction

Roy Jenkins was a remarkable politician who assumed the post of Commission president at a crucial time. Between 1977 and 1980 he found himself at the heart of a European Community that was in a troubled state, its institutions and policies struggling to cope with the global economic crisis underway since 1973. Jenkins' own country, meanwhile, still appeared unable to come to terms with its 'European choice', uncertain whether its recently attained membership of the European Community was a help, a hindrance or an irrelevance at a moment when the UK's economic performance and political fortunes reached a postwar nadir. And Jenkins himself was at a personal moment of flux, his earlier rapid ascent towards the very summit of British politics interrupted by electoral misfortune and the changing mood of the Labour party, the attainability of both his European and domestic ambitions undermined by the increasingly polarised nature of British domestic politics during the 1970s.

The aim of this book is to paint a closely observed portrait of the Jenkins' presidency. By so doing it will provide a detailed study of a job, the Commission presidency – a job which is often referred to, yet little understood. A well-documented examination of how one talented and energetic politician sought to impose himself on the position, and the degree to which his ambitions succeeded or failed, will reveal much about the nature of the post and, more broadly, the strengths and limitations of the role that the European Commission is called upon to play. Far too political to be just a technocrat, but lacking the electoral mandate or the clout and influence that comes from occupying a leadership role within one of the larger EC member states, Jenkins as Commission president sought to engage with the European leaders of the era and win them over to his position on a wide range of European issues. His successes in doing so say much about the potential importance of the role; his even more numerous failures, by contrast, speak volumes about its inherent limitations. And a close engagement with how Jenkins operated as president, what he sought to do, what he achieved, and how he fell short, will also act as valuable foil to the much better studied Commission presidency of Jacques Delors. Jenkins' successor-but-one dominates current scholarly writing about the Commission's top job. An in-depth

investigation of how an earlier and somewhat less successful president fared in the same post, will therefore enrich our understanding of the position, and throw into sharper relief some of the methods, approaches and innovations that helped Delors become the most powerful Commission president to date.

The book will also be a study of a man, or at least the very human story of one man's engagement, both frustrating and rewarding, with a cause and a process of which he had become a prominent advocate. Jenkins' career had become closely associated with the cause of European integration and the idea of Britain's participation in that process. There was therefore a logic to Jenkins' decision to withdraw from British politics following the frustration of his ambitions to lead the Labour party, and to concentrate instead on playing an active role in the integration process. How he fared – and how he regarded his four years in Brussels – reveals much not just about his post but also about his personality, his capabilities and his limitations. This book will also therefore be a biographical contribution to a short, but interesting, important, and less well studied, chapter of Jenkins' life.

It will be a study too of a brief moment when it seemed that Britain's pro-Europeans, of whom Jenkins was one of the most prominent, might finally be able to exercise a degree of that leadership role which much of the UK political elite had assumed that they would automatically inherit upon joining the EEC, but which had proved stubbornly elusive for most of the early years of membership. The waning of such hopes, and Jenkins' painful discovery of how little able he was to influence the evolution of the UK debate about the EEC from his Brussels vantage point, will be one of the sub-plots that run throughout the chapters that follow.

Lastly the book will provide a snap-shot of a vital period, both in Western Europe and in the world more generally.¹ The late 1970s were a time when the leading Western powers were still attempting to comprehend the cessation of the lengthy period of economic growth and prosperity that they had enjoyed since the end of the Second World War. Over twenty years of almost continuous economic advance had come to an abrupt halt in the first years of the decade.

¹ The current wave of historical revisionism about the period is well captured by Niall Ferguson, *The Shock of the Global: The 1970s in Perspective* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010).

Furthermore, the boom had ended in a fashion that seemed to challenge most of the basic assumptions about how growth could be secured and what policies were best designed to provide it.² The relevance and value of European integration itself was suddenly unsure. Most of the founding members of the EEC had viewed their participation in the process of ever-closer cooperation with their neighbours as part of the formula that had helped underpin their almost ceaseless economic growth. Now that that growth had come to end, however, what did this say about the value of integration? Was it part of the solution needed to rediscover economic advance? And if so, how should it change and what objectives should it aim at? Or was it instead another feature of the previous economic template that needed to be jettisoned in the light of the economic downturn?

Also particularly challenging for Western Europe was its vulnerability to another of the salient features of the period, namely the sudden rise in oil prices and the realisation of how dependent was Western prosperity on energy and other resources flowing towards Europe, North America and Japan from the countries of the developing world.³ Debates about 'producer power', about the need to lessen the ever-growing consumption of primary resources and especially of oil, about the proper relationship between the rich countries of the North and the poorer countries of an increasingly organised and militant Global South, and about how the North could organise itself so as to lessen its vulnerability, were very much a feature of these years.⁴ And alongside this new North-South axis of debate and confrontation, the 1970s also saw the persistence of the more established East-West conflict. This too was changing, though, the 1970s seeing the ebb and flow of détente, at its apogee in the middle years of the decade, in trouble by its end, as well as the continuation of a trend away from the Superpower dominance of the early Cold War and towards greater multipolarity.⁵ Several European countries, either individually or collectively,

² Stephen A Marglin and Juliet Schor, *The Golden Age of Capitalism: Reinterpreting the Postwar Experience* (Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press ; Oxford University Press, 1990).

³ Fiona Venn, *The Oil Crisis* (London: Longman, 2002).

⁴ Giuliano Garavini, *After empires: European integration, decolonization, and the challenge from the global south, 1957-1985*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

⁵ Melvyn P Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, *The Cambridge History of the Cold War Vol. 3, Vol. 3*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

hoped to benefit from this lessening of the indisputable American leadership of the Western bloc, thereby adding a further interesting but complex dynamic to the list above.⁶ And finally it was a period where the political stability of Western Europe itself seemed to be challenged not so much by the menace of terrorism, serious though this became in several European countries during these years, but much more by the collapse of dictatorships in Portugal, Greece and Spain and the instability, but also the opportunities, that this collapse seemed to bring.⁷ Worrying too was the rise of communist electoral success, particularly in Italy but also in France during this period.⁸ Most of these problems and trends left some trace on the dossiers that crossed the Commission President's desk and in the conversations that Jenkins had with most of the Western leaders of his time. A detailed study of what he said and how he regarded some of these issues, can thus offer a valuable, if tightly focused, view of a rich and eventful period of recent history.

The pages that follow will thus have four main purposes. First and foremost they will be a study of the role that Jenkins filled, a portrayal of a presidency that will shed light not just on what Jenkins was and was not able to do, but also permit a better understanding of how his predecessors and successors have fared. Second, the book will offer an in-depth biographical contribution to a period in Jenkins' life that has been less well captured by most of the existing literature. Third, it will add a further chapter to the troubled tale of Britain's difficult relationship with the European Community/Union. And fourth the study will offer one individual, but distinctive, vantage point from which to better understand the challenges and complexities facing both Europe and the wider Western world in the latter half of the 1970s.

A unique source base

This close up portrayal of Roy Jenkins' four years as Commission president is made possible by a very full and highly distinctive source base. Indeed, this book

⁶ Daniel Möckli, *European Foreign Policy during the Cold War: Heath, Brandt, Pompidou and the Dream of Political Unity* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2008).

⁷ Mario Del Pero et al., *Democrazie: l'Europa meridionale e la fine delle dittature* (Florence: Le Monnier, 2010).

⁸ David Childs, *Eurocommunism*. (London: Croom Helm, 1980).

differs from most other articles or books that I have written in as much as the source base led to the project, rather than the project defining the source base.

The roots of my decision to write a study of the Jenkins' presidency lie in my earlier participation in a team of historians assembled to write a history of the European Commission during the period from 1973 to 1986. In order to produce this volume, those taking part in the project were granted extensive access to the Commission archives for the years in question. This was for many of us, one of the key attractions of taking part. But we were also very strongly encouraged by the European Commission itself which was financing the project, and by Michel Dumoulin, who had assembled the consortium that was to write the volume, to interview over 200 of those who had worked in Brussels during the 1970s and the first half of the 1980s. Like the first volume of Commission history covering the 1958 to 1972 period published in 2007, this analysis of a second tranche of the Commission's past was to rest on oral sources and eye-witness testimonies as much as it on archival documents.⁹

To make it feasible for a relatively small team of historians to interview so many eye-witnesses in a comparatively short period of time, one of the key criteria used in deciding who should interview whom, was geographical proximity. As the sole British member of the research consortium, I therefore ended up interviewing a large number of Britons who had played some role in Brussels between 1973, the year the UK joined the EEC, and 1986. In the process, I gradually realised, I was seeking out and talking to many of those who had worked most closely with Jenkins during his presidency. Between 2010 and 2012 I thus interviewed Sir Crispin Tickell, his *chef de cabinet* in Brussels (i.e. the head of his private office), Sir Hayden Phillips, his deputy *chef*, and Michael Emerson, another member of his inner team and Jenkins' specialist advisor on monetary issues during the first part of the presidency. In addition, I spoke to Christopher Tugendhat and Richard Burke, both of whom were Commissioners during the 1977 to 1980 period, Sir Christopher Audland, who was the deputy secretary-general of the Commission while Jenkins was president, and David Marquand, who like Jenkins had made the transition from being a Labour MP to

⁹ Michel Dumoulin, Marie-Thérèse Bitsch, and European Commission, *The European Commission, 1958-72: history and memories* (Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2007).

working in Brussels in 1977. Without really aiming to do so, I had thus ended up speaking to most of those who had worked most closely with Jenkins. And as a member of the team collaborating on this Commission history volume, I also had access to several relevant interviews carried out by other colleagues, including those with Graham Avery and Michel Vanden Abeele, two further members of his *cabinet*, and with Etienne Davignon, another of his fellow Commissioners.¹⁰

All of these conversations served to increase my interest in Jenkins' four years in Brussels. Along with the published *European Diary* which Jenkins had kept while president – itself another almost unique and fascinating source, since no other Commission president has published anything comparable – and his very well-written memoirs, these interviews also gave me more than enough material to write the short profile of Jenkins and his presidency which I had been asked to do as part of the Commission history volume.¹¹ But valuable though these oral sources proved to be – and my participation in the Commission history project had served substantially to diminish my previous somewhat jaundiced view of how useful oral testimonies could be for political history – I was still too wedded to the importance of written sources to go any further on the basis of the interviews and the published *Diary* alone.

The crucial breakthrough in terms of realising that I had the makings of a book on my hands, was thus the discovery of the Tickell papers preserved in All Souls College, Oxford. This was a direct outcome of my interview with Jenkins' former *chef de cabinet*, since one of the questions that we had been asked to pose to all of those that we interviewed for the Commission history project was 'do you have any private papers relating to your time in Brussels?' To this routine enquiry, Tickell provided the unexpected but exciting answer of 'yes, 27 boxes worth of papers which have been sitting in the cellar of All Souls since my departure from Brussels nearly thirty years ago.' With his permission and with the collaboration of the librarians and archivists of the college who went and

¹⁰ Many of the interviews are now available at http://archives.eui.eu/en/oral_history/#ECM2. Unfortunately, some of those interviewed declined to allow the transcripts of their interviews to be posted online. A number of the interviews that will be used in this volume are not therefore accessible to the general public.

¹¹ Roy Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977-1981* (London: Collins, 1989); Roy Jenkins, *A Life at the Centre* (London: Macmillan, 1991); for my brief profile of Jenkins see Éric Bussière et al., *The European Commission 1973-86: History and Memories of an Institution* (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2014), xx-yy.

retrieved the boxes and files from the cupboard where they had been stored since 1981, I thus became the first person since the end of the Jenkins' presidency to gain access to the detailed paper work of his private office in Brussels.

This proved to be a collection utterly different from most normal Commission sources. In general, the European Commission has not had a particularly good track record of recording its internal deliberations. The Commission archives which I knew well from both the Commission history project and earlier research contain an odd but highly patchy assortment of policy papers, official correspondence and semi-public materials, most often press cuttings and the texts of speeches. Several of the key documentary series, notably the minutes of the weekly Commission meetings are notoriously terse and Delphic, only hinting at the arguments and debates that preceded each Commission decision. And the records of the meetings that Commissioners held with other politicians whether in the Community or beyond, are highly sporadic and only intermittently worthwhile. As a basis for writing a comprehensive history of the organisation and its activities they are useful and frustrating in equal measure.

The records kept by Tickell and the other members of Jenkins' team were of a totally different calibre, however. Here were a group of Whitehall-trained civil servants transplanted to Brussels working for a political master also used to the methods and record-keeping traditions of the British civil service. It was therefore unsurprising that they brought with them a pattern of record-keeping seldom if ever seen within the Commission before. In place of the customarily incomplete file series, or the rather opaque records of how decisions were taken, were instead detailed minutes for virtually every meeting between Jenkins and his European or international interlocutors, a voluminous series of files on the internal correspondence between Tickell and his president, a number of very full thematic dossiers on issues such as monetary integration or the British budgetary question, and extensive paper work relating to the each of the G7 summits in which Jenkins had taken part. Also neatly filed away were the briefs prepared for Jenkins for all of the meetings of the Commission and many of those of the Council of Ministers, his speaking notes for Commission meetings, Council

gatherings and European summits, and several informal records of ministerial meetings and European Councils that Jenkins had attended. As a bonus there were also lengthy accounts written up by Tickell of certain key episodes, notably the trip to China in 1979 and the 1980 negotiations that would temporarily resolve the row over the British contribution to the Community budget. It was in other words the most detailed set of internal Commission papers that I had ever seen – and quite possibly the most complete file series on any Commission president’s activities before 1977-1980 or since.

In due course this breakthrough was complemented by the further coup of being allowed by Lady Jenkins to make a brief visit to East Hendred to delve into Jenkins’ own private papers and in particular to photograph the unpublished version of his *European Diary*. This was extremely worthwhile since, as Jenkins himself acknowledges in the preface to the published edition, quite extensive cuts were made prior to publication, particularly of those sections most directly focused on internal Commission business.¹² For an inside story of the Commission presidency it was therefore very important to be able to read the full text rather than edited version. Half of the diary text had disappeared, though, so I was only able to track down the portions covering 1979 and 1980 two years later when they were made available by the Bodleian Library in Oxford. This unexpurgated diary text has proved a further invaluable source, allowing an even more detailed reconstruction of exactly what Jenkins did – and thought - while president than was possible from the Tickell collection.

Needless to say, other sources have also been used. These include a range of further Commission materials, primarily from the Commission archives in Brussels, including for instance the complete run of *proces-verbaux* (i.e. minutes) of the weekly Commission meetings for the Jenkins’ years. To these have been added the very valuable private papers of Emile Noël, the Commission secretary general, now posted online by the Historical Archives of the European Union in Florence,¹³ as well as a range of public and semi-public Commission materials also preserved digitally thanks to the Archive on European Integration at the

¹² Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977-1981*, x.

¹³ <http://archives.eui.eu/en/fonds/110729?item=EN>

University of Pittsburgh.¹⁴ A small number of archival sources from the British, German and French governments have also been read, notably those relating to Jenkins' appointment as Commission president. But I have quite deliberately chosen not to explore extensively the sizeable collections now open for consultation in many of the European capitals, since to do so would be to risk turning the book into a general history of the European integration process in the 1976 to 1980 period, rather than a much more targeted volume focused almost exclusively on the Commission presidency. For the same reason, the use of press sources has been limited mainly to the coverage of key episodes from Jenkins' years in Brussels and not expanded to include the much greater amount of more general press copy about the European Community and its development between 1976 and 1980.

Existing scholarship

An in-depth look at Jenkins' experiences as Commission president adds something new to existing scholarship both about Jenkins' life and career, and about the evolution of the European integration process. As far as the former was concerned, there were several biographical studies of Roy Jenkins already in existence, although by far the best and the most detailed only came out when I was more than half-way through this project. The earliest was the relatively short biography by John Campbell, commissioned by Jenkins himself in the early 1980s as part of his efforts to raise his public profile in Britain and thereby improve the electoral prospects of the Social Democratic Party (SDP).¹⁵ To this Jenkins himself had then added the *European Diary*, which came out in 1989, and his much praised volume of memoirs, *A Life at the Centre*, published two years later.¹⁶ And 1995 saw the appearance of an in-depth retrospective on the short but eventful life of the SDP, which inevitably also added a valuable new perspective on Jenkins' role and contribution.¹⁷ After Jenkins' death in 2003 there was then a further flurry of publications. The first to appear was Giles

¹⁴ <http://aei.pitt.edu>

¹⁵ John Campbell, *Roy Jenkins, a Biography* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1983).

¹⁶ Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977-1981*; Jenkins, *A Life at the Centre*.

¹⁷ Ivor Crewe and Anthony King, *SDP: The Birth, Life and Death of the Social Democratic Party* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

Radice's triple biography of Jenkins, Anthony Crosland and Denis Healey, an attempt to trace the interweaving trajectories of three of the brightest stars of the postwar Labour Party.¹⁸ This was followed by *Roy Jenkins: A Retrospective* edited by Keith Thomas and Andrew Adonis which was a collection of short essays often by those who had worked or served with Jenkins at various points of his life.¹⁹ Both Christopher Tugendhat and Crispin Tickell had, for instance, contributed pieces on the Brussels phase of Jenkins' career.²⁰ And then last, but most certainly not least, in 2014 Campbell brought out a second Jenkins biography, this one much more complete than that written three decades earlier.²¹

This literature means that we now have a pretty comprehensive coverage of Jenkins' life and career. The recent Campbell biography in particular is meticulously researched and grounded in a very thorough reading of many of Jenkins' private papers, now progressively becoming available for consultation at the Bodleian Library, Oxford, but to which Campbell, as official biographer, had been granted earlier, privileged access. It therefore assembles a huge amount of information about Jenkins' origins and education, his very active social life, and about his domestic political career, both before 1977 and after 1980. It also includes two, perfectly competent chapters on Jenkins as Commission president. But despite the book's length, these chapters are too short to do full justice to Jenkins' period in Brussels. They are written furthermore by someone whose *forte* is the biographical study of prominent British politicians, and who is hence most at home when analysing the ebb and flow of Jenkins' domestic career.²² This applies with even greater strength to Radice's study also, and, unsurprisingly, to the volume on the rise and fall of the SDP. An in-depth study of the 1976 to 1980 period, written by an author whose main academic focus has been the workings of the European integration process

¹⁸ Giles Radice, *Friends and Rivals: Crosland, Jenkins and Healey* (London: Abacus, 2003).

¹⁹ Andrew Adonis and Keith Thomas, *Roy Jenkins: A Retrospective* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

²⁰ Christopher Tugendhat, "The European Achievement", and Crispin Tickell, "President of the European Commission," in *Roy Jenkins. A Retrospective*, ed. Andrew Adonis and Keith Thomas (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 179–202 & 205–209.

²¹ John Campbell, *Roy Jenkins. A Well-Rounded Life* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2014).

²² Campbell's earlier output includes detailed studies of both Edward Heath and Margaret Thatcher: John Campbell, *Edward Heath: A Biography* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1993); John Campbell, *Margaret Thatcher: Grocer's Daughter to Iron Lady* (London: Random House, 2009).

and Britain's troubled relations with it, would therefore add something rather new and different to these earlier accounts.

The other body of literature to which this book is intended to contribute is that on European integration history. Historical scholarship on the European Community in the 1970s and early 1980s is still rather patchy. There have been a profusion of edited volumes showcasing the most recent findings in the archives.²³ Also important have been a number of trail-blazing journal articles which have begun to shed light on the very important changes to the European Community system that took place in what had once been seen as a stagnant decade.²⁴ And a slow trickle of detailed monographs on important aspects of the integration process during the 1970s has gradually begun to appear.²⁵ To this should also be added the volume on the history of the European Commission mentioned earlier, as well as an official history of the European Parliament.²⁶ But important gaps remain, especially in terms of Europe's internal evolution and in the coverage of the latter half of the time period. This book should help address both of these weak points.

²³ Jan Van der Harst, *Beyond the Customs Union: The European Community's Quest for Deepening, Widening and Completion, 1969-1975* (Brussels: Bruylant, 2007); Johnny Laursen, ed., *Institutions and Dynamics of the European Community, 1973-83*. (Baden-Baden: Nomos Publishers, 2014); Antonio Varsori and Guia Migani, *Europe in the International Arena during the 1970s. Entering a Different World* (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2011); Guido Thiemeyer and Jenny Raflik-Grenouilleau, *Les partis politiques européens face aux premières élections directes du Parlement Européen* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2015); Claudia Hiepel, *Europe in a Globalising World Global Challenges and European Responses in the "Long" 1970s* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2014).

²⁴ Emmanuel Mourlon-Druol, "Filling the EEC Leadership Vacuum? The Creation of the European Council in 1974," *Cold War History* 10, no. 3 (August 2010): 315–39; Angela Romano, "Untying Cold War Knots: The EEC and Eastern Europe in the Long 1970s," *Cold War History* 14, no. 2 (April 3, 2014): 153–73.

²⁵ Laura Scichilone, *L'Europa e la sfida ecologica: storia della politica ambientale europea (1969-1998)* (Bologna: Il mulino, 2008); Angela Romano, *From Détente in Europe to European Détente: How the West Shaped the Helsinki CSCE* (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2009); Daniel Möckli, *European Foreign Policy during the Cold War: Heath, Brandt, Pompidou and the Dream of Political Unity* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009); Emmanuel Mourlon-Druol, *A Europe Made of Money: The Emergence of the European Monetary System* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2012); Maria Gainar, *Aux origines de la diplomatie européenne: les neuf et la coopération politique européenne de 1973 à 1980* (Brussels: P.I.E. Peter Lang, 2012); Aurélie Elisa Gfeller, *Building a European Identity: France, the United States, and the Oil Shock, 1973-1974* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012); Eirini Karamouzi, *Greece, the EEC and the Cold War, 1974-79* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Véronique Dimier, *The Invention of a European Development Aid Bureaucracy: Recycling Empire* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

²⁶ Bussière et al., *The European Commission 1973-86*; European University Institute, *Building Parliament: 50 Years of European Parliament History* (Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2009).

The incomplete nature of the literature is particularly striking in the case of the Britain and Europe sub-plot to the wider integration story, given the intensity of the debate about EEC membership within the UK during the 1970s. There is now a second volume of the official history of Britain's relations with European integration which covers the period up until 1975.²⁷ And there are a number of older titles that cover some of the main milestones of the decade.²⁸ But the best new study of the membership negotiations has yet to be published.²⁹ Likewise important new work on the renegotiation and the referendum is still being written.³⁰ And little has yet appeared on the early years of the Thatcher government and the European issue.³¹ So all that there is to show so far for new scholarship in this field are a smattering of useful journal articles and a few chapters in edited volumes.³² There is hence plenty of scope for a study of the Jenkins' presidency to add to this rather meagre spread.

Finally, a detailed look at Jenkins' four years in Brussels will complement the existing literature on the Commission presidency. The bulk of this centres on Jacques Delors' tenure as Commission president. Most was written by political scientists and journalists while Delors was still in office or shortly after he had

²⁷ Stephen Wall, *The Official History of Britain and the European Community. Volume II: From Rejection to Referendum, 1963-1975* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012).

²⁸ Uwe W Kitzinger, *Diplomacy and Persuasion: How Britain Joined the Common Market* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1973); David Butler and Uwe Kitzinger, *The 1975 Referendum* (London: Macmillan, 1976); Anthony King, *Britain Says Yes: The 1975 Referendum on the Common Market* (Washington: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1977).

²⁹ Daniel Furby, "The Revival and Success of Britain's Second Application for Membership of the European Community, 1968-71" (Queen Mary, University of London, 2009).

³⁰ In the case of the referendum, work is being done by Rob Saunders at Queen Mary, University of London. Lindsay Aqui, a PhD student in the same department is preparing a study of the renegotiation.

³¹ The best sources so far are Stephen Wall, *A Stranger in Europe: Britain and the EU from Thatcher to Blair* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Hugo Young, *This Blessed Plot: Britain and Europe from Churchill to Blair* (Overlook Press, 1999).

³² Aoife Collins, "The Cabinet Office, Tony Benn and the Renegotiation of Britain's Terms of Entry into the European Community, 1974-1975," *Contemporary British History* 24, no. 4 (December 2010): 471-91; Mathias Haessler, "A Pyrrhic Victory: Harold Wilson, Helmut Schmidt, and the British Renegotiation of EC Membership, 1974-5," *The International History Review* 0, no. 0 (November 25, 2014): 1-22; N. Piers Ludlow, "Safeguarding British Identity or Betraying It? The Role of British 'Tradition' in the Parliamentary Great Debate on EC Membership, October 1971," *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 53, no. 1 (January 1, 2015): 18-34; Matthew Broad, "Awkward Partners? The British Labour Party and European Integration in the 1970s," in *Les Partis Politiques Européens Face Aux Premières Élections Directes Du Parlement Européen*, ed. Thiemeyer and Raflik-Grenouilleau, 119-41.

stepped down.³³ It is rich on detail, but often lacking in the perspective that comes with a greater distance from the events being described. Beyond this, there is a little bit on Walter Hallstein, the first president of the Commission, and the only president able to rival Delors in terms of impact and success.³⁴ There is a biography of Sicco Mansholt, although inevitably this focuses more on his lengthy tenure as Commissioner for agriculture than on his two years as Commission president.³⁵ And there is a volume on François-Xavier Ortoli, Jenkins' immediate predecessor, but this too seeks to cover his whole career and hence can only devote a couple of chapters to his stint in charge of the Commission.³⁶ Finally, there is a very recently published edited volume on the Commission presidency that devotes a chapter to each of those to have held the post.³⁷ That on Jenkins, by Melissa Yeager, is well-written and offers some interesting insights.³⁸ But it was put together without access to most of the key archival documents and is also constrained by the need to fit its analysis within the confines of a single chapter. It too is thus a complement to this volume, rather than a rival which steals its thunder.

The structure of the volume

The chapters that follow are arranged in a mixture of the chronological and the thematic. Chapter two will thus look at Jenkins' life and career prior to his appointment as Commission president, highlighting in particular his youthful interest in European culture, politics and travel, and his early political conversion to the idea of British EEC membership. The cause of British

³³ Charles Grant, *Delors: Inside the House That Jacques Built* (London: Nicholas Brealey, 1994); George Ross, *Jacques Delors and European Integration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); George Ross, "Inside The Delors Cabinet," *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 32, no. 4 (December 1, 1994); Helen Drake, *Jacques Delors: Perspectives on a European Leader* (London: Routledge, 2000); Ken Endo, *The Presidency of the European Commission under Jacques Delors: The Politics of Shared Leadership* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999).

³⁴ *Walter Hallstein: The Forgotten European?* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1998); Jonathan White, "Theory Guiding Practice: The Neofunctionalists and the Hallstein EEC Commission," *Journal of European Integration History* 9, no. 1 (2003): 111–31.

³⁵ Johan van Merriënboer, *Mansholt: A Biography* (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2011).

³⁶ Laurence Badel and Eric Bussière, *François-Xavier Ortoli. L'Europe, Quel Numéro de Téléphone?* (Paris: Descartes & Cie, 2011).

³⁷ Jan van der Harst and Gerrit Voerman, *An Impossible Job? The Presidents of the European Commission, 1958-2014* (London: John Harper Publishing, 2015).

³⁸ Melissa Yeager, "Roy Jenkins (1977-1981): 'My Fear Always Is That We Shall Go Too Slow,'" in *An Impossible Job? The Presidents of the European Commission, 1958-2014*, ed. Jan Van der Harst and Gerrit Voerman (London: John Harper Publishing, 2015), 133–150.

Europeanism constituted a central theme in his subsequent political trajectory: it was one of the issues that first brought him to prominence, it was an important concern and interest during the most successful period of his ministerial career, and it was the key factor in souring his relations with his party following Labour's 1970 electoral defeat. It was hence highly appropriate that the first Briton to hold a major post at the head of a European Community institution, should be someone whose lobbying on the European issue ever since the late 1950s had earned him the reputation as Britain's leading pro-European alongside Edward Heath.

Chapter three will look at the period immediately before Jenkins' arrival in Brussels. It will explore the circumstances that led to his being offered the post, and the reasons he decided to accept. Next it will look at the manner in which the president-elect used the summer, autumn and early winter of 1976 to prepare himself for Brussels. Of particular interest will be the manner in which he learned his way around a European system the inner workings of which he had had little opportunity to experience, the advice he received, especially from the first cohort of Britons to have held posts in the European Commission, and the plans that he inherited for Commission reform. Also of importance in this chapter will be Jenkins' energetic but only partially successful efforts to influence the identity of those the member state governments appointed to his Commission. This campaign involved extensive discussions with leaders across the EEC and the bandying about of the names of many prominent politicians who might be lured to Brussels. In the end, however, a significant number of those who Jenkins wanted could not be persuaded to join the Commission whereas some of those who did join the Jenkins' Commission were candidates whose appointment the president-to-be had sought to block. The chapter will conclude with a look at the delicate allocation of jobs to the incoming Commissioners in the course of the so-called 'night of the long knives'.

Chapters four and five focus on two of the main controversies to mark the first half of Jenkins' presidency. The former looks at the battle to secure a seat for the Commission president at the new international top table constituted by the G7 summits. This was a fight that Jenkins inherited from his predecessor, but which absorbed a significant portion of his energies and time in the first part of

1977. Ultimately the Commission president was invited to the Downing Street summit held in May of that year. But procuring this invitation involved a bitter battle with the French, who were aided and abetted by a Callaghan government which showed little sympathy for a fellow Labour party politician. It was also only a partial success in the short term, in that French and the British between them ensured that Jenkins was present for only some of the summit and was subject to a number of petty humiliations while there, intended to differentiate between the national leaders and a mere official. Over time, however, Jenkins would be able to consolidate his presence at these Western global summits, leaving an inheritance of full participation that has been passed down to all of his successors.

Chapter five meanwhile focuses in on the single best known achievement of the Jenkins' presidency, namely his role in the launch of the European Monetary System (EMS). It will begin by explaining why Jenkins felt he urgently needed a big new policy priority by the summer of 1977, why he identified monetary integration as the objective to pursue, and how he set about winning support for this cause. This did not prove easy, since the president's new enthusiasm cut across an established Commission approach to economic and monetary union and faced serious internal opposition from Ortolini, his predecessor and colleague. The member states were also deeply divided on the issue. But the chapter will argue that Jenkins' advocacy did play a key role in persuading the German and French leaders to adopt the objective of greater monetary integration as their own. Once Schmidt and Giscard assumed a lead position in the push to create the EMS, Jenkins' own direct contribution fell away rapidly, although his interest in the issue remained high. The chapter will nevertheless contend that Jenkins' relatively brief period as standard bearer for monetary integration was of considerable importance and deserves to be seen as amongst the greatest successes of his years in Brussels.

Chapter six adopts a more wholly thematic approach, looking at Jenkins' engagement with international partners beyond the European Community across all four years of his presidency. The opening portions of the chapter will look at one very specific but highly important type of international engagement in the form of Jenkins' efforts to promote the enlargement of the EEC to Greece,

Spain and Portugal. Such efforts, it will be argued, were highly important since the Commission had hitherto been more of a sceptic about southern European membership than an enthusiastic supporter. Under Jenkins' presidency, however, the Commission's approach was transformed, in a fashion that would be vital in helping the Greeks join in 1981. For all its enthusiasm for further enlargement, however, the Commission was largely powerless to prevent the French from seriously delaying Spanish and Portuguese membership. The enlargement story is therefore a particularly striking illustration of both what a Commission president can achieve and of the limitations of his power. The latter half of the chapter then looks at Jenkins' travel patterns more generally, examining his interaction with the EEC's principal economic partners, the US and Japan, before explaining why it was useful and important for the Commission president to also travel to Africa, China and India.

The next two chapters, number seven and eight, then consider the final portion of Jenkins' term of office. Chapter six examines the various candidates to become the core policy priority for Jenkins during 1979 and 1980, before explaining why none of them quite fitted the bill. Amongst the options considered were the internal reform of the Commission, the policy response to the first direct European parliamentary elections held in 1979, root and branch change to the Community's flagship policy, the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), and a major push to create a genuine European policy on energy. In each case, however, there were a number of factors that prevented each of these policy fields assuming the centrality to the latter stages of Jenkins' presidency that monetary integration had had to the first two years. While this lack of a central policy priority did not mean that the Commission president was inactive during the 1979 and 1980 period, it did accurately capture the waning enthusiasm and focus of Jenkins during these final two years.

Entitled 'The Curse of British Politics', chapter eight will then look at the issue that, largely unbidden, did come to dominate much of Jenkins' last eighteen months in Brussels, namely the controversy caused by Britain's complaints that it contributed too much to the Community budget. The campaign by Britain's forceful new Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, to 'get her money back' monopolised a succession of European Council meetings and greatly alarmed

Britain's partners, requiring a careful but energetic response from the Commission. In the end, Jenkins succeeded in playing a significant role in securing a temporary truce on the issue. But getting to this point had not been easy, nor did the deal struck really address the underlying problems that had caused the row in the first place. The final portion of the chapter will then explain how Jenkins' attention was progressively drawn back to British domestic politics in the course of 1979 and 1980. At first there was so much still to do in the Commission that this re-engagement with politics within his home country could only be very partial. But from mid-1980 onwards it became increasingly apparent that the president's energies and enthusiasms were channelled more towards plotting a return to British politics and the launch of a new centre party, than they were to job of running the European Commission.

A concluding chapter then looks at the broader lessons that can be derived from a detailed look at Jenkins' four year term. It suggests that a number of conclusions about the nature of the Commission presidency, and the extent and limitations of its powers, can be drawn from Jenkins' experiences. Some of these have implications for the way in which we should view other holders of the post, notably Jacques Delors. Switching focus to the individual, it will go on to ask how well Jenkins adapted to the very different and distinctive challenges of the Commission job. The verdict arrived at will be somewhat mixed. In many respects, Jenkins adapted impressively well and brought a great deal to the post. Ultimately, however, his own enthusiasm flagged, the frustrations of the job combining with the gravitational pull of British politics to ensure that a moderately successful presidency ended earlier than it might have done and in somewhat anticlimactic fashion. To a very large extent, this less than triumphal end was a product of the context in which Jenkins had held the post, rather than the consequence of any flaws or mistakes of his own. For as the final pages of the book argue, the late 1970s were a moment when the European powers with whom any Commission president has to work had neither decided what they really wanted or needed from the integration process, nor settled in their own mind on the relative priority of global and European cooperation. By the time a pan-European consensus on such factors began to emerge, providing the context

where an energetic and skilful Commission president might be able to attain real success, Jenkins had left Brussels and returned to British politics.