

'Can political journalism exist at the EU level ?'

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Obscure decisions taken by unknown politicians or technocrats in a political and institutional system nobody can understand might be a good way to summarise the impression that EU public affairs give. One of the most popular debates about the EU is to complain about its so-called « democratic deficit »¹. Most writers insist on the legal and procedural aspects of this legitimisation problem : on the unelected commissioners, the weakness of the Parliament, the complicated decision-making process, etc. From this point of view, legitimacy would only be a technical problem and an institutional reform would then be sufficient to solve the problem. However, the question of legitimisation might be rather more complicated. The issue of the 'democratic deficit' has probably been badly presented since very few studies have questioned the representations given of this original political system or of the transparency of its processes, issues and actors. Most of the time indeed, European decisions seem to come out of nowhere since the political process they have been through is given very little public image.

Another unsatisfying way of presenting the problem is to blame the EU institutions, and especially the European Commission, for their insufficient communication policy² and their will to depoliticise the debates. If the point concerning the strategies used by institutional sources to control their public image is important, it forgets one side of the problem, that is, questions raised by the public about these communication policies and of the interpretation of the information.

Another argument is to underline the complexity of the decision-making process that would make it impossible to understand and boring . This argument seems specious to me since any political system is complex and political subtleties of foreign States are as mysterious as the 'codecision' process or the voting system in the European Council. Nevertheless, there is a political staff in Brussels, struggles for power, conflicts over the orientation of policies, prominent and weak commissioners. Yet, these aspects are hardly published in newspapers in the same way as other national political stories. We don't mean that EU politics should be given as much place as home news, but the striking point in EU news is that these real political conflicts, struggles and actors are hardly given time and space in the media.

Yet, there are about 1000³ people in Brussels whose job it is to scrutinise the EU, to interpret it and to make it public ; 1000 who perfectly know the political dimension of any decision. They are the filter through which institutions, that have no natural audiences except geographically, culturally and politically divided publics, are given publicity. While it is one of the biggest press corps in the world and in spite of the increasingly crucial role it plays on the EU citizens', it remains anonymous and has been studied very little⁴. Moreover, a study of EU correspondents is a unique occasion to compare journalists from different countries in a context which is not comparable with traditional foreign correspondence. To our mind, the study of this journalistic community and especially its ability to politicise EU news is of crucial importance. Until the EU political system has been given social visibility, it will probably remain a 'cold monster' in the opinion of Europeans⁵.

¹ : For a critical approach to theories of the democratic deficit see Andy Smith, L' « espace public européen » : une vue trop aérienne, *Critique internationale*, n°2, hiver 1999.

² : Christoph Meyer, Political Legitimacy and the Invisibility of Politics : Exploring the European Union's Communication Deficit, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 37, n°4, Décembre 1999, pp617-639.

³ : The number of 1000 journalists is quite contested since among these are lobbyists. A rather more reasonable estimation might be about 800 journalists (source : European Commission's Spokesman Service)

⁴ : See for David Morgan, British Media and European Union News. The Brussels News Beat and its Problems, *European Journal of Communication*, 1995, Vol. 10(3), pp321-343 or Caroline Schickel, *Les journalistes accrédités auprès de l'Union européenne*, Mémoire de DEA, IEP de Strasbourg, 1995, 111pp.

⁵ : In a cartoon published in the *Irish Times* (8/01/99) as the Santer's commission was accused of frauds, one can see a European reading the newspaper saying "isn't it great...at last the Commission is beginning to look like a real government".

However, as we will now see, the politicisation of EU news isn't very widespread among journalists in Brussels especially in the French press. For a long time indeed, the coverage of Europe has been dominated by a rather technocratic style, which has rendered the EU an exclusively technical matter. Despite that, a few years ago, new insiders arrived in Brussels who didn't share their colleagues assumptions about Europe and started to practice a more professionally rewarding kind of journalism. These journalists intended to give a new picture (more politicised, more critical) of EU current affairs. I will try to underline the main differences between these two groups of French journalists : their profiles, their expectations and their journalistic methods. But in order not to generalise a national situation, I will also give an account of the way in which the British press deals with EU news. Indeed, this comparison puts to the fore the specific national characteristics (cultural, political as well as professional) that give Europe interpretative boundaries. While Europe isn't a subject of political debate in France, it still divides the political arena in Great-Britain and, as the British press is much more partisan, the national media. Thus, if EU news is politicised in the British press it is mainly through national interpretative frameworks. Controversies that are presented are those that can be translated into the traditional patterns of national politics. Firstly however, we would like to depict the 'small world' of Brussels' journalism since as we shall see, its organisation has strong consequences on the coverage of EU current affairs.

Part I - The microcosm and the way it works : rules, rituals and socialisation.

At first, we would like to give an overview of this Press corps : the way it organises itself, its rules, places, processes. Indeed, as we shall see, this group of around 1000 official EU journalists constitutes what can be called a microcosm : a specific and limited social group which has its own habits, history, etc. Therefore, when studying the coverage of the EU it seems absolutely necessary to understand how this journalistic community works. Given that the majority of these journalists are working abroad, they organise themselves in a completely specific manner unlike that of any national press.

1- A small world.

The rhythm of an EU press correspondent's life is governed by visits to changeless places and events in which they experience a real community life that gives the Press Corps the appearance of a "travelling cocktail". In fact, these journalists go from lobby to lobby and travel together in planes hired by their professional association (API). The habits and unwritten rules that regulate the group can't all be described here so we have decided to focus on what is probably the most important moment in these journalists' every day life: the Commission's daily press briefing. This encounter between the central institution of the EU and the journalists is paradoxical : while journalists are given very little *new* information, most of them are anxious to attend what appears to be more a social ritual than a press conference. Nevertheless, these rituals are very important for the Press Corps in Brussels because it is through them that they are socially incorporated into the institutional and political system of the EU. Indeed, after a few years, these journalists become members of what can be called the 'first public of Europe'. By 'first public of Europe' I mean an over-informed social group that is aware of every single (political) fact that happens in the EU political world. But while, they all know what is going on behind the scenes (as well as the official discourse) very few will openly discuss this political reality. The microcosm therefore

has a social function for the new insiders, however, it also fulfils a social control role that prevents journalists from practising political journalism.

a) rituals.

Every day, at a few minutes before midday, between 200 and 300 journalists flock to the European commission's presidency building. Most of them arrive at the *Breydel* on foot from nearby offices. Their destination ? The ritual « rendez-vous de midi » to which they are invited by the Commission's spokesman.

With their official documents in hand (which they will not even be asked to present if they are considered "regulars"), they reach the underground press centre where they meet their colleagues over a drink in the nearby lobby bar. At precisely 12 o'clock, press information (PI), that is, commissioners' speeches and various documents from Commission services (reports, economic data, surveys) are arranged on display stands⁶. While the most scrupulous will get all the papers, the more relaxed will only grab the ones that seem interesting to them. At this moment, the hastiest are the agency journalists who, while still in the queue, will phone through the most urgent news to their offices (mergers authorisations for example).

However, the formal press conference takes place after the correspondents have finished queuing to get their documents. It is then that they enter the press room : a semicircle with hardly 200 places. Indeed, these are cramped conditions in which to accommodate a press Corps that has grown continuously since the beginning of the European construction. This crowd is remarkable in that a third of the journalists spend at least an hour of their precious time, attending a press conference in which they will learn hardly anything that they don't already know. In fact, the press conference merely consists of a presentation of the current subjects and the latest developments concerning particular problems. The whole is presented in a very civilised way by the spokesmen who tend to soften all the problems and disguise the conflicts. The most striking point of this somewhat sanitised presentation is that most of the journalists are aware of the conflicts and problems that the spokesmen refuse to talk about. Indeed, they have their own sources: their "off the record" declarations collected from civil servants and sometimes from the spokesperson himself that enable them to know what goes on behind the scenes. The element which generates the most interest at these press briefings is that most of the time, information comes from the room, not from the speaker. It is often the questions asked, rather than the answers given, that underline the problems that a particular decision might imply for the various countries involved. Given that these journalists can't be aware of all the national particularities and situations concerning the numerous subjects dealt with by the Commission, the press conference enables them to anticipate the debates that certain questions will raise.

The most striking point about this « rendez-vous de midi » (the name itself is significant) is the regularity with which the journalists and the European commission spokespersons attend. When asked about their activities, journalists spontaneously mention this ritual moment as the fixed point of their working day. Amongst themselves, the journalists ironise about their situation. Indeed, they have even adopted a religious vocabulary : the spokesmen are referred to as "high priests" giving a "mass", while "our daily bread" is used to qualify the documents they are given... Some of them even doubt this meeting's professional interest: *"the press room to me, it's a place where I have fun. No, it's absolutely not a working tool (...) the press room never provided me with information"*.

⁶ : These press documents both literally and figuratively flood the journalists' offices. In 1999, for exemple they were given more than 1000 PI.

Indeed, broadly speaking, it is above all a social meeting; an occasion to meet the colleagues in a relaxed atmosphere, to discuss the daily subjects, and to encounter the spokesmen in an informal way in order to get "off the record" reactions or information. Actually, the most important factor of this "briefing" is certainly not the press conference itself, but the daily meeting it generates between all the journalists. Deprived of editorial offices and of their habitual colleagues, they recreate (in the same way that they do in the press centres provided by all the European institutions) a professional environment through which they can break out of their isolation. In the Commission's press bar, as in the Council's, they can indeed share their views and sometimes information⁷ and contacts. Thus they can compensate for the fact that they are often the only representative of their national media. In addition, a large proportion of them share their offices and buildings with other journalists which enables them to reduce their isolation even further.

"It looks like a mass. These people are isolated. They work all day long in their office. For some of them at home, in their flat. It's a bit...its quite a useful contact".

This ritualised encounter is, therefore, of an extreme importance to the internal functioning of the microcosm : it is the place where the affinities and feelings of animosity are the most obvious and where the existence of distinct journalistic cultures is most apparent (in the way questions are asked for example). However, it is also a way for the newcomers to get the opinions of their more experienced colleagues: it reduces the uncertainty concerning the meaning of information⁸. When we use the term "ritualised encounter" we mean that this daily "rendez-vous" has quite an invariable structure: everyday new subjects appear in the press conference but the interaction between the institution and "its" journalists remains broadly the same, hence, conferring it the dimension of a ritual. However, Brussels' geographical position also has an influence on the functioning of this Press Corps.

b) the institutional triangle : the geography of the microcosm.

Some journalists have pointed out that the atmosphere inside the official Brussels press Corps has changed and they highlight the fact that the growing number of journalists tend to establish more formal and professional relationships⁹. At the same time, others underline the shock they felt when discovering this microcosm and the rules that govern it. The most striking factor seems to be the interpenetration of the journalistic circle by other social sectors such as those of the civil servants, politicians and lobbyists that populate Brussels. When mentioning his very first days in the Belgian capital, this journalist speaks of :

"the absolute horror : a technocratic world that was obeying incomprehensible rules for the outsider ; a conventional world ; a world where I would say journalists, civil servants and diplomats were sleeping together. There was no distance at all, no objectivity. A European militant's world of people persuaded that they are working for the good of humanity. In short, I couldn't distinguish between who was a journalist, who was a civil servant and who was a diplomat. It's a bit strange, isn't it ?".

Thus, these journalists are in fact just one particular social group amongst many others. They form part of a wider microcosm that includes all those with a professional occupation linked to the EU. This 'European people' as we might call it, is perhaps this political Europe's only

⁷ : As there isn't, as we will see, much competition.

⁸ : It is quite normal to see young journalists asking their elders for further explanations.

⁹ : « 10, 15 or 20 years ago we were tiny and we were eating together in fact ».

public: constantly looking for news, rumours and gossip. Indeed, a 'microcosmic' press is even dedicated to them : the *European Voice*¹⁰, a weekly newspaper which specialises in the EU political system¹¹ and *The Bulletin* (also printed in English) which is a newsmagazine dedicated to expatriates and which mixes political issues with cultural and gastronomic news about Brussels (restaurants, outings, etc).

Journalists often mention this phenomenon of a closed environment because this "European people" lives shut off from the rest of the world in very specific districts. What is more, they frequent the same places which they are the sole to be able to afford. This promiscuity has an enormous effect on the journalistic work of people who are in Brussels for more than 20 years and who become prominent personalities of this small European world.

« *All these people live in a 2 km quadrilateral... they go to the same schools, obviously go to the same expensive restaurants because only the expatriates and the civil servants can afford them. So they meet in the same bars, in the same schools, in the same stores, in the same... So it's very difficult not to get into this connivance. You meet a young civil servant : he's nice, he's your age and little by little he moves up in the hierarchy and one day he's general directorate or even commissioner... ».*

It is indeed surprising to notice that the geography of the European institutions diminishes significantly journalists' working perimeter: Breydel (home of the European Commission Presidency), Justus Lipsius (European Council) and the European Parliament are just a few hundred meters from each other. In this triangle (or close by), one can find numerous bars and restaurants and most of the correspondents' offices¹². Consequently, these people are in constant contact with each other : at work, in bars, in restaurants, in the street and inside the buildings of the European institutions. For those who don't intend to spend their whole life in Brussels, this confinement seems very oppressive¹³.

Those who also know the Washington press Corps, underline the differences between the two capitals. According to them, the internal mode of regulation in Brussels is much more consensual. This enables the establishment of a real "community spirit". This rather friendly and fraternal atmosphere is indeed further strengthened by a low degree of rivalry among journalists. Very few scoops appear at the EU level that are considered as such by the editorial offices : « *the scoop in Brussels is rarely a scoop at the national level (...) When I'm the first to get a reform bill document on the harmonisation of the radio tones, I'm the first to get it in Brussels, it's a scoop. But compared with Paris nobody notices it, nobody cares ».*

Hardly concerned with competition, the journalists can more easily develop collaborative relationships : when several events take place at the same time, they share information and, sometimes, the workload. Moreover, the absence or the infrequency of exclusives pacifies the professional relationships since there is no point in protecting the information. Whenever someone has an exclusive the others aren't embarrassed because they don't have to justify themselves to their editorial offices¹⁴.

However, the microcosm represents more than these rituals and these places. It is also a regulatory system where journalists gain experience of a political reality that most of them only discovered on arrival in Brussels.

¹⁰ : which belongs to *The Economist*.

¹¹ : it contains the traditional sections of political journalism : portraits of euro-politicians, gossip,...

¹² : On this point see Jean de la Guérivière (former EU correspondent), *Voyage à l'intérieur de l'eurocratie*, Le Monde Editions, Coll. « Actualité », 1992, 197pp.

¹³ : Some journalists for example preferred to be interviewed in bars outside the European district where they wouldn't encounter colleagues or acquaintances.

¹⁴ : this situation is probably changing nowadays as investigative reporting develops itself. But for most of the journalists that don't plan to practise this kind of journalism, competition still doesn't exist.

2) Training and socialisation.

The absence of political symbols at the EU level has already been underlined¹⁵ and has notable consequences on journalistic work. The social process that creates political myths and places (and makes them exist as such in social representations) is not yet complete. Besides the lack of information concerning what European political life¹⁶ entails, the EU suffers from a deficit of recognisable political imagery which, practically speaking, prevents an effective widespread understanding of European politics and current affairs. For example, while the white gravel of Matignon's courtyard is immediately recognisable by any French viewer, the Breydel or Berlaymont's buildings mean nothing to the average European citizen. In fact, there are very few symbolic "common places" and no immediately recognisable reference points, both of which would facilitate the coverage of the EU's activities¹⁷.

During their first weeks in Brussels, most journalists confess that they believed they had "landed on planet Mars" since the "euro-speak", the technicalities and the complexity of EU processes corresponded little with what they were previously accustomed to. Nevertheless, a daily contact with the European political and institutional system has meant that these EU correspondents, and all those whose professional activity is linked to Europe, have since gained an intimate knowledge of its processes, the political staff, the places and the issues. They are, therefore, the only ones capable of identifying the few European symbols which actually exist: symbols which would better enable the public to grasp the political reality of the EU.

a) Taking care of the new insiders.

The technicalities and political complexities mentioned above appear to be a popular point of contention. In fact, most of the journalists interviewed spontaneously mentioned how tough it first was to understand the decision-making processes. Indeed, most affirm that they needed a one year period in order to adapt themselves. One particular press agency journalist recalls the "humility" one needs when beginning as an EU correspondent, even after a long and prestigious career as a foreign correspondent such as his. The intricacies of the work and the institutions with which these journalists are dealing are such that one must completely rethink one's methods.

The harshness of the situation, the existence of this microcosm where everybody knows each other and where there is very little competition, partly explains the phenomenon of mutual aid and the welcome given to newcomers. As this journalist puts it : « *when I first arrived here, I was an absolute laywoman on these subjects and, in fact, things soon went well. I met some journalists that helped me, that showed me the way, that explained how things work (...) As Brussels' world is rather small, when you know two or three people, you soon know 10 then 20 then 50. So finally, from this point of view, it went well* ».

Once again, journalists underline the difference with Washington where « *it is inconceivable that someone explains to you what has just been said if you arrived late* ». This mutual aid and this friendliness is clearly visible. As we have already said, the absence of an editorial office is compensated for by help from colleagues from other newspapers. Indeed, the Brussels "old boy network" is extremely active: it possesses a kind of moral authority on the younger members since they have an intricate knowledge of the issues and the workings of

¹⁵ : See for example Marc Abélès, *En attente d'Europe*, Questions de politique, Hachette, 1996, 158p.

¹⁶ : Commentators always moan about the lack of knowledge about commissioners.

¹⁷ : Journalists indeed complain about their obligation to recall the ins and outs of every single fact and process while the time or space they are given is strictly limited.

the European machine. Additionally, they are "*Brussels' best address books*" and can therefore help the newcomers establish a network of acquaintances.

Moreover, once the training period has ended, the position appears much more rewarding than the other "foreign" journalist posts. Press agency journalists often recall how much the EU post is different from a traditional foreign correspondent's post where access to sources is much tougher, most of the work is limited to following the national press and where there is little direct contact with current affairs. Thus, several journalists evoke a certain fascination with the EU system and a growing satisfaction which results from an impression that, in Brussels, they are finally "*at the very heart of things*".

Indeed, unlike most citizens, the journalists whose job it is to cover current affairs within the EU, follow a kind of self-imposed political "crash-course" in order to grasp the workings of the European political system.

Of course, they confess that initially they had only a very superficial knowledge, however, given their obligation to write articles, they were rapidly forced to become familiar with the specific EU political processes, issues and institutions. They develop a kind of formula which enables them to decode European issues and, once they have gained the necessary experience, they can even anticipate events rather than merely react to them. While for most Europeans, decisions seem to crop up from nowhere or from « *Brussels* »¹⁸, once their training period has ended, these journalists, are able to understand what is at stake as well as spot all the actors and problems that surround them :

Once again, after so many years, we still remain (...) eurocrats to some degree. We know the issues very well (...) we also know the limits of this kind of exercise. When a directive comes out, we know perfectly well the reasons for its ambition or on the contrary for its modesty and almost all the obstacles it will have to go through and we could almost anticipate the end result : that Italy will remove that because... That French will moan about it because of the sovereignty thing, that the Germans... the trade unions and the Danish... the ecology. I mean there's a kind of (...) cynicism(...) I mean, 30 years after, you need to have a strong character to be taken with a directive on tobacco...

b) the first public of Europe.

Therefore, the press corps becomes a privileged observer of the EU. Little by little, they come to intimately know this political and institutional system which, used to be, as it still is for the average European, widely unfamiliar to them. In this respect, one can describe these journalists as the first, and perhaps the only, European public whose members have acquired a set of perceptions and a political understanding about the workings of the EU system which most European citizens do not possess.

Probably, the most striking example of the nature of the European Union's only public is provided by some opinion polls concerning European commissioners. Given that the institution (Eurobarometer) devoted to collecting data concerning public opinion is unable to conduct surveys about the individual popularity of commissioners, some newspapers have decided to fill this information gap. However, when *The Economist* or the French monthly magazine *L'Expansion*¹⁹ decided to try to evaluate the commissioners' popularity as it would

¹⁸ : this generic and vague term devoid of significance is the most commonly used to depict the EU decision-centre.

¹⁹ : See for example *L'Expansion*, 4-18 march 1999, n° 592.

for any other national political figure, there was undoubtedly much debate about the population which they should survey. Besides the obvious problems of cost and organisation, the main obstacle to such surveys is probably the fact that the political figures in question are complete strangers to most Europeans²⁰. When asked about the members of the European Commission, European citizens would probably not have been able to pass a judgement on people whom they cannot even name. EU correspondents were therefore asked to answer the questionnaire in order to establish a "hit parade" of commissioners.

It is the means used to collect the results for these opinion polls rather than the results themselves that is most revealing because, it clearly demonstrates the official press' role as Europe's only real public. This public is in fact, made up of people who are bombarded with news and comments about the EU in a way which the average citizen is not. One could even say that the press pool: this microcosm from which commissioners try to obtain assent²¹, is the sole representation of a European public opinion. Indeed through the questions they are asked, they are able to understand how different nations react to individual issues. What can be taken for granted in France may be slightly more difficult to introduce in Germany or in any other country. Thus, the press corp's reaction gives a hypothetical idea of how an actual European public opinion, with it's various national tendencies and problems, might function. Having learnt how the EU works, these journalists can develop analytical skills which enable them to write political articles about current affairs. They possess an intricate knowledge concerning the balance of power that exists between and inside the institutions. However, most written articles on the subject fail to depict a decision's political implications in spite of the specificity which the EU institutional system represents. In fact, the only conflicts that are given time and space are those involving Member States as is the case for any form of intergovernmental bargaining. However, no attention is paid to specific EU issues, actors or processes. While EU correspondents are very well aware of the intense political life in Brussels, this particular European dimension is hardly ever explored which results in a reinforcement of the public belief that Europe is excessively technocratic²². There is a distinct difference between what these journalists know about any decision or fact and what they actually write about it. Nevertheless, the existence of this microcosm has also prevented some journalists from politicising the news.

Part II – Three attitudes toward the politicisation of EU news : struggle over legitimate journalism and national differences.

Although the Brussels press Corps can be largely depicted as a microcosm, this doesn't however mean that a kind of 'eurojournalism', with its own homogeneous practices and production, has emerged. In fact, as one British journalist puts it, « *there are 15 microcosms* » in the press room and the national boundaries haven't disappeared²³. On the contrary, there

²⁰ : Except few commissioners who managed to attract media attention (as Emma Bonino did for example) and (perhaps) national commissioners.

²¹ : Commissioners very often organise meetings with the press. The number of journalists who attend the press conference is also a way to estimate their political weight and their popularity.

²² : A belief shared by their Chief Editors.

²³ : The most striking example of this organisation of the Press Corps in national communities is given by the seats the journalists occupy in the press room. Indeed, French or British journalists always sit in the same part of

are principles of organisation which are specific to any group of national journalists. One cannot, therefore, understand the EU news produced in any country without bearing in mind the kind of relationships that exist between British or French journalists themselves. Indeed, besides the language barrier, the professional and political cultures still determine the EU coverage and each national press continues to organise itself according to its own principles which in turn produces a particular method of covering Europe.

I would like to analyse these two national groups of journalists (British and French) by focusing on their ability to politicise the EU news, that is, their ability to develop a political journalism applied to Europe's specific institutions, politicians and issues. The theoretical basis of this analysis draws its inspiration from studies that have examined journalists' working relationships and the constraints which their work involves²⁴. Such approaches enable us to understand the influence of both the way in which specialised journalists organise themselves, and of the daily news production working conditions which they are subjected to. In some respects, the social interactions between themselves, their sources and their colleagues, determine or at least limit their journalistic production. Indeed, on their arrival in Brussels they must not only learn to deal with the existing patterns of coverage, and the development of the institutions' communication strategies, but also with their editorial offices' expectations and their own conception of the journalistic work.

The point of view I will develop is an internal one. Indeed, very little attention will be paid to the relationships which exist between sources and journalists; a concept which was briefly examined in part one. My point is in fact to understand the principal determining factors that influence the organisation of national journalist groups and how these social arrangements facilitate or prevent a politicisation of EU news.

As we will see, it is possible to distinguish between at least three forms of journalism in Brussels which, represent the different attitudes to the politicisation of EU news: institutional, investigative/political and political journalism with a national angle.

1 - French journalists : from technical to political coverage.

The French community of journalists is organised around two centres of attraction; two ideal-types of journalisms²⁵. These types also serve as professional models which allow individuals to personally define their journalistic approach.

On the one hand, institutional journalism is a coverage characterised by a rather technical and expert-like approach of the EU. Representatives of this model support both the political project and the institutions of Europe. On the other hand, a new kind of journalism has recently appeared which combines investigative reporting methods, with a rather critical approach to EU news²⁶ and which also tries to depict the political game taking place in Brussels. Representatives of the latter model base their own legitimacy on the disqualification of the former journalistic habits by introducing practices closer to political journalism : for example, interest in what goes on behind the scenes, exclusives and scandals

the room beside their national colleagues and there are very few exceptions to this unwritten rule. In fact, after a few days spent attending the midday briefing anyone can spot the different groups.

²⁴ : See for example the studies of Jean Gustave Padiou, *Systèmes d'interaction et rhétoriques journalistiques*, Sociologie du travail, n°3, 1976, pp.256-282 and Jeremy Tunstall, *The Westminster Lobby correspondents : a sociological study of national political journalism*, Routledge & Keagan Paul, 1970.

²⁵ : We would like to say that very few journalists exactly correspond to these categories (7 for both categories over 30-40 French journalists). These ideal-types must therefore only be used as analytical tools.

²⁶ : But, as they always recall, they aren't eurosceptic which differentiates them from most of their British colleagues' methods.

In fact, these ideal-types relate back to an inter definition process where each group is justifying to the other its own professional practices. What is actually taking place is a symbolic struggle, particularly fierce in the French case, concerning the most legitimate journalistic approach in Brussels. The scandals of nepotism and the Santer commission's resignation revealed this opposition and helped to harden each group's position. During the interviews, members of each group accused the other in order to discredit it²⁷ : institutional journalists were thought to have connived with EU officials while investigative reporters were accused of being superficial and of having been manipulated. For example, according to one of the institutional journalists questioned, '*You can't say the cooker is a chef if the quail falls "ready roasted" onto the plate*'.

Historically speaking, EU coverage has been dominated by this traditional institutional journalism and it is only in the last few years that new insiders have begun to contest it. Indeed, they have realised that Europe isn't just limited to the Common Agricultural Policy as before, but that it has become a political and institutional system in its own right.

A - The institutional journalism.

I realised in fact that these people who were here for 30-40 years, who have been here since the beginning, were European campaigners. That is : they believed in the European idea. They have made Europe as much as the eurocrats themselves. They have popularised the European idea, they have covered it from the beginning. It's their baby.

These people aren't journalists in the original sense of the word. That is they didn't see things in a competitive way...They used to see things as a family where everybody takes part in the construction of an ideal.

Institutional journalism, in fact, refers to a journalist's professional habits where the main role is that of a 'clerk' documenting EU activities and giving a daily account of the current affairs without providing any political interpretation.

Their technocratic coverage of EU news removes the very political nature of the events, the power struggles and the interests which surrounded them. These kinds of conflicts between the various actors (high civil servants, politicians, lobbyists) never appear²⁸, indeed, the only struggles represented are those which oppose Member States as in any traditional form of intergovernmental bargaining. Broadly speaking, these journalists support the official position of the European Commission and are accused of merely copying out the press releases they are given.

This form of European coverage dates back to the period when they first arrived in Brussels (late 60's) when Europe's main concern was the Common Agricultural Policy in which only very limited social groups (and experts themselves), such as farmers, were interested. Their self-identification with the European political project provides a further explanation of their lack of will to highlight the EU's controversial aspects.

a) The elders of the group.

²⁷ : While the polemics were going on, Jean Quatremer (*Libération*) the most prominent representative of this new coverage, published an article accusing some journalists of being too close to the Commission : receiving travelling expenses, etc... By publishing such articles, he justified his own legitimacy by appearing as a 'white knight' among corrupted journalists (in an insert he recalled his newspaper's code of ethics).

²⁸ : And yet Liesbet Hooghe's study among the Commission's top officials clearly shows that political and ideological differences exist inside this institution : Liesbet Hooghe, Images of Europe : Orientations to European Integration among Senior Officials of the Commission, *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 29, n°2, avril 1999.

As far as their profile is concerned, these journalists are also often the veterans of the press Corps, and are seen as the experts on European matters : 30 years²⁹ spent working with these institutions and the priceless contacts they obtained while they were junior journalists rubbing shoulders with the future top officials, has transformed them into the « *best address books in Brussels* ». Indeed, when evoking a veteran French journalist one junior journalist said “*this guy is an institution*”.

From the group’s internal view point, these veterans command respect owing to their in-depth knowledge of European affairs and to their analytical ability. However, they have also gained influence by helping young newly arrived journalists, providing them with contacts and introducing them to the right people... While none of them are ‘media stars’ they have benefited from symbolic rewards in the small world of Brussels : they are influential and looked upon as experts among journalists, they are prominent personalities of the microcosm and talk to ministers³⁰ and commissioners on equal terms.

Present in Brussels since the 60’s or 70’s, they started out as ‘believers’ who identified themselves with the European institutions and their political project. Thus, one of them can say he « *considers [his]self as a fake eurocrat without the wages* » because the discourse and the aims of the Commission have become his own. Some of them were indeed (when students) members of a well educated society dedicated to Europe, they had a personal interest in these questions and came to Brussels in order to « *see what was going on* ».

b) « *They want to be part of it* » : the assimilation to the institution.

The problem is that, very often, the people, the journalists ‘think the right way’ because their desire is to be integrated into the machine instead of scrutinising it, criticising it, analysing it, dissecting it. Their dream is to be accepted by those people.

The accusation of connivance is fairly routine in the journalistic milieu and, as far as Brussels is concerned, is used by other journalists to describe the kind of ties that exist between the institutional journalists, politicians and the Commission officials. Given that they arrived very young (it was often their first assignment as a journalist) they met people of the same age who were at that time Commission trainees and who later became directorate generals, members of cabinets or even commissioners. These kinds of acquaintances imply comradeship and friendship with people whom they are supposed to be able to criticise. Undoubtedly, this relational capital that they have cultivated makes their work easier³¹ and is reinforced and legitimised by their ‘faith’ in the European political ideal. In the past, as long as the press Corps has been small enough for everybody to know each other, the daily exchanges/communication between journalists and civil servants (especially spokesmen) has been very friendly. As one journalist puts it, the daily briefing used to look more like a « *pleasant chattering* » than a professional press conference. Nowadays, as they bitterly point out, the will of the spokesmen « *to get a message across* » is obvious³² and they seem to regret the ‘good old days’ when all the information was given confidentially between friends who shared the same convictions about Europe.

²⁹ : five French journalists have been in Brussels for more than 15 years.

³⁰ : Confronted with real experts, national ministers are often disconcerted during their first encounter with these journalists. Contrary to French habits, discussions are often tough.

³¹ : They can also take advantage of this relational capital for other purposes. Thus, one of them told me how he acted as a go-between for the industrial group that owns his newspaper. Indeed he has known some members of Prodi’s cabinet « *for 20 years* ». The firm wanted Romano Prodi to deliver a speech at a meeting. So he did (a recording was broadcast) and the journalist wrote the speech...

³² : Thus Romano Prodi’s communication staff replaced the table where spokespersons sat by two lecterns and wanted to broadcast the « *midday briefing* ». They had to stop the broadcast when a rebellion began, especially among the French journalists, because there wouldn’t be any « *off-the-record* » information.

The close proximity between a journalist and his sources is relatively common and is in fact part of the job³³ even if the profession's ethical rules make its publicity undesirable and rare. Moreover, when such practices become public, convicted journalists are branded as being a disgrace to their profession. Indeed, when appointed to a section of the newspaper, journalists develop relationships with their sources that go beyond those which normally exist between two people who meet for the first time³⁴. The need for « off-the-record » statements, gossip, rumours and exclusives means that both politicians and journalists are looking for mutual trust³⁵ even if it might be considered contrary to journalism's ethical ideal of objectivity and critical judgement.

Nevertheless, institutional journalism differs from the traditional conception of journalism because, beyond this relatively common familiarity with sources, there is a phenomenon of self-assimilation into the institutions which they cover. By self-assimilation I mean, as Florence Haegel puts it, the feeling of these journalists « *to be part of the furniture* »³⁶. As she points out, the press room of Paris' city hall « *accommodates all those whose mission is to diffuse information about the municipal world seemingly so exclusive. Yet, their position in the imposing 'municipal enterprise' is just like this room nestled in the decor of the city hall : they are really, and for a long time, part of the institution* ». Not only do these journalists feel that they are part of the European commission but they act as such. The polemics that lead to the Santer commission's resignation are very revealing since, while some of their peers were investigating these scandals, they remained silent for as long as they could and, when obliged to write about it, were very sceptical about the scandalous nature of the facts³⁷.

Rather than insisting on what is in fact a relatively "natural" collaboration between journalists and their sources, as we have seen, more benefit can be drawn from an analysis of this phenomenon in terms of the shared assumptions and beliefs which exist between the journalists and their institutional sources. Since these journalists have both a social and intellectual identification with their sources' world, they develop a « *reaction of protection of the institution* »; a kind of self-censorship which they justify by their belief that the Commission is acting for the public good, even if there are occasional lapses of behaviour.

In fact, these journalists greatly resemble those depicted by J.G. Padioleau³⁸: the 'Education correspondents' that he has studied, have demonstrated that institutional journalists are involved in practical routines, that they share assertions and conceptions with the institutional sources they are confronted with and, as far as their discursive production is concerned, that they use a 'rhetoric of objectivity' where « *the expression of judgements is also present but the editors use an additional asset, that of technical competence which softens the risk of opinionated journalism* ».

³³ : As Rémy Rieffel explains, the daily life of political journalists is made up of dinners, outings and cocktails with politicians. Rémy Rieffel, *L'élite des journalistes*, PUF, 1984, 220pp.

³⁴ : In his PhD on political television programmes Eric Darras underlines the fact that if before the 'on air' lights is turned on there are obvious signs of familiarity they disappear when the broadcast begins. Eric Darras, *L'institution d'une tribune politique. Genèse et usages du magazine de télévision*, Thèse pour le doctorat de science politique, Université de Paris II Panthéon-Assas, janvier 1998, 727pp.

³⁵ : Jean Baptiste Legavre, *Off the record. Mode d'emploi d'un instrument de coordination*, *Politix*, n°19, 1992, pp 135-157.

³⁶ : Florence Haegel, *Des journalistes pris dans leurs sources. Les accrédités de l'Hôtel de Ville de Paris*, *Politix*, n°19, 1992, pp102-119. This phenomenon can even become a caricature as the situation William De Lange describes about Japanese journalism. William de Lange, *A History of Japanese Journalism*, Japan Library, 1998, 224pp.

³⁷ : The written article of one of them has even been rewritten and published unsigned as the newspaper considered the point of view wasn't « neutral ».

³⁸ : Jean Gustave Padioleau, *Systèmes d'interaction et rhétoriques journalistiques*, op. cit.

Yet, as this German journalist explains, things have changed in Brussels and the Breydel's cosy press centre now welcomes journalists who tend to practise a new kind journalism : « *Until the early nineties investigative journalism was an unknown species in Brussels. Most of the press corps, myself included, saw ourselves as fighting on the same side as the Commission to build up our common Europe (...) Only a couple of years ago some journalists, given time and money by their editors, started to dig deeper and to look behind the daily press conferences, declarations and so-called « background » briefings. Far away from mainstream reporting another truth saw the daylight* »³⁹.

B - Investigative reporting and the politicisation of the EU as such.

My contribution to the French press (I think) is to have shown that Europe, the coverage of Europe isn't 'techno', isn't obviously technocratic. And that you can make investigations, you can make revelations, you can make scoops (...) you can make the news and that's something that wasn't true five years ago (...) One used to have the impression that only the Common Agricultural Policy existed (which is definitely boring and the less I write on it the better) (...) Now everybody knows it's not boring, everybody has a good laugh.

This 'new species' of journalists constitutes those who define themselves as, 'investigative reporters' since they were able to dig out scandals concerning Edith Cresson and other commissioners as well as the BSE crisis. Unlike most of their peers they do not consider that EU coverage is limited to experts and they refuse to hide behind a specialisation which they see as synonymous with a technical, expert-like and biased treatment. Although, « *the position of critic of the specialisation is a way for those who stand it (...) to disqualify their colleagues since the worst reproach that can be directed at a journalist is to consider him as a 'militant' or a spokesperson that is someone who goes against journalistic 'objectivity' and 'honesty'* »⁴⁰. As they strike a new journalistic pose in Brussels, investigative reporters accuse their predecessors of being actively involved in the issues that they cover. On the contrary, this new model highlights their self-definition of a journalist's status: their 'objectivity' is demonstrated by their will to reveal scandals and dig out scoops. They have also decided to treat the EU as they would any other political system by giving an account of the internal conflicts and struggles that exist. As far as the journalistic milieu is concerned, investigative reporters hold the junior journalists under their spell as the latter identify themselves to a greater extent with this more symbolically rewarding professional model than to that of their elders.

a) new insiders.

These journalists differ from the institutional journalists due to their 'late' arrival in Brussels (about 8 years⁴¹). Compared with their British colleagues they seem quite old in the job and represent another generation. They didn't come to Brussels on the strength of their own conviction or faith in the EU's political project and they also made the most of their socialisation process with the EU. Once their training period over, their intimate knowledge of the functioning of Europe's political system has enabled them to go beyond the traditional

³⁹ : Hartwig Nathie, Brussels needs its muck-rakers, *La lettre de l'API*, n°2/98. The International Press Association (API) brings EU correspondents together and defend their interests.

⁴⁰ : Dominique Marchetti, Le « journalisme d'investigation » : genèse et consécration d'une spécialité journalistique. A propos des « affaires et notamment du « scandale du sang contaminé », communication pour la table ronde « juger la politique », 6^{ème} congrès de l'AFSP, Rennes, 28 septembre-1^{er} octobre 1999.

⁴¹ : This period is Maastricht treaty one : when EU competencies were enlarged and the institutions deeply reformed as majority vote system was extended and the powers of Parliament strengthened...

account of the decisions taken in Brussels. Indeed, after a few years in Brussels, they have developed their own informers' network with whom they entertain a trustworthy relationship, and are likely to understand what is at stake and every struggle that fuels their investigative and political news stories.

I would say that after four years, I began to be efficient. That is : I began to understand all the internal mechanisms and power struggles. I began to know enough civil servants and then you can dig out scandals (...) That are things that supposed to be completely integrated to the mechanics, to know people who trust in you, who know you'll never break an 'off', that the documents they give you are in a safe and that nobody will lay his hands on them. I mean you need networks to understand what is going on.

The so-called 'investigative reporters' professional methods also differ from those of the institutional ones. As we have said, the latter, have developed useful contacts inside the institutions and have reliable sources which they protect. However, the former don't have the kind of « *reaction of protection of the institution* » that is characteristic of the institutional journalists and don't hesitate in revealing even their most compromising information. Moreover, in a journalistic circle which has long been characterised by friendly and intimate contacts, they have professionalised their relationships with sources by refusing to diner with officials, or develop the traditional comradeship which previously existed:

We aren't friends with these peoples. We are from different social backgrounds. We'll never belong to their social world : we'll never earn as much money as they do, we'll never be civil servants. So, we should never forget what we are : little (laughs)

c) professional plan : gaining legitimacy.

You give the position the nature you want to. At a pinch, nobody would have imagined that it was possible to make investigative reporting.

After arriving in Brussels, which is not in itself a very symbolically rewarding position, these journalists wanted to redefine the traditional EU correspondent's job in a way that conforms more to their professional expectations. Their wish was to demonstrate that Brussels was capable of proposing the most legitimate and prestigious form of journalism rather than simply an institutional journalism that essentially offers local symbolic rewards. As Dominique Marchetti underlines, by refusing to class their older colleagues as 'journalists' they are defending a « *a more professional and more autonomous conception of the job, that is, most of the time, a more subversive and moral one* »⁴². In order to do so, they have developed practices which are closer to the professional definition of excellence : investigative reporting and political journalism. Although they remain "europhiles", they are not seeking prominent local positions in the microcosm, nor do they share the same set of beliefs and assumptions as the institutional sources, hence, they tend to be more critical towards the functioning of the EU. This intermediary position ("europhile" yet critical) makes them a privileged beneficiary of any eventual leaks. Since they have gained the reputation of being 'investigative journalists', those who want certain documents and facts to become public go directly to them.

They also tend to analyse EU events in a political way, explaining and describing the internal struggles and conflicts that take place inside the institution. They consider the EU as neither a technical or unpolitical subject, nor as a wide brotherhood. To them it is a « *continual struggle* » between members states, officials, commissioners, institutions and they want to give an account of this political reality. In order to do so, they develop a political journalisc

⁴² : Dominique Marchetti, op. cit.

style, portraying euro-politicians, and writing chronicles of the daily political life⁴³ in order to explain what goes on beyond the official discourse etc.

The combination of these professional methods into daily coverage of the EU enables them to turn the 'Brussel's post' into a more prestigious and potentially interesting job for other journalists. Even if this new form of coverage is still not widely spread in the French press⁴⁴, competition between national broadsheets⁴⁵ may lead to an increase in the value of EU news since the legitimate way of European reporting is changing. Indeed, this symbolic struggle in Brussels is a reproduction of that which takes place in the French journalistic field: the institutional journalists now represent an oddity in a field dominated (since the 80's) by a definition of journalism that tends to privilege exclusives and spectacular news etc.⁴⁶

2 - British newspapers : EU news through Westminster's eyes.

The British group of EU correspondents will serve as a counterbalance to the French situation. While international comparison in the sociology of journalism is still largely undeveloped, the Brussels' press Corps offers a privileged opportunity to demonstrate a particular national situation. Indeed, dozens of nationalities and as many cultural, professional and political traditions are concentrated in a very limited perimeter. In this respect, comparison is a very useful analytical tool enabling us to understand what is specific to a country rather than simply taking it for granted⁴⁷. We would first like to underline the differences in the organisation of these two groups of journalists in order to, subsequently, understand the way in which the EU is covered in Great-Britain.

A - Different organisational standards.

a) the turn-over policy.

The first factor that one must take into account when analysing the way the British journalist group organises itself and the place it occupies in the Press Corps, is the time these journalists spend in Brussels. While French newsmen have been (even for the youngest) EU correspondents for quite a long time, British journalists spend hardly more than 4 or 5 years posted in Belgium. Indeed, their newspapers consider that too long a stay could undermine their readiness to criticise and that they might, as Mrs Thatcher used to say about British officials in Brussels, « *go native* ». This turn-over policy has two major consequences : it prevents British journalists from gaining prominent positions among the microcosm's members and from making the most of their socialisation period since they are likely to leave Brussels just as they have learnt the technicalities of the EU system. If the British press is quite prestigious and well known⁴⁸ in Brussels, individual journalists remain quite anonymous. As a consequence, the British press Corps has long had a weak influence on the

⁴³ : The best example of this tendency is a regular column published in *Libération* called « *Coulisses* » (backstage). This interest for internal conflict is also symbolised by articles such as those *Libération* published about the 'nationality balance' in the Commission, as Romano Prodi replaced some officials and favoured, said the journalist, the British : Chaises musicales à la Commission européenne, *Libération*, 30th September 1999 and God save the Commission européenne, *Libération*, 29th September 1999.

⁴⁴ : In fact it concerns *Libération*, and *Le nouvel Observateur* (weekly newsmagazine)

⁴⁵ : and the retirement of most of the 'institutional journalists'.

⁴⁶ : For an overview of this phenomenon see Patrick Champagne, Le médiateur entre deux Monde, *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, n°131-132, mars 2000.

⁴⁷ : The point here is not to compare two national presses but to try to explain differences in practices concerning the coverage of the EU. As we focused on the question of the politicisation of the EU news, many factors and variables won't be so taken into account

⁴⁸ : This is particularly true for *The Financial Times* but journalists wonder whether, especially in its European edition, it is a British newspaper.

organisation of institutions' communication policy. For example, until 1995, while there are about three times as many British journalists as French⁴⁹, the Commission press briefing's official language was French. Given that they are required to give up the EU job after 4 or 5 years, British journalists are unable to become experts on EU matters to the same degree as some French journalists are. This phenomenon not only prevents them from becoming institutional journalists but also makes it more difficult for them to apply political journalism to the EU. As we have seen, the socialisation period is indeed essential to journalists who plan to write news stories explaining what is really at stake, the balance of power that exists and the actors involved in the process.

b) a more influential editorial office.

Another difference between French and British journalism in Brussels concerns the kind of relationship that exists between the correspondents and their editorial offices. While the former are quite free to evaluate the "newsworthiness" of information and to freely define their position, the latter seem to have a much stronger link with London. EU correspondents become experts that are in a dominant position to determine what is at stake and, as editors have very little interest in (and knowledge about) EU news, they can hardly contest the journalist's choices. But British newspapers paint a very different picture since EU news is not only considered relevant for experts, but also deeply embedded in national politics. As this journalist puts it « *I am an extension of Westminster or rather Westminster is an extension of me* ». This conception of a post geographically located abroad yet which is not a traditional foreign correspondent's job, is widely shared among the French as well as the British. However, in the latter case, it has a different signification : while EU news almost exclusively goes to the « foreign news » pages in France, British correspondents very often have their articles published in the « Home news » section.

Fundamentally, and beyond this revealing organisation of the British newspapers, EU news is always framed in the pattern of domestic politics. Two factors have to be taken into account here. The first one concerns the kind of domestic issue that the EU represents in each country. Secondly, one has to consider the degree of politicisation of newspapers and especially whether European issues occupy a dominant place or not.

B - The national bias.

a) EU as a domestic political issue.

Since the 'Maastricht referendum', the EU is no longer the watershed of French politics. Indeed, among government parties⁵⁰ there exists a widely shared consensus concerning Europe and polemics between national politicians hardly exist on this subject. In Great-Britain on the contrary, EU issues are deeply embedded in national politics and some of the fiercest struggles between political parties concern European matters⁵¹. The only British journalist in Brussels for 15 years explains how his relationships with the editorial offices have evolved over time : « *It was quite an easy job because: as an EU correspondent I was quite important but there wasn't much to do*⁵² *because the news desk did not want much. But when Mrs Thatcher arrived asking 'what is going on in Brussels ? We are losing sovereignty*

⁴⁹ : Even if one should take into account the Belgian and journalists from Luxembourg, British is much more widely spoken among journalists.

⁵⁰ : Socialist Party, Gaullist party (Rassemblement pour la République) and the centrist (Union pour la Démocratie Française).

⁵¹ : See for example Peter J. Anderson and Anthony Weymouth, *Insulting the public. The British Press and the European Union*, Longman, 1999, 230 pp.

⁵² : during the interview he remembered he had never play pinball that much in his life.

etc. ' then it began...then it became domestic politics (...) Little by little I've been in continuous contact with my political editor in Westminster. At the beginning there was nothing, it was pointless : nothing to discuss. But with Thatcher : there's something happening in Westminster obviously there is something here (...) Each political story is a mix between European and British politics ». After Mrs Thatcher's Premiership turned the EU into domestic politics, it not only became part of the political debate but also part of the national press' political positioning.

Indeed one of the main differences between British and French national presses is the politicisation of the newspapers. While British newspapers clearly have a political line, French ones, using a 'rhetoric of objectivity', refuse to be assimilated into an opinionated press⁵³. If newspapers are politically biased in France, there is no editorial stand towards one political party or another. Thus, the political consensus among parties on Europe continues to be reinforced by that of newspapers which, broadly speaking, are all europhile⁵⁴. On the contrary, the British press is clearly divided over Europe⁵⁵. A politicisation of news is therefore possible through a domestic political framework. As newspapers confirm and reproduce the clear division that exists in the national political arena, EU news is translated into the national debate. While French coverage is characterised by two rival conceptions of the EU correspondent's job⁵⁶, British coverage of the EU can be depicted as being lead by a particular newspaper's editorial policy. The correspondents are supposed to cover Europe according to the newspaper's position on this topic. While working for "eurosceptic" newspapers, some of them were replaced because they were said to show too much leniency towards Europe⁵⁷.

b) the organisational dimension of the national bias.

This 'nationalisation' of EU news has affected the way in which the group of British journalists organises itself. While the French press corps has two poles of attraction related to two forms of journalism, the British one has only one : Geoffrey Meade, the *Press Association's* correspondent in Brussels. When asked to name the most influential person or newspaper among British journalists, every interviewee spontaneously cited this representative of the British national agency. He is indeed the journalist who determines the "newsworthiness" of any event. As one of his colleagues says « *when he decides it's a story. It's a story* » and he himself ironically explains that British journalists consider him as an « *oracle* » and that his views and advice are listened to with great respect. This influence has three origins. This position as an "oracle" relates back to his seniority : in Brussels for 15 years⁵⁸ he is the one who has an in-depth knowledge of the European institutional system. Secondly, each journalist has to bare in mind that Meade's press releases « *are on [their]chief editor's desk* ». The last component of his influence (and the most revealing one) is the fact

⁵³ : For an overview of the phenomenon of the standardisation of the French press see Dominique Marchetti, Contribution à une sociologie des transformations du champ journalistique dans les années 80 et 90, PhD, Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, 1997.

⁵⁴ : Even the right wing *Figaro* has a very neutral position over Europe since 1992 and the 'Maastricht referendum'.

⁵⁵ : And dominated by euro scepticism : Jeremy Tunstall, *Newspaper power*, Clarendon Press, 1996, 441pp, Chapter 15.

⁵⁶ : The institutional journalists' one is, as they are explicit supporters of the EU, intellectual and political but on individual basis and the critical journalists is a professional (career-planning) project.

⁵⁷ : Recently, *The Daily Telegraph* replaced his correspondent by a new one who was nicknamed a 'Prodi killer', a journalist whose only instructions are to dig out scandals that could embarrass the new Commission President.

⁵⁸ : The *Press Association* functioning can only explain this oddity. Indeed, he's the only 'foreign' correspondent of the agency and no particular status was made for him. As the agency doesn't have a turn-over policy for its local correspondents he has never been asked to leave Brussels.

that his media only covers British current affairs. Given that his entire coverage of EU news is UK-centred, it perfectly corresponds to what the London editorial offices are waiting for.

The 'national filter' which this journalist represents is the symbolic of the way in which British newspapers deal with EU news. This politicisation of news is a result of interpretations made of domestic political frameworks : is a decision of the commission likely to embarrass the government or not ? has the government moved back in the beef crisis... ? Paradoxically however, while having the strongest "eurosceptic" press, British journalists did not anticipate the political crisis that lead to the resignation of the Santer Commission. As euroscepticism fuels most of the articles that are written on the EU, corruption and wastage are taken for granted and euro-scandals are commonplace in British journalism concerning Europe. In addition, since British newspapers and journalists have always considered EU news to be domestic news, they have been unable to detect the existence of a real and specific political crisis. As they pay very little attention to the specific power struggles between and inside the institutions, they did not pay much attention to the changing balance of power between the Parliament and the politically weak Commission. Since no British commissioner was involved and the main informer was "*an unknown Dutch*" (Paul Van Buytenen), Editorial offices were not interested in articles giving an account of what was going on.

The belatedness of British journalists to react is proof of the kind of politicisation that takes place in their newspapers : a politicisation that fails to take into account the specific political dimension of an institutional system which can't be compared or reduced to those that exist in member States.

Conclusions :

This study has tried to give an overview of both the way the EU's press Corps organises itself; the role it plays throughout journalists' socialisation period, and of the kind of journalism that can be found in Brussels. As we have focused on the politicisation of news, many other aspects have not been taken into account. However, by concentrating on the internal organisation of each national group it is possible to describe the processes of inter-definition and of self-legitimation that presently take place in the press Corps. The comparison also enables us to counterbalance what might be mere national particularities and so to enrich the analysis of each group with factors that relate back to political, professional and cultural differences. As this study is still a « work in progress », the description of each group, of the kind of relationships they have with each other and of the role of institutional sources in the production of information is not yet complete.

Nevertheless, this first account highlights the existence of different journalistic methods towards politicisation that can be summed up as follows :