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EMBARGO: 19.00 heures

Brussels, 23 March 1990

**ROBERT SCHUMAN LECTURE**

by The Rt. Hon. Bruce MILLAN  
European Commissioner for Regional Policies

"Ireland, Europe and Regional Policies in the 1990's"  
University College, Cork  
Friday, 23 March 1990

- Excerpts -

Mr Bruce Millan, giving the traditional Schuman Lecture in Cork had the following message : "As we are making good progress in strengthening the cohesion of the Community, we are in a position to respond with a message of solidarity to the challenge flowing from the dramatic changes in Eastern Europe."

"It is understandable that we all need some time to adjust to the dramatically new situation in Eastern Europe. A closed alliance of repressive regimes behind the Iron Curtain has vanished.

Should this new-found liberty and reassertion of national identity in the East make us think again about 1992 and further integration in the Community? If the answer to that question is no, how do we accommodate the Community and its neighbours in the East into a new European order without threatening out achievements or disappointing their own expectations?

We have first of all to be careful in our analysis of recent events. For half a century the countries of the Western Alliance and indeed of the United Nations have insisted on the principle of self-determination. The old colonial hegemonies of the nineteenth century have disappeared to be replaced by national Governments with varying levels of democratic legitimacy. Now the neocolonial dependencies of Eastern Europe are also disappearing.

In the first days in the dazzling light of the outside world it is understandable that some of the new leaders emphasise their nationality and independence above all.

But as the newly elected Governments get established, their leaders are likely to reach the same basic conclusion on the economic situation of their countries on the world stage as the countries of the Community have done. This conclusion is that in an interdependent world economy, traditional political and cultural identities can best be safeguarded in a wider framework of economic and political unity, in which essential political interests are protected by reliable institutional safeguards, but in which economic interests can be promoted in the context of a large and strong economic community.

It is because of the success of the Community in providing such a framework for the existing Member States that it has acted as a pole of attraction for the countries of Eastern Europe.

It was nevertheless Gorbachev himself who recently underlined in his concept of the common European home that a European Community limited to Western Europe was an incomplete one. In this respect he shares a respectable historical tradition with Jean Monnet and other leading figures in our Community who have underlined that our common European heritage binds countries as far apart as the Atlantic and the Urals.

It is of course too early to say what kind of relationship the Community may wish to develop with the new democratic countries and talk of accession to the Community is to say the least premature. In any case as a matter of principle the Community has taken the view that it will not enter into any negotiations on the accession of new Member States before 1992, even notwithstanding the current Austrian application.

However it is essential in my view for the Community to participate actively in shaping the new European "architecture". It would be entirely wrong to look at the opening of the Community to Eastern Europe as a change in priority or a loss to existing Community Member States. It is both a political challenge, and potentially a vast commercial opportunity for us all, and Ireland is no exception here.

Since the very outset, the Commission has emphasized the special status of East Germany, which has an unquestioned right to join the Community as part of a unified Germany. Since the elections last weekend, it is now clear that German unification will take place sooner rather than later.

East Germany already has one foot in the internal market through intra-German trade. It will also, it seems likely now, complete economic and monetary union with the Federal Republic by the summer of this year. Beyond this there will be an interim phase in which German unification will be completed in both a legal and political sense. And we should also expect to see a parallel completion of the process of application of Community policies and law in East Germany.

This includes of course structural policies. It could involve a rapid extension of European Investment Bank and other European Community lending operations to East Germany on a similar basis to that already envisaged for Poland and Hungary. Subject to progress and the more general application of Community law in East Germany, it is also possible that Structural Fund assistance could be made available on an ad hoc basis until revision of the present Structural Funds arrangements, which take us to the end of 1993.

Inevitably many countries and regions are concerned that the integration of East German territory into the Community might result in a diversion of the Community's Structural Funds from existing priority regions to East German regions, and ultimately to other countries of Eastern Europe.

Let me be quite clear on this point. The Commission has now negotiated multiannual Community support frameworks with Member States and regions, and has launched, or is launching, further Community initiatives which will commit the entire amount allocated to the Structural Funds between now and 1993. The Commission intends to meet these commitments. If any new regions or new purposes need Structural Fund help, then there must be additional resources in the Budget for these new needs.

But it would be equally wrong in my view for Germany's partners in the Community to be reticent about the entitlement of East German regions to Structural Fund assistance if they meet the criteria which are already in the Regulations. As one of the richest Member States in the Community, it is obvious that the national German authorities will bear the main cost of structural adjustment in East Germany just as they are likely to benefit most in the longer run from the development of the East German economy. The time-period over which East German regions may need Community assistance may equally be much shorter than for many priority regions.

However if Community cohesion means anything, it must mean that the Community should show solidarity with and identify with the problems to be tackled in East Germany. Our German partners have shown consistent solidarity with Community regional policies in the implementation of the Single Act. It is only right that other Member States should do the same in return.

And if in the longer term we want as a Community to develop our relations with the other countries of Eastern Europe, we must look both at what help we can offer to them in parallel with the advantages we can obtain from greater commercial and economic cooperation."

