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A PEOPLE'S EUROPE

Note from the Commission

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A PEOPLE'S EUROPE: A MAJOR POLITICAL OBJECTIVE

The Fontainebleau European Council in June 1984 undertook to give the Community a new dimension to bring it closer to the people of Europe. To that end it instructed an ad hoc Committee to identify, from a series of suggestions, measures which would enable the Community "to respond to the expectations of the people of Europe by adopting measures to strengthen and promote its identity and its image both for its citizens and for the rest of the world."

The Milan European Council in June 1985 endorsed the ad hoc Committee's proposals and urged the Community institutions to take the necessary steps to implement them as soon as possible.

Two years after the impetus given by the Fontainebleau Council, the Commission finds that the political resolve of Heads of State and Government to make Europe more meaningful to the man in the street has yet to be translated into practice. The gradual improvement in the economic situation offers a real prospect of the Community regaining its vitality, but its inhabitants still have no feeling of belonging to a single entity. The average European feels so little concerned by joint implementation by the Member States of policies involving cumbersome decision-making procedures and complex, technical rules that the gulf between him and the institutions has widened if anything.

A People's Europe must remain a prime political objective if the undertaking in the Single Act to make the Community into an area without frontiers, within which everyone may move "without let or hindrance" and study, live and work where they will is to be honoured without too much delay.

ACTION IN HAND

The ad hoc Committee on a People's Europe, chaired by Mr Adonnino and made up of representatives of the Heads of State and Government, met for over six months and produced two reports for the European Council. The first, datelined March 1985, identified practical measures that would enable the citizen to enjoy individual freedom of movement and right of residence within the Community, in either an occupational or a private capacity. The second, datelined June 1985, purported to give the Community a new political, cultural and social dimension by proposing practical measures such as new citizens' rights, scope for mobility for young people within the Community, and measures to promote culture and health protection. The Commission has made numerous proposals and floated many ideas for implementing the recommendations of the two reports.

In a communication to the Council dated 19 November 1985 the Commission appraised the outcome of this European Council initiative. Its verdict then, still valid today, is that results have been disappointing. The Council has failed to adopt any of the more meaningful proposals in terms of popular impact, with the notable exception, as indicated in the Presidency's report, of those on freedom of establishment for certain professions (architects, pharmacists). But these had been with the Council for several years before the Adonnino report.

The opposition of one delegation is still blocking agreement on the proposal to relax controls at internal borders, a first step towards the objective set in Fontainebleau of abolishing "all police and customs formalities for people crossing intra-Community frontiers" by mid-1985.

Also blocked in the Council are two general proposals essential to the creation of a frontier-free area: they deal with generalized right of residence and the equivalence of university diplomas. Last but not least, the proposal for a regulation on support for television and cinema co-productions was rejected by the Council and is being reworked by the Commission along broader lines.

THE NEED FOR FRESH IMPETUS

The Commission considers that it has, by and large, discharged its obligations in relation to A People's Europe under the mandate given it by the European Council. It urges the European Council to provide fresh political impetus, making it possible to unblock the proposals still pending and to implement new ideas for bringing Europe closer to its citizens. It should be directed essentially towards the young, who must be given new faith in the European venture.

The Commission has come up with proposals for youth and student exchange programmes. These were designed to facilitate such exchanges and constitute a key component of A People's Europe. The Council, which has just adopted the COMETT programme - on the basis of a financial commitment that limits its scope - should give the go ahead to the YES and ERASMUS programmes as a matter of urgency. The Commission intends to take new initiatives, notably on work camps for projects relating to protection of the environment and the cultural heritage. It will also draw on the

Franco-German experiment to coordinate "development volunteer" operations as part of the campaign against hunger in the world.

Support for a cause can also be fostered by the judicious use of symbols. Symbols can contribute as much as concrete initiatives to public perception of Community identity. This is true of the Community passport, despite delays in its introduction by some Member States. A more recent example is the agreement on the Community flag. Further progress must therefore be made along the path indicated by the European Council, notably by the adoption of the specific proposals which have been made for distinguishing between internal borders and external frontiers, even though symbolic action of this kind meets with the stiffest resistance from national experts. The Commission will also be developing new ventures inspired by the Adonnino Committee, particularly in connection with sport and special issues of postage stamps. Lastly, despite the slender resources at its disposal, it plans to continue to ensure a Community presence at major cultural and sporting events.

The Commission believes that there is yet another area deserving of attention, namely the decision-making process and the associated technocratic language which hinders comprehension and perception of Community law. This is a common phenomenon which most Member States are trying to tackle. The Commission is therefore determined to improve the transparency of Community law by undertaking a codification exercise and dealing more systematically with citizen's complaints. Arrangements are already in hand to facilitate the filing of complaints at Commission Offices in the

Member States. It would be helpful if national administrations themselves were to become more Community-minded.

The Commission is also acutely aware of the problem of public safety in these difficult times. The idea of a Community response to the hardship and distress caused by acts of international terrorism, including compensation for victims, might therefore be considered.