

Week of May 18 to 23

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From May 28 to 30, more than 2000 mentally handicapped persons from the four corners of Europe will compete amicably in Nivelles, Belgium. This event is part of the activities connected with the International Year of the Handicapped.

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CULTURE : When music works for youth

- Acclaimed all over Europe for the last four years, the European Community's youth orchestra is currently preparing its next summer tour when it will be playing with such illustrious conductors as Raphael Kubelick, Claudio Abbado or Daniel Barenboim.

The idea of an orchestra of young musicians from EEC countries was born in the European Parliament some six years ago. The proposal received the enthusiastic support of all European institutions. The problem of financing remained : rehearsals, transport and concerts can be quite expensive. The question was resolved with help from three sources : the governments of the Nine (now Ten), the European Commission and private patrons of the arts. Auditions for musicians are open to all candidates between 14 and 22 years of age. Competition is strong. In 1980 there were 4000 new candidates from whom only 128 were chosen.

For the happy winners of the competition, the programme is attractive : they have the unique opportunity of travelling all over Europe , going from festival to capital to play with world-famous conductors, be they classical, romantic or modern. But they also have to learn discipline, rehearse constantly, and deepen their understanding of musical and general culture. The Community's Youth Orchestra is above all a symbol of the friendship which links the people of Europe. It is now up to the youth of Europe to strengthen these links. And as European Commission President, Gaston Thorn, pointed out recently, the Orchestra helps young musicians make their professional debut. In fact, a number of "old" members of the orchestra are now playing with other European orchestras.

- On May 1, the Orchestra played in Naples for the victims of the earthquake which devastated the region. The young musicians were received a few days later by Pope John-Paul II. During the summer tour, the Orchestra will play in London, Dublin and Cork in July and Lake Como, Frankfurt, Athens and in France in August. Their repertoire will include works by Schubert, Mahler, Brahms, Berlioz, Schuman and Ravel. Don't miss the concerts...

EDUCATION : Two answers to students' questions

More and more students are continuing or completing their studies in a European Community country other than their own. Certain wellknown universities, such as Harvard and Berkeley in the United States, Cambridge or the Sorbonne in Europe are international educational magnets, but lesser-known establishments also attract foreign students. Not only are students from many countries obtaining highly-specialised training, but they are also coming in contact with other cultures and improving their knowledge of foreign languages.

In the context of its educational action programme, the European Economic Community has sought to encourage the mobility of students. In this effort, it is seeking to promote the mutual recognition of diplomas, and the harmonisation of scholastic requirements in all the Community member countries.

But students frequently have difficulties finding out about existing possibilities and their professors are not always any better informed than they are. That is why the European Commission has just proposed the establishment of an information network capable of providing answers to the questions of interested students, parents, teachers or prospective employers. This network would fit into EURYDICE, the European information system on educational matters, which, in principle, should be fully operational by the beginning of 1983.

From that date, it will be possible to consult the national EURYDICE outlet, to learn about possibilities in higher education such as university and post-graduate courses and the requirements sought for all diplomas offered in the different European Community countries. The European Commission also intends to publish a manual containing most of this information and to extend the current Community plans for aid and for joint study programmes.

SOCIAL : 1984 priorities unchanged

Each year the European Commission reviews the objectives of the European Social Fund for the coming three years. Anxious to retain a certain degree of continuity and stability in the Fund's operations, the Commission has just decided to maintain the priorities defined in 1980. These involve the upgrading of the level of training of unemployed persons, attacking employment problems linked to the introduction of new technologies and the guiding of female workers into traditionally male occupations. It will nevertheless institute a thorough review of the operations of the Social Fund, which may be increasing its budget in the future.

TRADE : Japanese cars continue to roll in

Despite increasing overtures by the European Commission to Japan to cut back its export of cars to the 10 E.E.C. Member States, the Tokyo government has ignored the demands and in some cases done quite the opposite. As the E.E.C.'s overall trade deficit with the Japanese increases, anxieties are mounting and there seems to be little relief in sight. At \$ 10.7 billion last year, the deficit was up by 50 % over the 1979 level. A decade ago, it had not even attained the \$ 300 million mark.

The latest statistics show that Japanese car exports to the Community in the first quarter of this year have increased by 18.3 % compared with the same period last year. A breakdown of statistics reveals the following. The biggest volume increase was Germany, which imported 80,000 more Japanese cars over last year (an increase of 48.6 %). While Greece imported only 5,000 more Japanese cars, the increase was a whopping 259.8 %. Of the member states with restrictive tariff barriers to Japanese cars, France cut imports by 43 %, Italy's quota increased by 110.9 % and the U.K. took in 3.3 % more. These latest figures are not in line with what the Commission considers to be an appropriate degree of voluntary restraint by Japanese exporters. March exports were down by 1 % over last year but the Commission is quick to point out that a long-term decline cannot be projected on the basis of this figure alone.

Recently, the Reagan Administration finally won an agreement with the Japanese for a voluntary cutback over the next three years in the number of cars exported to the United States. Encouraged by these positive results, the Commission has called on the Japanese government to accord 'analogous' treatment to the Community. However, if recent talks between Japanese and European car manufacturers are anything to go by, the Commission will have a difficult task.

On May 19th, the Council of Ministers came out in support of the Commission's latest efforts in securing an agreement with Japan. They re-emphasised their position calling for an immediate solution to the problem. In addition to this they stressed that restraint should be practised towards the Community as a whole and not just to individual member states.

ENERGY : Oil's oft-forgotten cousin

Almost ignored, but highly significant in the European search for energy resources is natural gas.

As an indication of the growing importance of this substance, the share of natural gas in Europe's total energy consumption shot up from only 2 per cent in 1958 to 17 per cent in 1978, a thirty-fold increase in 20 years. Because of a number of factors, however, it is not expected to increase in the coming years. These factors include the limited or uneconomical nature of the current known deposits of natural gas, the lack of pipelines to transport it from the source to the consumer and the trend of increasing prices. But the development of natural gas and Europe's dependence on it have been highly-visible news topics recently with headlines focused on the giant pipeline projects being considered to bring gas from the vast wasteland deposits in Arctic Siberia in the Soviet Union to several consumer countries in Western Europe. Major contracts such as this or one with Algeria, are all major elements in the complex gas and energy picture, which are covered in a recent study published by the European Commission entitled "Natural Gas Supplies and the Prospects for the Future".

This study notes the phenomenal expansion of the use of natural gas in Community countries based largely on the discovery and development of the huge fields in the Netherlands. Consumption of natural gas went from 7 billion cubic metres in 1958 to 212 billion in 1978, although in the 1950s there were predictions of its virtual disappearance as an energy source. The situation now is one of levelling production and consumption, again largely based on the fact that the deposits in the Netherlands are being used up and are only partially being replaced by supplies from Algeria, the Soviet Union, the North Sea and elsewhere. Investments for exploration, exploitation and infrastructure for new sites, even the mammoth Siberian ones which represent the largest in the world, are so tremendous that they could represent a problem. The study estimates that investment needs by the gas industry from 1976 to 1990 would amount to around £ 26 billion.

While the pattern of natural gas consumption varies from one country to another in the Community, it is characterised by an almost even use by the domestic and industrial sectors, although in recent years the domestic sector has increased its use considerably. The use of natural gas for electricity or power generation is still limited to about 19 per cent, according to the study.

The report also indicates that Germany is the largest user of natural gas, followed by the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, with France and Italy at about half Germany's consumption rate behind them.

THIRD WORLD : The EEC's major stake in the North-South dialogue

The seriousness of the crisis facing the industrialised countries and the scale of the economic and financial difficulties currently facing the developing nations clearly call for concerted North-South action. This is particularly true in such crucial areas as energy, finance and food supplies.

Despite earlier failures, several attempts to open a "global" North-South dialogue will be made in 1981. These include the organisation of a special summit on development issues to be held in Mexico, the launching of international negotiations on economic cooperation at the United Nations in New-York, a special meeting on new and renewable sources of energy in Nairobi, Kenya and, finally, a meeting on problems of the poorest developing countries scheduled for Paris next autumn.

The Community and its ten member countries will be active participants in all these meetings. In a recent communication forwarded to the ten Member States, the European Commission draws attention to the EEC's basic stake in the dialogues : the fact that, among the industrialised countries, Europe is probably the one with the biggest immediate economic interest in reducing constraints caused by scarcities of raw materials and the disturbance of Third World production which can often be provoked by food shortages.

The Community's major interest in the dialogue clearly focuses on improving the world energy situation. As the Commission points out, all parties in the North-South dialogue will have to be prepared to cooperate during the transition from the current shaky equilibrium to a less oil based, more resource-conscious world economy, to help finance energy development in the developing countries and ensure an orderly trend of oil supply and demand, and hence oil prices. This requires greater cooperation between the industrialised countries and the oil-exporting nations.

The dialogue will also centre on financial questions, namely the Third World's growing demand for external finance. The Commission underlines that official aid to the developing countries should be increased, but that this should be backed up by a flow of credit from private banks. The oil-exporting nations should also be encouraged to invest their massive petrodollar surpluses both in the developing and the industrialised worlds.

The main scarcity constraint at the world level - and the least tolerable - is the shortage of food. Combatting hunger in the world requires action on two major fronts : increased food aid from the Western nations, but also a coordinated effort by the developing countries themselves to increase food output. The international community, particularly the EEC, must help the Third World nations by providing assistance for the drawing-up and im-

plementation of national food plans and strategies and for national, regional, and international research activities designed to increase food production and evolve cultivation systems and methods that are less dependent on imported energy.

An attempt to restructure the Community's industry and trade relations will also have to be made. This would involve the strengthening of European integration : market unification, coordination of research and development activities, a coordinated approach towards public aid to industry and the use of Community borrowing facilities to finance restructuring.

SPORTS : The first "special" European olympic games

Belgium is to play host in the coming days to a sporting event marking the International Year of the Handicapped. It amounts to the first special European Olympic Games for the handicapped. It will be held in Nivelles from May 28 to 30. More than 2000 athletes from Belgium, France, Germany, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Spain, Italy, Greece, Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Monaco are expected to take part.

The major sports planned include track and field events, swimming, football and basketball. Each competitor will find himself against others of the same age, sex and strength. The main objective is not to triumph over another but to improve each individual's performance.

These games were organised by the European Federation for Physical Education and Sports for the Mentally Handicapped. The financing has come almost entirely from private firms, because public agencies have unfortunately not shown themselves to be very generous.

The games will take place before an audience that will include a number of European sports stars. They will end with a giant dance and fireworks display.