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MAY PART-SESSION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

(13 - 15 May)

CONSUMER INFORMATION AND PROTECTION

G. BERSANI: Demand for European legal protection

'The 250 million inhabitants of the Community have in common the fact that they are all consumers. It is therefore extremely important that the Community should not become a disappointment to consumers.' With this statement Mr G. BERSANI introduced his report on a preliminary Programme of the European Economic Community on Consumer Information and Protection.

'The sense of discrimination required of consumers in a market economy presupposes a knowledge and insight which the consumer cannot obtain in a modern economy without help. Although consumers in the Community are better informed today than in the past and are inclined to be more critical of the products offered, it is becoming increasingly difficult to make a responsible choice because of the complex nature of many products, the wide range on offer and persuasive advertising. For these two reasons the Community needs a consumer policy'.

Mr BERSANI underlined the importance of better European legal protection, which meant not that the authorities would regiment the consumer but, on the contrary, that they would provide the consumer with the legal instruments with which to defend his interests himself. 'It is in the interest not only of national governments and parliaments but also of Community institutions, to strengthen consumer organizations, not least with a view to fighting inflation.' Mr BERSANI closed by saying that it was necessary for the consumer organizations to be involved in the formulation of a policy representing their interests.

ITALIAN TRADE RESTRICTIONS

A. BERTRAND: Economic and monetary union lacking

'If the Council had adopted the proposal by the Commission on entry into the second stage of economic and monetary union, Italy would not have been in its present position.' As the spokesman for the Christian-Democratic Group, Mr A. BERTRAND emphasized, the fault was again to be found in the Community machinery: it was becoming increasingly more urgent for the Council of Ministers to be replaced by a Chamber of States which, together with the European Parliament - provided with all the necessary powers - and the Commission, would carry out as a European government a European policy proceeding from a single decision-making centre.

The Christian-Democratic Group called upon the Commission at this time, as it had to assume a stronger political role in accordance with Article 108 of the Treaty, to provide proof that it was made up of individuals forming a collective body with the political will to take the Community measures which were essential to restore the normal functioning of the Common Market.

W. SCHOLTEN: Search for a Community solution

The events in Italy were only the beginning of what was awaiting Europe this year. The effects of the energy crisis, which Italy was at present experiencing in its currency and balance of payments, would not be confined to one country. The question was whether the events in Italy occurred so suddenly that the Commission was unable to make use of its powers under Article 108 of the EEC Treaty and restricted itself to making recommendations instead of initiating measures.

The Christian-Democratic Group would support the Commission in its search for a Community solution. This, however, required great discipline from the Member States in their efforts towards solving their own problems, and reciprocal solidarity throughout Europe.

I. FRÜH and J. DE KONING: Agriculture is worst hit

I. FRÜH: At all events we must prevent individual national governments escaping the measures which I hope the Commission can take in this situation to protect the common agricultural market against disturbances; otherwise the result would be a fatal escalation in this direction.

J. DE KONING: Balanced development of agricultural and horticultural production in Europe and adequate supplies of food for the peoples of Europe depend to a great extent on the free movement of agricultural products. This development will be at risk if the Member States resort to measures to avoid national difficulties and which - as is at present the case in Italy - are aimed at restricting imports.

E. BLUMENFELD: Regional equilibrium must be restored

The problem which has arisen through the decision by the Italian Government will not stop at any of our Member States. We must therefore endeavour to press on at a faster rate with the regional and structural policy by setting up the Regional Fund; otherwise it will not be possible to discuss economic and monetary questions within the Community framework.

GENERAL REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMUNITIES FOR 1973

P. VAN DER SANDEN: The Commission yields too easily

'The Commission yields too easily. In its proposals it limits itself to what it considers will be accepted and forgets that it has a task to fulfil as an autonomous Community Institution. In the relationship between the Council and the Commission the latter must constantly make clear that it is the executive body of the Community.' After analysing the role of the European Institutions, Mr VAN DER SANDEN closed with an appeal to the Council of Ministers to act as a Community body in accordance with the will of the peoples. The European Parliament was aware of its task of having to provide the decisive stimulus for the resurgence of the Community; at the same time, however, it sensed the discrepancy between this responsibility and its real political powers.

ECONOMIC SITUATION IN THE COMMUNITY

H. NOTENBOOM: Recommendations - to what end?

'The severe criticism which has been made of the Commission's report is certainly not directed to its - as usual shrewd - analysis of the situation, but rather towards the recommendations which it makes to the governments of the Member States. We know that the work of the Commission would be fruitless if its recommendations were not accepted by the Council - but, on the other hand, what is the value of recommendations which contain only features which will be accepted straight away by the Member States?' In view of the present economic crisis, the Member States - in Mr H. NOTENBOOM's view - must direct all their forces to retaining at least the customs union and the common agricultural policy; in their national parliaments they must ensure that European problems are discussed more frequently.

MISCELLANEOUS

Direct election of Belgian Members of the European Parliament

The two chairmen of the Belgian Christian-Democrats, W. MARTENS (CVP) and Charles NOTHOMB (PSC) have tabled a bill in their parliament on the direct election of Belgian Members to the European Parliament. Under this bill, direct elections would take place jointly with the local elections on 10 October 1976.

The bill is to be seen against the background of undertaking given by the Heads of State or Government at the Paris Summit Conference to achieve European Union by 1980. In order that this obligation can be fulfilled, a breakthrough is needed in the construction of Europe.

'In order to achieve this breakthrough towards political unity', states the explanatory memorandum to the bill, 'the governments and parliaments must be able to count on the agreement and support of the citizens.

The individual citizen has so far not been sufficiently involved in the construction of Europe. The Community has been seen as a collection of treaties and technical regulations in favour of big business and agriculture, whereas the action which the Community is called upon to take affects the vital interests of each individual citizen in the same way as those of the national authorities.

The distance which has been maintained between the people and the Community is not merely the consequence of a lack of information. It is above all the consequence of a lack of collaboration of the citizens in Community life. A system of government cannot develop and operate properly if this constant interaction of questionings and stimuli, which gives it its vitality and effectiveness, does not exist between it and the people.'

The bill which the chairmen of the Socialist Party and the Liberal Party both signed was drawn up by the Committee for European Affairs of CEPES (Political, Economic and Social Studies Centre of the Belgian Christian-Democrats). The Chairman of this committee is Mr DEWULF (Member of the Christian-Democratic Group and Vice-President of the European Parliament).

The bill reads as follows:

Art. 1 - The Belgian Parliament shall organize a general direct election in order to designate from among its members, the Belgian Members to the European Parliament pursuant to Art. 138 of the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community.

Art. 1 - The election shall take place at a time to be determined by agreement with the Member States of the European Communities or with a number of these States.
Failing such a decision, this election shall take place for the first time on the same date as the local elections for 1976, that is, on 10 October 1976.

Art. 3 - The election shall follow the system of proportional representation based on a single electoral district for the whole country.

- Art. 4 - Belgian citizens who have the right to vote in the local elections and, under the same conditions as these Belgian citizens, nationals of the Member States of the European Communities who have their residence in Belgium, may take part in this election.
- Art. 5 - 1. For the election, lists shall be drawn up of not more than 14 candidates who at the time of the election are members of the Belgian Parliament.
2. The provisions governing the nomination of candidates, the election procedure and the counting of votes shall be laid down by the Crown in accordance with the provisions governing provincial elections.
- Art. 6 - The Belgian Parliament shall designate its representatives in the European Parliament on the basis of the results obtained under Art. 3 and Art. 5 as regards the number and sequence of candidates on the various lists.
- Art. 7 - In designating members pursuant to Art. 6, the Belgian Parliament shall ensure that as far as possible members from the two Chambers are designated in equal numbers.
- Art. 8 - This law shall remain in force until the provisions governing the election of members of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage come into force pursuant to Art. 138(3) of the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community.
- Art. 9 - The Minister of the Interior shall be responsible for implementing this law.

P.J. LARDINOIS: THE POWERLESSNESS OF THE GOVERNMENT IS THE REASON FOR
THE CRISIS IN THE COMMUNITY

The political crisis in Europe has more serious implications for Community collaboration than Italy's restrictions on imports which led to a breakdown in the customs union and in the agricultural market. This view was expressed by the agricultural commissioner of the European Commission at a conference of the European Movement which took place in Eindhoven (Netherlands). In this situation of political uncertainty no further measures have been taken at Community level: the increase in the agricultural prices in March this year was actually the last decision of the Council of Ministers. Mr LARDINOIS is of the opinion that the problems caused by Italy and the British demands do not represent an insurmountable obstacle - together with the increased prices for primary products, the high rate of inflation, and above all the political crisis

which almost all Member States were experiencing, they could however place insoluble problems before the Community. The greatest threat arose from the possibility of a split between countries with strong and weak currencies. One currency group - consisting of the Benelux countries, Denmark, Switzerland and Austria - had already formed around Germany. If the present situation continued there was a threat of a division in the Community.

A NEW CONCEPTION AND A POLITICAL WILL FOR ISPRA

The Committee on Energy, Research and Technology and a delegation of the Committee on Budgets of the European Parliament met on 6 and 7 May at the Joint Research Centre at Ispra with Mr G. SPRINGORUM in the chair.

The Members of Parliament held two meetings with the representatives of the staff of the research centre, who expressed their point of view regarding the start of the multi-year research program, problems of organization of the research centre and trade union demands.

The parliamentarians also put questions to the representatives of the Commission and the management of the research centre regarding the effects of the action program in the field of nuclear research adopted by the Council in February 1974 on the basis of Art. 235 of the EEC Treaty.

Apart from Mr SPRINGORUM, Mr AIGNER and Mr NOE of the Christian-Democratic Group, also took a main part in the discussions. The three Christian-Democrat members emphasized the need for an improvement in the research work at Ispra, the development of a global strategy for the activity of the research centre, and a reorganization of the staff structure. It was not a question of financial saving, but of the future of Ispra itself.

EUYCD FROM PORTUGAL (PRESS RELEASE)

The European Union of Young Christian-Democrats met in Brussels on 10 May with Mr A. DE BROUWER in the chair, to hear the report of its Portuguese representative, Mr A. VIERA MARQUES, on the political situation in Portugal.

Since 1971, with the collaboration of the young leaders of the militant Catholic action, an underground Portuguese group of the EUYCD had formed within the democratic opposition to the Salazar régime.

The European Union of Young Christian-Democrats

1. notes with pleasure that the Facist dictatorship in Portugal had been removed by a movement within the Portuguese forces which had developed in close collaboration with the democratic opposition in the country;
2. emphasizes that the freeing of Portugal is a decisive step towards the freeing of the whole Iberian peninsula and has raised great hopes among the Christian-Democratic organizations in Madrid, Catalonia and the Basque country;
3. fully supports the political forces organized within the democratic movement in Portugal, because these forces fortify the young Portuguese democracy and are capable of providing a satisfactory answer to the question of independence of the African colonies and the future question of the integration of Portugal into the European Community;
4. undertakes to make available to its Portuguese members all the means they will need to provide for information and political education of Portuguese youth and to break down the apathy into which the agricultural population in particular had sunk after 48 years of Facist dictatorship. To this end the delegation of the EUYCD will be visiting Portugal in the near future to discuss on the spot the terms of collaboration and exchange.

Following the meeting, the Portuguese representative in the EUYCD, VIEIRA MARQUES, met H.A. LÜCKER and A. DE POI - the chairman and Secretary-General of the Christian-Democratic Group of the European Parliament - as well as representatives of the national executives of the organizations of the PSC and CVP, who assured him of the full solidarity of their organizations.

A SPIRITUAL DIMENSION

Extracts from the speech given by the French President of the Senate, Alain POHER, on the occasion of the 25th Anniversary of the Council of Europe.

Europe must be strong and happy. We have now come a long way and the Europeans are justified in entertaining great hopes, although we must not underestimate the difficulties.

The decisive events of last autumn, which affected all the countries of Europe with their full force, made it absolutely clear - and this lesson should not be forgotten - how greatly our prosperity, the place which Europe holds as the leader of scientific and technical progress, its success in improving the quality of life and in its relations with third countries, depend on Community cooperation in the energy sector and other areas.

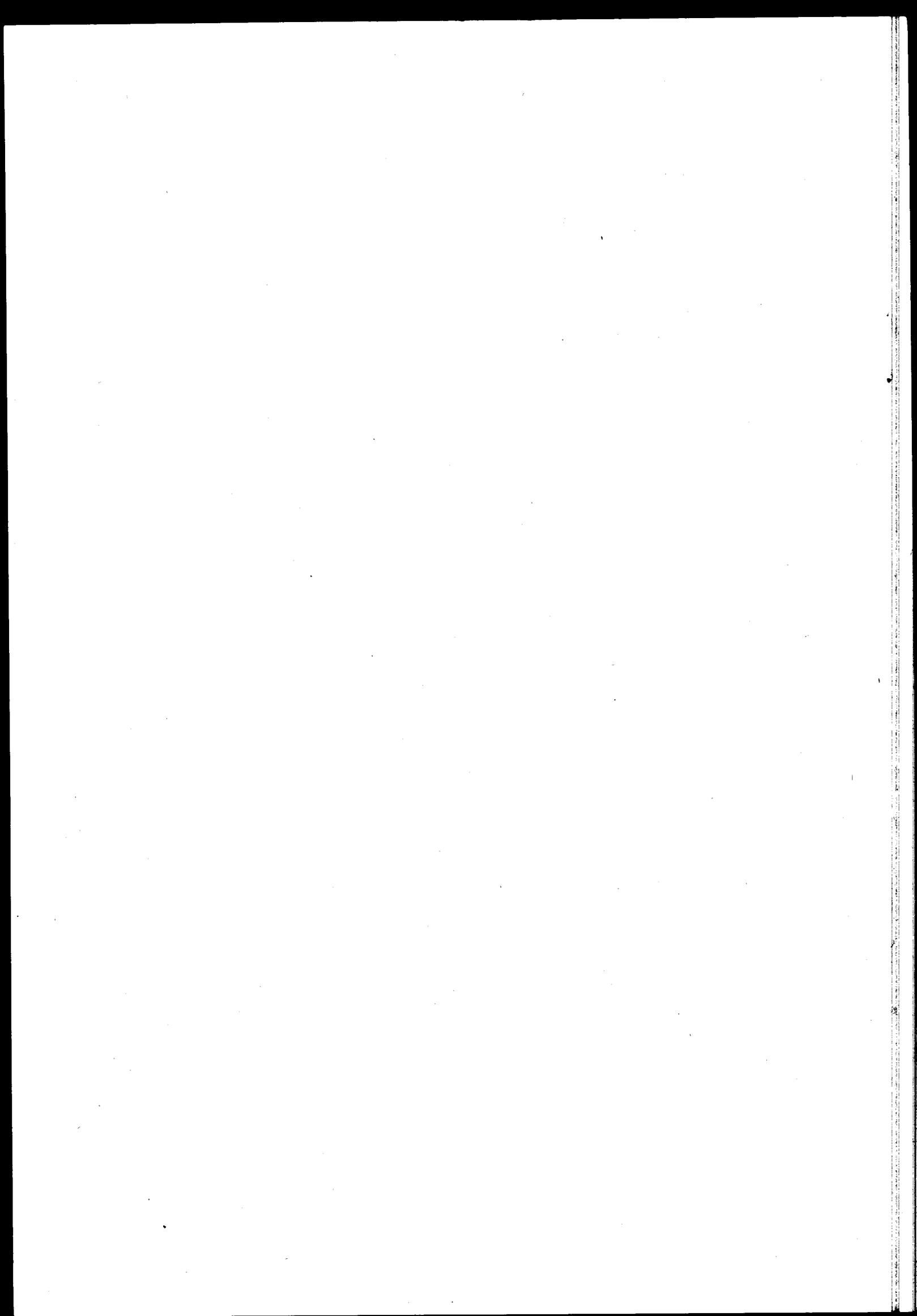
Europe can win everything by unification and give a great deal to the rest of the world. When united, the European states can take effective action and contribute to world-wide prosperity, to the fight against poverty and to the solution of ideological conflicts.

For this reason I urge you to think of the population of more than 10 million people which knows no frontiers: the 18th state formed by the migrant workers and their families. No country, no idea, no individual is isolated today - for the young generation there are already no frontiers. National problems rapidly affect neighbouring states. Even at a distance of thousands of kilometres European parents and European children are faced with the same problems. They are united in a difficult process of development and a permanent uncertainty and are aware both of the strength and the weakness of our continent.

Promising prospects are open to this continent; at the same time, it is weighed down by its responsibility towards a world which is trying to find its own identity and perhaps will continue to do so for a long time - but which already has some conception of the good fortune which it can claim.

Let us not forget, in this connection, the advice of Mr J. GUITTON, a member of the Académie Française, that above and beyond the Europe of the consumer and the everyday Europe, there is a spiritual dimension of Europe, without which a real Europe can never be built.

Let us all learn to have a common, steadfast and resolute belief and determination to construct a more equitable and humane world, which is what we all desire.



EUROPE AWAITS DIRECT ELECTIONS

Extracts from an article by Kai-Uwe von HASSEL,
in No. 18 of the Deutschland-Union-Dienst

During the symposium held on 3 and 4 May in Luxembourg many experts spoke out against postponing direct elections to the European Parliament until it had acquired the full powers of a real parliament. In Luxembourg there was a readiness to proceed with direct elections and extension of powers at the same time.

What is actually preventing a start being made with direct elections in those countries which are ready for them? Why are they waiting for the Council to propose a procedure for all the Nine or for other countries to join in, even without a proposal from the Council? If three or four countries make a start, the Council and other countries will have to follow.

The European Union of Christian-Democrats is convinced that the free peoples of Europe are almost all more European in their outlook than their governments are prepared to be in their actions. The crisis of consciousness in free Europe, to which increasing reference is being made, consists in the conflict between the expectations of our peoples and the powerlessness or inability of the governments to translate the will for unity into action.

The politicians in their parties were in a position in the past to give a new political incentive and to create new political realities. The parties are therefore called upon to devote all their energies to their European responsibilities beyond national problems. This includes direct elections and full powers for the European Parliament. Directly elected representatives endowed with a specific mandate for Europe, can act with more force for European progress than representatives delegated from nine national parliaments.

A directly elected European Parliament can only be fully effective with the backing of European parties. The aim of the parties which are grouped together in the European Union of Christian-Democrats is a European centre people's party. To suit the situation it must be federalist in character, and its membership and inner commitment will be directed predominantly towards the real Utopia - the unification of Europe. The preparations for this unique step in party history are fully under way.

EUROPE AT A DEAD END

by Dr H. AIGNER¹

I. IS A BREAKTHROUGH STILL POSSIBLE?

Europe has not only reached a dead end but is faced with the loss of its unique identity. If it does not finally break out of the helplessness and lack of decision of an ingrained, nationalistic way of thinking and act to put into effect an indispensable, European policy, it will never win the race against time.

The Socialists and Communists of Europe are playing into Moscow's hands either consciously or unconsciously. At least since Oreanda, Moscow's policy towards Europe has undergone a complete change. The weakness and delusion of a German Federal Chancellor and his readiness to draw closer to the Socialistic society caused Moscow to change its strategy and tactics towards Europe. Whereas its policy was previously to prevent the process of European integration with all its means, it is now attempting gradually to infiltrate this process, to create a link between Comecon and the EEC, to create a power policy vacuum in Europe and thus to secure the hegemony of Moscow. The end would be a Brezhnev doctrine for the whole of Europe.

Moscow had to acknowledge that the European idea arose west of the Iron curtain. All surveys in recent years have shown an overwhelming majority of the European peoples in favour of the unification of Europe. Even the question which was put in France of whether the French population would welcome a European president if he was not French was answered in the affirmative by more than 60%.

The governments of Europe had also begun to fall in gradually with this will of our peoples. Thus, at Mr Pompidou's instigation, the declaration at the Paris Summit conference included the following words:

'the Heads of State or Government, having set themselves the major objective of transforming, before the end of the present decade and with the fullest respect for the Treaties already signed, the whole complex of the relations of Member States into a European Union, request the Institutions of the Community to draw up a report on this subject before the end of 1975 for submission to a Summit Conference.'

¹

We are publishing the first part of a paper given by Dr AIGNER at the meeting of the CSU working party on 'Germany and Ostpolitik' on 4 May in Bayreuth. For reasons of space this article will be continued in the next two issues.

Slowly, even the Gaullists began to modify their idea that they could aspire to the role of the leading European power, which they had maintained with such stubbornness. They realized that in this fight over the leadership of Europe, Europe was becoming increasingly powerless and the idea of a leading power would then have no further attraction.

What has changed since then? Gradually it has become clear that at all levels of European unification we have reached stagnation point and there is even a risk of a mood of resignation. The Yom Kippur war, the oil and currency crisis and not least the Copenhagen Summit conference of the Heads of State in December 1973 gave warning of the political bankruptcy of Europe despite the bombastic declarations.

An increased socialistic trend in the governments of the European Member States marks a development which we must analyse and fight against.

Because of the powerlessness of Europe, the idea is growing not only among youth but especially amongst the uncommitted members of our peoples, that little Europe has lost its fascination. In its place comes the idea of a greater Europe stretching from Lisbon to Vladivostock, accompanied by wild offers from Moscow.

Four-fifths of this huge territory - even without further expansion - would be under the dominance of Moscow. As the Soviet Union is still Communist and its ultimate objective is world revolution and - as the entry into Prague showed - because it is not particular about its military means, the hegemony of Moscow over the whole of Europe would be the outcome of an inevitable process.

