

'The Dublin meeting' from L'Europe en formation

Caption: On the eve of the Dublin European Council, held on 28 April 1990, the federalist journal L'Europe en formation questions the ability of the Twelve to react to the political upheaval in Eastern Europe and to the challenge of German reunification.

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The Dublin meeting

Editorial

Faced with the upheavals in Eastern Europe and with Germany's reunification priorities, is the European Community capable of responding to Jacques Delors' request to 'accelerate'? Can it be more than a 'common market' and embody a grand political ambition? At any rate, on 15 March the European Parliament supported British Labour MEP David Martin by a very large majority (213 in favour, 19 against, 8 abstentions) in calling for enlargement of the agenda for December's intergovernmental conference on European economic and monetary union.

The MEPs declared that it was 'increasingly necessary rapidly to transform the European Community into a European union of federal type', that 'even the current level of responsibilities entrusted to the Community require more effective and more democratic institutions', and that 'greater effectiveness of the institutions can be achieved notably by providing for systematic majority voting in the Council.' They asked for the following items to be included on the agenda for the intergovernmental conference:

- creation of economic and monetary union in accordance with a specific, automatic and mandatory timetable;
- better treaty provisions in the social and environmental sectors and incorporation into the treaty of provisions promoting a citizens' Europe;
- stronger powers for the Commission;
- reform of the own-resources system;
- new powers for Parliament of control and of co-decision with respect to Community legislation.

The intergovernmental conference should also consider the institutional future of Europe and instruct the European Parliament to 'finalise the draft constitution of the European Union in close cooperation with the national parliaments, meeting in a joint European Assembly designated the "assizes".'

An interinstitutional pre-conference will be convened in Strasbourg on 16 May. It should comprise representatives of the Council, Parliament (12 MEPs) and the Commission. Invitations were addressed to the Council and the Commission by the President of the European Parliament, Enrique Baron, on 22 March.

Mark Eyskens, Belgian Minister for Foreign Affairs, sent the governments of the Community a 'memorandum', which received immediate support from the Italian Government, in which he suggested, inter alia, that a qualified majority apply to all areas covered by the Treaty of Rome except for certain basic decisions of a constitutional nature; that the executive powers of the Commission be increased and its President elected by Parliament; that the European Parliament be given greater powers, at least in the legislative field; that the European Parliament be granted a right of initiative; and that provisions concerning the subsidiarity principle and human rights be incorporated in the Treaty.

Finally, Chancellor Kohl came to Brussels on 23 March and assured Jacques Delors and the members of the Commission that, although he still did not want — as Roland Dumas, the French Minister for Foreign Affairs, had proposed — to 'bring forward the date of the intergovernmental conference on monetary union, scheduled for December 1990, by six months', he nevertheless remained greatly attached to it. He also confirmed that his aim was still 'European political union'.

Undeniably, the ingredients for giving the Community fresh impetus are there, just as the issue of incorporating the whole of Germany into the Community is being raised. German monetary union will enter into force by the summer, no later than 1 July. Full integration of East Germany will require a transitional period of several years, as was the case for all the countries that have joined the European Community.

The reasons for taking new steps towards European Union from 1990 are obvious. Only if the Community is given fresh impetus will the differences that have arisen between Paris and Bonn concerning the 'intangibility' of the Oder-Neisse line and the subsequent visit to Paris, at the Élysée's initiative, of the Polish leaders and Oskar Lafontaine, who is running for Chancellor against Helmut Kohl, soon be just a bad memory. At least we must hope so, and François Mitterrand's televised address on 25 March, together with the statements by Richard von Weizsäcker, President of the Federal Republic, encourage us in that hope.

Meaningful acceleration also requires fresh political impetus towards the 'large European market'. Difficult issues are piling up on the Council's table, and the proportion of measures requiring unanimity is constantly increasing. It is significant that Peugeot CEO Jacques Calvet should admit that 'personally, I have never believed in 1993, and my view is strengthened by the slow pace at which we are moving', while, almost at the same time, someone as different as former German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, an advocate of a federal Europe like his friend Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, should state publicly that the East Germans' vote in favour of rapid unification is delaying creation of the single market.

So what kind of European Community do we want to build? The slow-moving Europe of the Single Act will no longer suffice. Will the exceptional summit meeting of the Twelve in Dublin on 28 April at last overcome the doubts and ambiguities? The countries of Central and Eastern Europe now looking towards the Community will quickly turn away unless it clearly indicates the path on which it intends to embark and the ways and means it will adopt in order to move forward.

L'Europe en formation