

'Little motivation to press ahead' from the Corriere della Sera (5 June 1992)


Caption: On 5 June 1992, the Italian daily newspaper Corriere della Sera leads with the efforts of the Member States of the European Communities to find a political solution following Denmark's refusal to ratify the Treaty on European Union.

Source: Corriere della Sera. 05.06.1992, n° 10. Milano: Corriere della Sera. "Vagi impegno ad andare avanti - Forse un nuovo referendum", p. 10.

Copyright: (c) Translation CVCE.EU by UNI.LU
All rights of reproduction, of public communication, of adaptation, of distribution or of dissemination via Internet, internal network or any other means are strictly reserved in all countries.
Consult the legal notice and the terms and conditions of use regarding this site.

URL:
http://www.cvce.eu/obj/little_motivation_to_press_ahead_from_the_corriere_della_sera_5_june_1992-en-c47477b0-a1e4-4b76-9a09-534ba12da077.html

Last updated: 05/07/2016



Little motivation to press ahead Is a new referendum on the cards?

From our correspondent

OSLO — Wounded to the core by the Danish referendum, the EEC is meeting in Oslo to find a response that has some political meaning, but is not managing to speak with sufficient credibility. What is being said very timidly, almost stammered out, is that the Maastricht agreements must be ratified by 11 Member States, that they cannot be changed and that Denmark must stay in the family.

It is an example of the law of contradiction, highlighting the impotence of a still traumatised European Community, one that is perhaps a slave to fear.

The European Foreign Ministers, meeting on the fringes of an Atlantic Council, could not send a weaker message to public opinion in their own countries. If Maastricht is to be saved, it is not enough for them simply to affirm in general terms their wish to press ahead. A solution has to be found to the legal muddle, brought about by the attitudes of Margrethe II's subjects, which may block further integration. *Raison d'état* may well be able to perform miracles, probably even imposing itself on the logic of international law. In this particular case, however, one country, Denmark, is stuck halfway in and halfway out of Europe. Is Denmark to be in or out in the future?

Contradictions down to chance — or not?

As we have already said, the law of contradiction has been discovered in Oslo. It is all too easy to support the ratification of the Maastricht agreements, without any change, by eleven Member States and to hope that Denmark continues to be a full member of Europe. Only if the Maastricht agreements are amended, even marginally, can Denmark repeat the referendum exercise to see whether it can stay in the family.

Rejecting any amendment will shut Denmark out. Obviously, there are doubts as to whether the contradictions are down to chance or whether they mask a substantive disagreement about how to react to the Danish rejection.

It may well be that those countries keenest to see Maastricht progress, such as France and Germany, have insisted on ratification by the eleven and also on the inviolability of the agreements. Shutting Denmark out is not an important issue for them. Other countries not sharing this view, such as the United Kingdom, might well have introduced the contradiction of a Denmark that must stay in the family.

Obviously, such a disagreement is no more than supposition. Facing a crowded press gallery, Jacques Delors and Joao de Deus Pinheiro, respectively President of the European Commission and President-in-Office of the Council of Ministers, stated that discussions in Oslo had been brief and that agreement had been easy to reach.

Without saying so openly, they may have wanted to lend force to the argument that the Danish rejection is no more than a passing incident. The European project born in Maastricht last December is too important to be jeopardised by a minority that may not have understood what is really at stake.

Slow reflexes

The truth is that the ministerial meeting in Oslo was impromptu and inadvisable. Europe is an animal with slow reflexes. The crisis that has opened up is serious not just because Denmark has refused to go along with the Maastricht approach, but also because doubts and fears have now been triggered in all the Member States, in France and Germany, in Ireland and Greece, and perhaps even in Belgium and the Netherlands.

Finding a response to these doubts and fears is impossible in three days of major confusion. Especially as the legal muddle, if unresolved, could become a nest of vipers.

Jacques Delors and Joao de Deus Pinheiro are an odd couple: Mr Delors with his sad and nervous face, aware of the seriousness of the moment. Mr de Deus Pinheiro, in the guise of a jolly Faust, with his beard and Latin eyes, keen to lend his weight to the law of contradiction.

Two faces of Europe: one rather knowing, only too well aware of the traps of the Community game, and the other, younger, Portuguese, and full of youthful enthusiasm.

Minor charades

Now that Denmark has decided to throw a spanner in the works, all these minor charades are possible. Nobody dares to think what will happen to Europe if, in France, Mitterrand's people are on the same wavelength as the Danish.

There is little to be happy about, Jacques Delors and Joao de Deus Pinheiro seemed to be saying, and we shall have to wait for the autumn to find out whether Maastricht is a reality or merely an illusion.

Arturo Guatelli