

'After Copenhagen, let's not lose any more time', from 30 jours d'Europe (January 1974)

Caption: In the January 1974 issue of the monthly publication 30 jours d'Europe, the Editor-in-Chief of the 'Agence Europe' press agency, Emanuele Gazzo, expresses his disappointment at the outcome of the Copenhagen European Summit (14 and 15 December 1973).

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After Copenhagen, let's not lose any more time

Emanuele Gazzo followed the Copenhagen Summit night and day and then the ministerial meeting that was held in its immediate aftermath in Brussels. Much could be expected of such an exceptional grouping of men holding such great powers. World public opinion had been mobilised. Were our hopes too high? In this article, Emanuele Gazzo, a tireless and dispassionate observer, cannot hide his disenchantment.

The Paris Summit was to be the start of a consolidation and enlargement process for European integration; the date of 31 December 1973 was to mark an important step, symbolised by the transition to a new stage of economic and monetary union. Yet this process had a more distant objective: European Union in 1980.

As Mr Pompidou, who had floated the idea, expressly stated, the Summit that was called for the end of 1973, and eventually held in Copenhagen on 14 and 15 December, was intended, first and foremost, to speed up political cooperation and to move us closer to the 1980 target. It was to be a 'new style' summit, so that, in future, such summits would tend to be referred to as 'presidential conferences'. It was to give the political impetus sometimes required to prompt the Community institutions to take decisions on particularly difficult subjects.

1973 has now been and gone, and we can see that the majority of the programme put forward at the Paris Summit has not been implemented. So what was the point of the recent Summit, both with regard to the current issues being dealt with and from the political perspective of European Union?

President Pompidou expressed his satisfaction. Mr Brandt declared that the Community had been under threat of breaking up and that avoiding such a break-up was, in itself, positive. The house certainly had not fallen down.

But we must not forget that circumstances are difficult, that Europe has to face up to serious political, economic and social problems and that a much more solid house is therefore needed. We were to reinforce it; we have weakened it. Faced with the danger of seeing it crumble, it is not inconceivable that each occupant will seek refuge elsewhere: the house will be deserted, a ruin from the past ...

No more separation of the economic and political spheres

Are we being too pessimistic? Undoubtedly. But the course taken by the Summit is disconcerting for observers.

First of all, from a 'technical' point of view, the 'fireside chat' where nine leaders could have looked one another straight in the eye and taken two or three fundamental decisions was turned into a complex negotiation in the style of Council meetings, psychologically dominated by the presence in the city of a delegation from the Arab League. It could be predicted — and we did indeed predict — that circumstances would lead the Summit to take a detailed look at the energy problem, but this outside presence was a disturbance. More serious still, the prospects of recession, if not of an economic crisis triggered by the energy crisis, influenced attitudes profoundly. Each side called for solidarity whilst brandishing the threat of isolation. Solidarity is the cornerstone of the Community, and it must be total if it is to be credible. It must be total, first and foremost, in the economic sphere, where there is integration. But it must also be total in the political sphere, since, as Mr Ortoli stressed in his letter to the Presidents, the economic and political spheres can no longer be separated.

It was vital that this political will to demonstrate solidarity should emerge from the Summit, because we are a Community, and it is in hardship that cohesion is put to the test. This needed to be set out in a few specific statements. No such statements were made. This leads us to make an observation that is somewhat comforting. The fears of 'collusion' between two or three leaders have proven to be unfounded. The much-vaunted 'bilateral summits' do not appear to have been very fruitful. The small countries can derive some satisfaction from this, but only small satisfaction, because the Community mechanisms do not, at least not yet, 'compensate' for the disagreements between the big countries.

The only point on which the prior agreement of the big countries could be secured, even if this was not expressed in the final declaration, concerns the frequency and regularity of Summits. The Final Declaration merely states that the Presidents will meet more frequently and that it is for the country holding the Presidency to convene such meetings. However, six-monthly meetings will become almost inevitable, as Germany has already declared that it will issue invitations for a meeting in May/June and France for a meeting in late 1974. 'If someone wanted to be different', added Mr Jobert, 'and not send an invitation, then too bad!'

On the other hand, agreement could not be reached between Mr Pompidou, Mr Heath, Mr Brandt and Mr Rumor on a common approach to energy policy. Agreement could not be reached on the endowment (or even the order of magnitude) of the Regional Development Fund. As a result, agreement could not be reached on the implementation of the decisions taken at the Paris Summit. Community orthodoxy is respected, as it is the role of the institutions to take the appropriate decisions on these subjects. But where is the political impetus? We know that the institutions can function only if:

- (a) they have a political impetus, where unanimity would at all events be necessary, as well as for 'new' actions,
- (b) they are able to take a majority decision in most cases,
- (c) they enjoy the support of the peoples, i.e. an elected Parliament.

The Summit did not achieve its aims or fulfil its entire mandate. There was no real act of courage or imagination. The most important result, represented by the instructions given in the annex on 'Energy', must still be treated with caution as, when the Council has to debate measures to ensure the orderly functioning of the common market in energy, there will inevitably be differences of opinion between the Ministers responsible about the actual meaning of *orderly functioning*.

Europe does not yet have a government

Undoubtedly, each of our countries goes through difficult times, and it becomes necessary to arbitrate between different ideologies and interests. However, political and governmental structures make it possible to carry out such arbitration at any given time, to overcome disagreements and differences, to enforce sacrifices, which are presumably shared around equally. This is government. Europe does not yet have a government. It had been hoped that the Summits would provide an 'embryonic' government, but the experiment has not yet proven conclusive.

The events surrounding the Regional Development Fund are typical. It is not conceivable that, in a Community which is moving towards becoming an economic and monetary union (and, subsequently, a full Union), the necessary arbitration cannot be carried out in order to help to reduce the regional disparities that exist in the Community. However, that is what happened. Since the Summit did not succeed (or perhaps did not even try), how can we think that the Council will be successful?

The root is political

The failure of the Council on 18 December was inevitable. The specious argument that the prospects of economic recession undermine a regional aid policy devised in a period of economic growth was contested by Mr Ortoli himself; Europe cannot be created simply by adapting to the economic situation. Everyone knows that, in the event of recession, the most disadvantaged regions will suffer most; they will have to bear the burden of thousands of unemployed people. Having said that, those who claim that it is not possible to 'make State policy and then asks for money from the Community budget' are not wrong. So we return to the root of all the problems, which is political.

It will be argued that this is why Europe has finally defined its own identity. It is the first step on the path towards the creation of a genuine political union. The document on identity is, indeed, important, and every pupil in the schools of the Nine should be advised to read it. However, identity presupposes the individual, and

the individual has its own organisation, its own structure. But the definition of identity includes only the intention to create structures. That is not enough.

Does this mean that all hope should be abandoned? Of course not! We must be aware of the considerable difficulties that exist and work to overcome them. Mr Ortoli expressed this very well: ‘The Commission has certainly not allowed itself to be disheartened. Nor have I. We shall fight to win ...’ We must, therefore, fight, organise ourselves, mobilise all the prime movers, concentrate our effort on issues where breakthroughs can be made but, at the same time, begin the battle everywhere. You, the citizens, are Europe.

However, the final communiqué from the Summit includes a glimmer of hope and a possibility for some action. Paragraph 2 states that the Presidents have decided to speed up the necessary work to define the European Union, which they made their primary objective at the Paris Conference. They called on the Presidency to submit appropriate proposals to that end without delay. We have already lost one year; let us not lose any more time. Chancellor Brandt, who had defined an advanced European position in his address to the European Parliament and who will be President-in-Office from 1 January, has already announced his intention to devote himself to this task. He also used the words ‘European government’. He said that his proposal would essentially relate to procedure. We have waited a year for an effective procedure for 1975.

Is it helpful for the institutions to move forward in a disorganised fashion, each drawing up proposals that might be contradictory, that are undoubtedly incomplete, while it is not known who will collate the proposals?

Agreement must be reached as soon as possible in order to give one institution the leadership in this preparatory work. It would seem logical for this leadership to be taken by the European Parliament, possibly strengthened by the support of national political forces. Having the leadership does not mean working alone, but consulting one another. It is not inconceivable that an ‘initial report’ on the method will be submitted in five or six months; this could be the subject of an in-depth debate at the next Summit, and that Summit would then give instructions for proceeding further. This parallel but ultimately convergent effort would enable conclusions to be reached very quickly, based both on the expression of the will of the prime movers in Europe and on the well-considered assessment of the most senior leaders.

And this would be the justification for the Summits.

Emanuele Gazzo