

'The four giants of the European electronics industry commit to Eureka' from Le Monde (27 June 1985)

Caption: On 27 June 1985, the eve of the meeting of the Ten in Milan, the French daily newspaper Le Monde gives an overview of the issues to appear on the agenda of the summit of Heads of States and Governments.

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The four giants of the European electronics industry commit to Eureka

Europe's four leading electronics groups, Siemens (FRG), Philips (Netherlands), General Electric (United Kingdom) and Thomson (France) have agreed to collaborate on a range of projects under Eureka, notably on strategic components. In a joint statement, these four companies declared that 'the Eureka programme has the potential to be an essential factor in enabling Europe to address the technology challenge'. Following the signing of an agreement between Matra and the Norwegian company Norsk Data, this collaboration brings powerful support for the project from the industry on the eve of the European Council in Milan.

A few weeks ago, preparations were under way, in Paris and in the other capitals, for the Milan Summit scheduled to be held on Friday 28 June to mark the birth of a new stage in the European integration. The report presented by Mr Maurice Faure, albeit couched in moderate terms, gave every reason for hope that this would be the case.

But the heads of state and government, together with the prime ministers of Spain and Portugal attending as observers, will be meeting in the Lombardy capital with their enthusiasm markedly dampened by the Community's recent difficulties and by the clear reticence of some of the parties. And, if any of them ventured to make a prediction using a film title, whilst it might not quite be *12 Angry Men*, it certainly wouldn't be *Miracle in Milan* either. This almost superstitious determination not to anticipate any huge step forward for Europe during the Council and to defer in advance any hope the EEC making of a 'qualitative leap forward' for the EEC *a priori* towards a European Union is particularly apparent on the French side.

But Paris expects this Summit to do one important thing at least and that is to place the Community's seal of approval on the Eureka project. After a disappointing start particularly at the Summit of the major industrial nations held from 2-4 May of this year in Bonn, things do not look quite so bad now. Chancellor Kohl has just confirmed his interest in the European project and the American SDI project to Christian-Democrat Members of the Bundestag. It is true that Roland Dumas has buckled down to the task with that quiet, even silent efficiency which is probably his preferred style. Mr Claude Arnaud, diplomatic advisor to the French Government, was dispatched on a round of talks with the Twelve and to the Brussels Commission. Useful contacts have also been forged outside the EEC, particularly with the Scandinavians. Ministerial meetings have been held, and others are scheduled for just before the Summit opens.

But France wants the project to be presented as more than just a pooling, inside and, sometimes, outside the EEC, of some of Europe's technical and industrial resources.

Mr Mitterrand plans to make it plain that the 'Old Continent' needs to coordinate theoretical and applied research far better than it has done to date. He will be putting a proposal to his partners for the foundation of a European university and a European academy of science and technology, whilst further efforts can be made towards the harmonisation of education and training and qualifications. He will stress that the challenge which Europe faces, in competition with the Americans and Japanese, is not simply a financial challenge but one of the intellect, of the mind.

Can a venture of this kind be taken further with any chance of success if it is not, at the same time, a political undertaking? The French do not think so. For this reason, the sudden modesty of the institutional ambitions announced just ahead of the Milan Summit must not be seen as a renunciation of the President's view that a European Union is more necessary than ever before. A recent memorandum, drawn up with a view to the forthcoming European Council, lists under a number of 'chapter headings' the four areas in which action is required in the months ahead, in the form of an initial outline of a major political entity: 'Building a Europe of technology, pressing on with a People's Europe, completing an economic and social Europe, and laying the foundation for a European Union.'

It is, in fact, the many reservations expressed, certainly by the Greeks and Danes but primarily by the

British, during and after the work of the Dooge Committee set up last year which have led Paris to conclude that the process needed to achieve that end will undoubtedly take longer and be trickier than the Elysée, along with Rome or Bonn, had first thought. London's position, ably set out by Sir Geoffrey Howe in recent months, is paradoxically deemed worrying by the most committed 'pro-Europeans'. Paradoxically, because the Foreign Secretary repeatedly says that the United Kingdom's greatest wish, like that of Mr Delors – and whose *communautaire* credentials could be better? – is to see the single market completed, and that, on other pending issues, such as technology or institutional reform, the UK is more than willing, as well, to be part of a (preferably large-scale) committee which would take the time necessary to do a good job.

British trump cards

The fear in Paris is that the aim may, in fact, be to defer the hoped-for reforms for a few years, for an excellent reason (because France is not at all hostile either to completion of the single market, quite the contrary) and with the involuntary assistance of one of these 'cover-up committees' referred to in earlier times by Clemenceau. But other partners of the United Kingdom might be tempted to think that, after all, taking Mrs Thatcher and her Minister at their word might enable the Community to move forward faster, something which, not to use institutional language, would mean equally decisive progress on the part of the Ten, who had now become Twelve ... So the British 'hand' is not altogether a weak one.

In order to take account of this the French, on reflection, are not keen to come out unequivocally in favour of an immediate intergovernmental conference on the subject, one with a specific mandate. In this they differ from the Italians, and they are not reacting as Mr Maurice Faure had hoped. Paris thinks that some Community Member States are likely to prefer not to take part for the time being, something which would augur badly for the hoped-for 'union'. The Elysée's verdict is substantially 'yes' to the conference, but only after agreement has been reached on the main issues.

To that end, the focus in Milan and during subsequent weeks will be on 'multiple bilateralism' (rather than the 'multilateralism' suggested by the British), using a rather persuasive formula currently doing the rounds at the Quai d'Orsay. The West Germans, for their part, are getting ready to offer their partners a formula less formal than an intergovernmental conference, one which would allow for largely clearing the ground ahead of the next European Council which is scheduled for early December 1985 in Luxembourg. This would entail the formation, by 15 July, of a committee of personal representatives of each of the heads of state or government of the Ten plus, as observers, representatives of the Prime Ministers of Spain and Portugal. Its remit would be to consider a number of specific ways in which European cooperation could make rapid progress in several areas: regulations and standards, planning, enterprise cooperation, liberalisation of services, vocational training, etc. An initial review of their work would have to be conducted in mid-August.

This Bonn proposal, as yet secret but to be put forward in Milan barring any last-minute difficulties, clearly does not fully allay the concerns of those for whom no substantial progress is conceivable at the current stage of the Community's development unless it includes transition to a Union; the include the European Parliament and its President, Mr Pierre Pflimlin, who will be attending the Milan Summit (*see also his appeal to the Ten*). But one advantage of the proposal is that it will prevent these people from being overly disappointed, and it should receive the endorsement of France.

France is currently emphasising the need to improve existing institutional mechanisms in the hope of better things to come, either by amending the Treaty of Rome slightly or at least by getting a number of decisions adopted by the European Council, preferably with the blessing of the Strasbourg Parliament. In particular, according to the Elysée's memorandum, 'more frequent use might be made' of majority voting, and those opposed might be encouraged to abstain rather than voting against. Those abstaining might, in some cases, be excused from certain obligations (though they would, of course, forfeit certain rights). Paris would also like to see the Council adopting the title of 'Council of the European Union' – even before the Union's structure and powers are framed in law – and being assisted by a general secretariat to ensure continuity.

A People's Europe

As for a 'People's Europe', thought will be given to this, too, on the basis of the report presented to the Foreign Ministers of the Ten in Luxembourg recently on 19 June by the other committee set up last year in Fontainebleau. This report sets out a number of measures which might increase a European awareness amongst the peoples concerned and make the Community more a part of their daily lives (*Le Monde* of 25 June). France is especially keen to emphasise the question of languages and youth exchanges. It is possible that it may advocate the creation of a European Youth Office which would organise exchanges rather along the lines of the Franco-German Office for Youth or the Franco-Quebecois Youth Office.

The Milan European Council is the first for a long time which will not be dominated by an imperative need to find answers to an immediate technical problem, such as the budget question or the dismantling of monetary compensatory amounts in earlier years and, more recently, enlargement. The general consensus, especially in Paris, is that this does not mean that we should expect miracles from it. There is even less reason to do that since, this time, the Summit will be touching, however lightly, on matters of essential importance often obscured on previous occasions by the battles over figures, namely the very nature of the Europe that we wish to create. But, if he cannot come back with the promise of union, Mr Mitterrand does not intend to leave Milan empty-handed. The account of preparations for the Summit which Mr Dumas gave his government colleagues this Wednesday morning during the Council of Ministers meeting may, despite the moderate tone of its conclusions, give his President cause for optimism.

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