

## 'A new phase of political cooperation?' from Europe (9 September 1981)

**Caption:** In his editorial of 9 September 1981, Emanuele Gazzo, Director of Agence Europe, explains the issues surrounding the ambitious plan for European Political Cooperation.

**Source:** Europe. Dir. of publ. Riccardi, Lodovico ; REditor Riccardi, Ferdinando. 09.09.1981, No 3202. Brussels.

**Copyright:** (c) Agence Europe S.A.

**URL:** [http://www.cvce.eu/obj/a\\_new\\_phase\\_of\\_political\\_cooperation\\_from\\_europe\\_9\\_september\\_1981-en-61ebcc7b-fd4d-4e98-aca3-1c771010bfbe.html](http://www.cvce.eu/obj/a_new_phase_of_political_cooperation_from_europe_9_september_1981-en-61ebcc7b-fd4d-4e98-aca3-1c771010bfbe.html)

**Publication date:** 16/09/2012

## A new phase of political cooperation?

The blueprint Lord Carrington has had on his drawing board for some time for tuning up the workings of European political cooperation, bringing it more into the Community's institutional framework (greater involvement of the European Commission and the elected Parliament) and extending its scope to cover security issues — which does not necessarily mean defence as such — has entered a phase of practical implementation following this weekend's talks at Brocket Hall (see yesterday's Political Day).

At the planned ministerial political cooperation meeting in October, a formal decision will most likely be taken. It could take the form of a third paper to follow on from that issued in Luxembourg (October 1970) and a second issued in Copenhagen (July 1973) establishing the “charta” which forms the basis of political cooperation.

Everyone knows that this is not a Copernican change but will mean modest but pragmatic adjustments to present practices, which will in no way alter the inter-governmental nature of political cooperation or introduce any new objectives, particularly as regards a common foreign policy.

However, this policy of taking “small steps forward” could be very useful to the European cause — and we say so in all sincerity — on two conditions. The first is that the small steps are always turned in the right direction and that there are no big gaps between one step and the next (the first report, come to be known as the Davignon Report, now goes back eleven years!). The second condition is that it must always be borne in mind that this approach is nothing more than a temporary make-shift and any favourable opportunity to make the great leap forward needed should be seized.

The danger of solutions such as this is that they might lead the public to believe that major progress has been made and act as a “soporific”. Even MPs might be misled and become satisfied. By their very nature, they are sensitive to this way of doing things since they know that the public can be easily led, i.e. judges Europe and its efficiency on the basis of verbal statements made as to what Europe is promising to do in international politics and what can be easily discussed “at the local”. In other words, the general public “demands” of Europe that it makes its voice heard and, if possible, influences events, be it in the Israeli-Palestinian dispute, putting that insolent Colonel Gadhafi in his place, pacifying Namibia, protecting Poland or even preventing the superpowers from plunging Europe into a nuclear apocalypse. There are even more examples that could be given, some of them contradictory to those mentioned above. The only thing is that there comes a time when we start to realise, given present circumstances, that Europe, already so slow when it has to come up with a firm joint stand on any issue, is generally not able to get it accepted. At the very most, all we hear is whispered tributes. It is then that disappointment sets in and the curses start to fly about the impossibility of building a credible Europe.

In other words, there must be no encouraging false appearances. The most ambitious objectives must be held high but, as such, they call for adequate means to fit the bill. This is what must be patiently explained to the public. It has to be explained that Europe will be able to play a role the day it achieves consistency in its institutions and Community policies which make it a political entity, in the fullest sense of the word.

We have highlighted this question on several occasions and were pleased to hear that the European Parliament's number one, Mrs Veil, warned her colleagues against jumping the gun, reminding them that “political cooperation would no longer have any credibility if it were not founded on a strong economic Community” (Political Day, p. 4 of yesterday). We have to keep pressing the matter and we will do so. Especially as there is increasing talk of breathing new life into Europe. Think back to early May 1981. The Bonn correspondent of a French newspaper noted that Bonn at that time was impatiently awaiting the re-election of Mr Giscard d'Estaing, so that the work of giving Europe new life could start. This would be done in agreement with London and along the lines of the “signal from Stuttgart” contained in the appeal issued by Mr Genscher for European Union. Mr Genscher has now issued his appeal again. As for Mr Mitterrand, due in London on Thursday, he has promised to bring up the question of new life for Europe on 24 September. Things are starting to move. But in what direction?

Emanuele Gazzo