

Conclusions of the Strasbourg European Council: extract concerning the CEECs (8 and 9 December 1989)

Caption: At the end of the Strasbourg European Council held on 8 and 9 December 1989, the Heads of State or Government of the Twelve welcome the political changes under way in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEECs) and approve the principle of establishing a European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD).

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Strasbourg European Council (8 and 9 December 1989) Conclusions of the Presidency

[...]

Countries of central and eastern Europe

The Community's dynamism and influence make it the European entity to which the countries of Central and Eastern Europe now refer, seeking to establish close links. The Community has taken and will take the necessary decisions to strengthen its co-operation with peoples aspiring to freedom, democracy and progress and with States which intend their founding principles to be democracy, pluralism and the rule of law. It will encourage the necessary economic reforms by all the means at its disposal, and will continue its examination of the appropriate forms of association with the countries which are pursuing the path of economic and political reform. The Community's readiness and its commitment to co-operation are central to the policy which it is pursuing and which is defined in the declaration adopted today; the objective remains, as stated in the Rhodes Declaration, that of overcoming the divisions of Europe.

1. The Community has concluded Trade Agreements and, for the most part, Co-operation Agreements with Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland. The Agreement with the USSR should be signed by the end of this year. The Council will, as soon as possible, instruct the Commission to negotiate a Trade and Co-operation Agreement with the GDR to be concluded during the first half of 1990.

The European Council welcomes the decisions taken by the Council (General Affairs) on 27 November 1989 temporarily granting Poland and Hungary special trade facilities in order to contribute towards solving their specific political and economic problems.

It noted the decisions taken by the Community to assist economic reform in Poland and Hungary.

The Community took part, in co-operation with its main Western partners, in an operation to supply agricultural products to Poland. In view of the scale and urgency of the needs, the European Council would ask the Council to take a decision in the near future on a further such operation.

2. At their meeting in Paris on 18 November 1989, the Heads of State and of Government asked the Troika of Presidencies and the Commission to make progress in discussion and decision-taking with regard to the following:

- the European Council approved the principle of granting observer status to the USSR in GATT;
- the Commission has submitted proposals designed to allow nationals of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe to take part in a number of educational and training programmes similar to Community programmes; the European Council requests the Council to take the relevant decisions;
- the European Council calls upon the Council to take, at the beginning of 1990, the requisite decisions for the setting up of a European Vocational Training Foundation, on the basis of proposals which the Commission is to submit;
- the European Council approved the creation of a European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. Its aim will be to promote, in consultation with the IMF and the World Bank, productive and competitive investment in the States of Central and Eastern Europe, to reduce, where appropriate, any risks related to the financing of their economies, to assist the transition towards a more market-orientated economy and to speed up the necessary structural adjustments. The States of Central and Eastern Europe concerned will be able to participate in the capital and management of this Bank, in which the Member States, the Community and the European Investment Bank will have a majority holding. Other countries, and in particular the other member countries of the OECD, will be invited to participate. The European Council hopes that the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development will be set up as soon as possible. The European Council requests that

the necessary steps be taken to ensure that negotiations are opened in January 1990. The European Investment Bank will play a key role in preparing the way for this new Institution.

3. The European Council confirmed the Community's readiness to participate, under the conditions defined at the meeting on 18 November, in the creation of a Stabilization Fund for Poland. It emphasized that the combined contributions of the Twelve would provide more than half the resources of the Fund, which is to receive 1 000 million dollars. The European Council referred to the need to grant Hungary, after agreement with the IMF, an adjustment loan of the same amount.

It called upon the Council to take an early decision on the Commission proposals.

4. The European Council confirmed the key importance it attaches to the fact that aid and co-operation projects decided on by Western countries should be as complementary as possible. It reaffirmed the need to maintain and strengthen the procedure established by the Community. It expects the forthcoming ministerial meeting of the 24 Western countries on 13 December to take the necessary substantive and procedural decisions to ensure that the efforts undertaken to facilitate the transition taking place in Poland and Hungary and possibly in other countries of Central and Eastern Europe are co-ordinated and effective.

5. The European Council is following carefully and with interest the important reforms planned in Yugoslavia and confirms the Community's undertaking to examine - once the agreement with the Monetary Fund is concluded - additional measures in support of the programme for improving that country's economic and financial situation.

[...]

Declaration on central and eastern Europe

Each day in central and eastern Europe change is asserting itself more strongly. Everywhere a powerful aspiration toward freedom, democracy, respect of human rights, prosperity, social justice and peace is being expressed. The people are clearly showing their will to take their own destiny in hand and to choose the path of their development. Such a profound and rapid development would not have been possible without the policy of openness and reform led by Mr. Gorbachev.

Expressing the feelings of the people of the whole Community, we are deeply gladdened by the changes taking place. These are historic events and no doubt the most important since the Second World War. The success of a strong and dynamic European Community, the vitality of the CSCE process and stability in the area of security, in which the United States and Canada participate, have contributed greatly to them.

These changes give reason to hope that the division in Europe can be overcome in accordance with the aims of the Helsinki Final Act which seeks, through a global and balanced approach and on the basis of a set of principles which retain their full value, to establish new relations between European countries whether in the area of security, economic and technical cooperation, or the human dimension.

We seek the strengthening of the state of peace in Europe in which the German people will regain its unity through free self-determination. This process should take place peacefully and democratically, in full respect of the relevant agreements and treaties and of all the principles defined by the Helsinki Final Act, in a context of dialogue and East-West cooperation. It also has to be placed in the perspective of European Integration.

Already the hopes which we expressed a year ago in the Rhodes Declaration have begun to take shape. The progress recorded in the negotiations on conventional and chemical disarmament, the greater freedom of movement of persons and ideas, the greater assurance of respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the different agreements concluded between the Community and certain of these countries are substantially changing the climate of relations in Europe.

The European Council is convinced in the present circumstances that all must, more than ever, demonstrate their sense of responsibility. The changes and transitions which are necessary must not take place to the detriment of the stability of Europe but rather must contribute to strengthening it.

Far from wanting to derive unilateral advantages from the present situation, the Community and its member States mean to give their support to the countries which have embarked upon the road to democratic change. They deplore all the more so that in certain countries this process is still hindered.

The Community and its member States are fully conscious of the common responsibility which devolves on them in this decisive phase in the history of Europe. They are prepared to develop with the USSR and the other countries of central and eastern Europe, and with Yugoslavia, in so far as they are committed to this path, closer and more substantive relations based upon an intensification of political dialogue and increased cooperation in all areas. The Community has in particular decided to support the economic reforms undertaken in these countries by contributing -in collaboration with its western partners- to the establishment of healthy and prosperous economies within the framework of appropriate structures.

The European Council has drawn up conclusions which illustrate this intention.

For the future and in accordance with the developments taking place, the Community is willing to implement still closer forms of cooperation with these countries.

At this time of profound and rapid change, the Community is and must remain a point of reference and influence. It remains the cornerstone of a new European architecture and, in its will to openness, a mooring for a future European equilibrium. This equilibrium will be still better ensured by a parallel development of the role of the Council of Europe, EFTA and the CSCE process.

Construction of the Community must therefore go forward: the building of European Union will permit the further development of a range of effective and harmonious relations with the other countries of Europe.

[...]