

'The completion of the large market is mainly a political question' from Europe (4. February 1988)

Caption: In his editorial of 4 February 1988, Emanuele Gazzo, Chief Editor of Agence Europe, emphasises that the collective political will of the Member States of the European Community is a prerequisite for the attainment of the economic objectives of the Twelve.

Source: Europe. Dir. of publ. Riccardi, Lodovico ; REditor Riccardi, Ferdinando. 04.02.1988, No 4714. Brussels.

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URL:

http://www.cvce.eu/obj/the_completion_of_the_large_market_is_mainly_a_political_question_from_europe_4_february_1988-en-e4468229-16a4-4683-8aed-24189afc817f.html

Publication date: 17/09/2012

The completion of the large market is mainly a political question

The restricted group made up of leaders of large European industries constituted within the “Round Table of European Industrialists” has just been meeting in Brussels, under the Presidency of Dr W. Dekker (Philips International), who has taken over from the Swede Mr G. Gyllenhammar (Volvo). The members of this Internal Market Support Committee were able, among other things, to talk to the Vice-President of the Commission, Lord Cockfield, about the state of advancement of the work regarding the “White Paper” on completing the Internal Market. Work is undertaken (see the Council’s work programme on pages 7 and 8 of this Bulletin) and has been since 1 July 1987, using the procedures set out in the Single Act, particularly articles 6 and 7 and articles 13 and the ones which follow.

It should be recalled that Dr Dekker, who in January 1985 launched the programme “Europe 1990: An agenda for action”, which we wrote about in our Editorial of 14-15/1/1985, was one of the pioneers of the movement which involved European enterprise encouraging the Community to make the qualitative leap essential if it is to face up to world economic and political changes once a real unified European area is created.

It is significant — and it would be surprising if the forthcoming Summit did not take this into account — that men like Dekker and others realise that this qualitative leap is more necessary than ever and that the rapid implementation of the Delors Plan is one of its conditions. For a long time, business circles have been becoming increasingly worried and have been calling for the institutional reforms necessary in order to attain the objectives which are of prime interest to them. In fact several months ago, the President of UNICE, Mr Ratjen noted that up to now, “Member states were not sufficiently turned towards Europe in order to find solutions to the improvement of their economies” and he asked that integration be advanced. These men, who are living and working in a real world, and who seek the global effectiveness of the system, without being influenced by ideological prejudices or national nostalgia, realise increasingly day by day that if the most visible obstacle to the creation of a single market is the existence of twelve old-fashioned bureaucratic systems which cling on to the little power they have, so that Europe is not created in a detrimental way for them, the real obstacle lies elsewhere and it is of a political nature. It is no longer enough to demolish frontiers using technical methods, since hindrances will doubtless arise again, in other guises. The solution can be only political, and result in a convergence of wills resolved to go over and above the national framework.

This collective political will has not been present up to now and it is difficult to see how it will stem from the initiative of national States, which are not suicidal by vocation. This is why those who believe that it is necessary, must address public opinion, to mobilise it and also the legitimate representatives of citizens, who sit in the European Parliament. One day Lord Cockfield, who is confronted by these problems daily, said bluntly that an integrated internal market includes the transformation of the sort of relations between the Member states and this the passage from the concept of “national sovereignty” to that of “shared exercise of sovereignty”. If we really want to get rid of twelve national regulations which are often contradictory, it will be vital to replace them by a thirteenth, which is simple and clear, and equal for all, and which at the same time will characterise the European identity, making this continent not an isolated and fragmented entity, but a united and dynamic one, able to take charge of the factors about which the Labour leader Kinnock expresses concern (see today’s PD, page 3). The Delors Plan supplies — though without attempting to deform the ideas of the Heads of Governments — the technical means, but there must be a political authority which controls them. It is simply an illusion to believe that once the large market has been created, everything will be alright and that the European institutions will only play the role of conservation and observation. Today is never equal to tomorrow: Europe must be governed every day. No civilisation has affirmed itself nor developed without strong institutions which rely — in one way or another — on the support of its citizens.

Emanuele Gazzo