

'Where to now?' from Die Zeit (2 December 1994)

Caption: On 2 December 1994, the German weekly newspaper Die Zeit speculates as to the reasons for the renewed rejection by the Norwegian people, consulted in a referendum, of Norway's accession to the European Communities.

Source: Die Zeit. 02.12.1994, n° 49. Hamburg. "In welche Richtung?", auteur:Buhl, Dieter , p. 5.

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The EU is complete for the time being. Without Norway

Where to now?

By Dieter Buhl

We should not be overly disappointed by the Norwegian ‘No’ vote. Its refusal to join will not hinder the European Union, nor will it be the downfall of the land in the far North. The result of the referendum is a blemish, nothing more. At the same time, it shows very clearly that the appeal of an organised Europe is relative: not all European nations are rushing to be part of the EU system. Admittedly, Norway is isolating itself with its veto, mainly because all of its Scandinavian neighbours are now looking towards Brussels.

The unequivocal rejection is possibly even better than a narrow ‘Yes’ vote would have been. Norway, divided into a pro-European and an anti-European camp, would have been the last straw for the Union. It already has enough Member States who are in two minds on the issue of Europe.

The Union is now complete with its three newcomers Austria, Finland and Sweden, at least until further notice. But is the good ship Europe equipped for a 15-strong crew and for full speed ahead? The Commission President, Jacques Delors, recently complained in an interview in *Der Spiegel* about the ‘objective contradiction’ between the goals of the widening and the deepening of the Union.

It is true that, if the enlargement takes place on 1 January, deepening does not have much of a future. Three obstacles already stand in the way of progress: from Italy, through France to the United Kingdom, major EU governments’ ability to act is drastically limited, either because it is nearing its end or because of permanent weakness.

The EU institutions have always been overburdened and inflexible. Such failings will become even more obvious in future. Public debate over the *raison d'être* of European community is becoming more and more common, and it has been so in the United Kingdom and Denmark for some time; now France is beginning to mumble too, and Germany may start soon. The Community has often had to cope with creaking institutions and with fainthearted Member State governments. But what might pose more of a threat to cohesion is the temptation posed by nationalism, which has been on the increase everywhere since the period of upheaval in Europe in 1989. These doubts about Europe, expressed increasingly often, give the impression that the original idea and subsequent aims of the unification process are now failing to convince. Yet they are now more important than ever.

Underpinning *peace* between Germany and France was the strongest motivation for the Community’s founding fathers. History has rewarded their efforts: the traditional hostility between Germany and France has disappeared following such achievements as the Internal Market and political cooperation. But the example of Yugoslavia shows that war in Europe is a possibility again. The Balkans are a warning and should make it crystal clear, even to europolitical sceptics such as the old and the more recent nationalists, that peace in Europe is possible only through a close interweaving of the interests and wishes of its nations.

Western Europe’s *prosperity and social security* are not least the result of cooperation within the Community. The proof of its success lies in its imitators. The North American Free Trade Association (NAFTA) and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) are now its chief challengers. The EU is still at the top of the international league for political integration and free-market trading, but the same cannot be said for its economic dynamism, intellectual mobility and innovation. Competition is getting tougher. That is why Europe needs a period of expansion, needs to join the 21st century. Yet this cannot be done if each nation stands alone. If it is to be successful, a united Europe must pool all its creative powers.

Jean Monnet, that visionary, saw a united Europe as a ‘force for peace in the world’. The world could certainly do with some help at the moment. But the Union still carries no weight in conflict prevention. Its hesitation in the Balkans merely emphasises its shortcomings in this area. Perhaps the neutral newcomers will be able to persuade the EU to step up their diplomatic and humanitarian efforts under the banner of the

EU. This would not only be a blessing to the wider world, it would also improve the EU's image.

But before it can take a great leap forward into the world, Brussels must first decide where it is going. Economic and Monetary Union? Free Trade Association? Federation? Core Europe? Concentric circles? These and other symbols are harbingers of many a future argument on general principles. This will reach its peak at the latest at the 1996 Intergovernmental Conference. Until then, it remains to be seen whether the widening and deepening of the Union really are incompatible.