

‘Copenhagen: the failure of the twelve headed Europe’, from L’Europe en formation

Caption: In its autumn 1987 edition, the federalist journal L'Europe en formation analyses the reasons for the failure of the Copenhagen European Council of 4 and 5 December 1987 on the adoption of the Delors Package.

Source: L'Europe en formation. Automne 1987, n° 269. Nice. "Copenhague: échec de l'Europe à douze têtes", p. 3-5.

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Copenhagen: the failure of the twelve-headed Europe

Editorial

The 'Delors Plan', far from enjoying unanimity with the supreme jury of the Twelve, sparked divisions amongst them at the Copenhagen European Council of 4 and 5 December, so much so that, for the first time, they have gone home after having publicly acknowledged their failure. A catch-up session is therefore scheduled to be held in Brussels in February. So the Danish Presidency comes to a close with a return to the 'provisional twelfths'. But the European Community is now used to these expedients ... Once again it will have to make do, but the situation is made worse by the fact that this financial year is ending with a 'hole' of six billion ECUs in the budget!

In some quarters, especially in the media, there has been criticism that the Europeans have displayed their weakness precisely when Gorbachev and Reagan, the nuclear superpower figureheads on whose moods our future depends, are preparing for an historic encounter that should symbolise a major shift in international relations. The contrast is particularly striking given that while the substance of the 'Delors Plan' (the role of MGQs, or 'maximum guaranteed quantities' that are supposed to control agricultural expenditure) is, it has to be said, quite tedious, the Washington Summit is dealing with the noblest and most fascinating subjects in the eyes of international public opinion: disarmament and peace.

Once again we have had to admit with some resentment that the fate of the world has been played out over the heads of the Europeans who are engrossed in domestic problems that they are incapable of resolving. While it is true, as Delors said, that in Copenhagen they went 'seventy-five per cent' of the way towards an agreement, it is wholly regrettable that they did not stay twenty-four hours longer in the Danish capital so as to try to achieve a positive outcome, whatever the 'Iron Lady' might think!

'Europe needs crises,' François Mitterrand remarked philosophically, 'in order to realise that, unless it takes control of its problems, it will lose its way!'

This situation is all the more farcical since the current crisis is a truly petty one. It is clear that Mrs Thatcher, who can be very stubborn when it comes to the cost of the common agricultural policy or the United Kingdom budget rebate, is also deeply averse to any major increase in the Community budget, even though the Community was set up so that its members could deal together with challenges affecting them all. It is no less obvious that Chancellor Kohl and the French leaders did not want to cause their farmers any distress in the run-up to the forthcoming elections, even though the EEC pays more than 56 billion ECUs each year to support agriculture, compared with 26 billion in the United States and 24 billion in Japan. Just as the British are rigid in the way they think the agricultural 'stabilisers' should be used, so the French and the Germans advocate flexibility, a flexibility that could lead them to prefer some 'renationalisation' of the common agricultural policy rather than leaving it to surgical, European-level decisions.

When the Commission calls for a doubling in the allocations for structural funds, it is supported only by the countries of southern Europe, together with Ireland, who are likely to benefit from it. For its part, Italy, whose GNP was recalculated to include the 'parallel economy' (the *sommerso*) in its balance sheets with the result that it finds itself among the rich countries of Western Europe, doesn't see why it should suffer from the restructuring of Community revenue (our *perestroika*) due to the introduction of a 'fourth resource' linked to GNP. This was created precisely to take account of the relative prosperity of each Member State. At the very least, Italy is demanding — and here we feel obliged to agree — that its disadvantaged southern regions not be forgotten.

So the 'unfinished cacophony' in Copenhagen, to use the expression of one of our colleagues, was inspired by an outburst of conflicting national selfishness at the highest level, whereas it should actually be at this 'highest level' that agreements are secured.

There are some Europeans, notably in France, at the close of this year of grace 1987, who tell us that the ills that they and their countries are suffering cannot be resolved until the countries are joined together in a

confederation. Well, thank you very much! We have long gone beyond the state of confederation in economic terms and we have just witnessed in Copenhagen that a ‘twelve-headed’ confederated Europe is incapable of facing up to the most basic agricultural, budgetary and community challenges facing it. How will such a twelve-headed Europe perform when it has to resolve issues such as defence that directly affect national sovereignty?

We already know the answer. As long as Europeans pretend not to understand that overcoming this sovereignty is a *sine qua non* for tackling contemporary challenges, they will be wasting their time and making fools of themselves. If we repeat this simple truth often enough perhaps we will eventually be heard. But watch out! A Community government should not be confused with vague plans for a variable geometry European union. We are not interested in an impotent Europe. It will in no way change the situation that we are now sadly witnessing. Let’s be quite clear about it. The old policy of the dead dog drifting down a stream, pursued by too many European political circles nowadays — even federalists — whose main concern is not to have their comfortable habits disturbed, is not and never will be our policy.

L’Europe en formation