

Open Europe - New Europe

Let me first of all congratulate the organizers of this conference for having placed the future of Europe so high on the agenda. It is perfect timing. Right now, Europe is at a cross-road. The key question being: Can we in Europe create a thriving, unified body which will assume a responsible world role without hiding behind walls and adopting selfish policies? And the venue of the conference ... well, it is always stimulating to be in the South of France.

I should like to place this morning's theme in a somewhat larger perspective. Of the great global challenges for humankind, the most daunting is the surge in the earth's population and the rising demographic imbalances between rich and poor countries. The result is a growing economic and social mismatch between where the world's riches are to be found and where the world's fastgrowing, poorer populations live.

Environmentally, the challenge is an exponential growth in industrial emissions, the draining of wetlands, the onslaught on tropical forests and the overgrazing of plains and savannahs. Evidence is at hand of a "green-house" effect. As the climate changes and sea levels rise, even the environmentally responsible countries will be affected.

Yet another challenge is the biotech revolution which possibly will make traditional agriculture redundant. At the same time, the robotics revolution makes jobs in the manufacturing sector redundant. These trends occur as manufacturers increasingly compete for global market shares and employ every device to achieve that aim - for instance relocating production, installing automation, adopting new labour-saving technologies. The result could be commercial clashes and social instability rather than the rosy picture of the global market place, the borderless world.

Further, our financial and communication revolutions have changed inter- and intra-state relations. Our sophisticated official contacts have not kept pace with the risk of financial turbulence. The greater change, however, is in the realm of global communications. The new media are breaking state monopolies of information, permeating national boundaries, allowing peoples to hear and see how others do things differently.

Can we in Europe concentrate on our own debate: currency harmonization, modifying the Common Agricultural Policy, giving more powers to the European Parliament, expanding the EC, etc.? Can we stand aloof from the global trends and possible global turbulences? The answer must surely be no.

As a result of the mentioned changes, also the European countries appear to have less and less control of their own destinies. They face illegal immigration and massive currency flows; they have unsatisfacto-

ry answers to the threat of large-scale redundancy in farming and manufacturing; they find it hard to prevent companies from relocating to other regions, or to muffle information from transnational television and radio.

And because the established structures are - at best - fumbling with the challenges, people are responding with resignation, searching for new structures, demanding protection from the global forces for change and turning angrily against recent immigrants.

The "double agenda" for European policymakers is to hammer out the future shape of the EC and at the same time try to tackle the described transnational changes. The key question is whether the internal controversies will hinder preparations for transnational changes or the transnational changes will stimulate the unification process?

In the context of this conference, let me focus on the issue of "civilisation", encompassing the economic, the cultural as well as the linguistic challenges confronting Europe.

My point of departure shall be the demographic trends brought about by circumstances outside the EC's borders, clearly an increasingly important issue for Europe's leaders and their planners. The disintegration of both the USSR and of its enforced order over former Warsaw Pact countries opens up the risk of ethnic tensions, border wars, social turbulences and the mass migration of refugees. If, for instance, a

full-scale economic collapse occurs in the former USSR and Eastern Europe - millions will be tempted to migrate to the EC.

For France, Spain and Italy, by contrast, the larger demographic problem lies to the south, in the fast-growing populations of the states of North Africa. At present, the immigrants have provoked a rise in native resentments, leading to occasional riots and a surge in right-wing political parties calling for repatriation. The greatest apprehension is that this is only the beginning and that population and economic trends in Africa will produce a future mass migration unless it is effectively prevented.

In other words, far from being something that Europe can safely ignore, global demographic trends can affect the social order, delay (or reverse) the opening of EC's internal barriers and even influence its foreign policy. Over the next few decades, migration may become a still more important aspect of the relations between the EC and the Muslim world.

Two centuries ago, Immanuel Kant observed that nature employed two means to separate peoples: "differences of language and of religion, both tending to produce mutual hatred and pretexts for war".

As I see it, the dominant source of conflict in the coming decades will be rooted in the differences between civilizations. Firstly, differences among civilizations are basic. Civilizations are differentiated from each other by history, language, culture, tradition and religion. These

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are all characteristics that are not changed overnight.

Also, civilization consciousness is increasing as interactions between peoples of different civilizations are increasing. The media revolution is making people aware of how they differ.

Further, the processes of economic modernization and social change throughout the world are separating people from longstanding local identities. They also weaken the nation state as a source of identity. To fill this gap and as a reaction against westernization, religion is moving in - often in the form of fundamentalism.

Finally, economic regionalism is increasing. Witness, not only the EC but also the NAFTA- and the ASEAN-cooperation. This definitely reinforces civilization-consciousness. At the same time, economic regionalism may succeed only when it is rooted in a common civilization. So there is still hope for the EC to succeed resting as it does on the shared foundation of European culture.

Mr. J. Akbar, an Indian Muslim author, has observed that the West's "next confrontation is definitely going to come from the Muslim world. It is in the sweep of the Islamic nations from the Maghreb to Pakistan that the struggle for a new world order will begin".

Conflict between Western and Islamic civilizations occurred periodically during the last 1300 years. It is unlikely to decline. The Gulf War left quite a few Arabs feeling proud that Saddam Hussein had attacked Israel and stood up to the West. And so far the openings in Arab political systems and the democratization processes that have taken place in a number of these countries have first and foremost benefited the Islamic fundamentalist movements.

Differences in culture, that is in basic values and beliefs, are a major source of conflict together with too big differences between rich and poor. Western ideas of individualism, constitutionalism, human rights, the rule of law, the separation of church and state have little resonance in Islamic culture. Western efforts to propagate such ideas produce instead a reaction against "cultural imperialism" and a reaffirmation of indigenous values.

As I see it, the challenge - mainly social and cultural but having important military, political and economical aspects as well - deserves two responses.

Firstly, we need to unify Europe, we need a "New Europe". Europe has no real alternative to moving forward, seeking to create an influential and responsible entity meeting this challenge collectively in a way that twelve or twenty separate nation-states simply cannot do. Fortunately, the movement toward integration, rarely slows down for long. Disagreement in one area (agriculture or currency reform) has not prevented agreement elsewhere (regional policies or overseas development assistance). There are simply too many forces at work for everything to come to a halt. Slowly, but surely, the Community is becoming a coherent entity which the rest of the world recognizes as a

power in itself. In a somewhat longer perspective Europe must also become a coherent entity in the difficult areas of foreign and defense policy.

Secondly, what we need is an "Open Europe" with less social conflicts. It is definitely required that the EC develop a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the basic religious and philosophical assumptions underlying other civilizations and the ways in which people in those civilizations see their interest. And it is essential that we help those countries to get a better standard of living for ordinary people.

It has been argued that the emergence of a "borderless world" contradict the EC's claim of deepening its economic and political unity. European integrationists often deny that they wish to distance EC from the rest of the world. But we might have to consider more carefully than hitherto what the various policies for deepening Europe's unity mean in practice for others. As the rest of the world watches Europe's integration, it clearly is concerned by its meaning for others.

It will require a special effort to identify elements of commonality between Western and other civilizations. For the relevant future, there will be no universal civilization. Instead, we will have a world of different civilizations, each of which will have to learn to coexist with the others.