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THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL MEETING IN RHODES: 2/3 DECEMBER

1. THIS WAS AN UNMEMORABLE MEETING OF THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL AND AN UNDRAMATIC ONE. THE PRESS WERE COMPELLED TO RELY FOR THEIR STIMULANTS ON NOISES OFF RATHER THAN NOISES ON.
2. PAPANDREOU JUST ABOUT MANAGED BECAUSE THERE WAS VERY LITTLE TO MANAGE. THOSE HEADS OF GOVERNMENT WHO LEAST LIKE THE HARD GRIND OF COMMUNITY DECISION MAKING TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY OF ITS ABSENCE ON THIS OCCASION TO COMMENT DISCURSIVELY BUT NOT PARTICULARLY TO THE POINT ON THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF THE COMMUNITY. DELORS WAS A VOICE OF MODERATION THROUGHOUT, WORKING TO KEEP THINGS ON AN EVEN KEEL. THE COMMISSION AND THE COUNCIL SECRETARIAT SAW OFF A LAST DESPAIRING ATTEMPT BY THE GREEK PRESIDENCY AT THE END OF THE FIRST DAY TO SMUGGLE INTO THE DRAFT PRESIDENCY CONCLUSIONS SOME OF THEIR MORE AMBITIOUS SOCIAL AND FINANCIAL OBJECTIVES.
3. THE TRUDGE THROUGH THESE DRAFT CONCLUSIONS ON THE SECOND MORNING WAS AS LABORIOUS AS USUAL BUT YIELDED SOME SATISFACTORY RESULTS SO FAR AS WE ARE CONCERNED. THE MAIN PLUSES ARE:

(I) THE DECLARATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL ROLE OF THE COMMUNITY. THIS IS MAINLY A MONUMENT TO MOTHERHOOD. BUT IT CONTAINS USEFUL LANGUAGE ON THE EXTERNAL ASPECTS OF THE SINGLE MARKET, TYING THE ISSUE OF RECIPROCITY FIRMLY INTO THE PRINCIPLES SET OUT IN THE PREAMBLE TO THE GATT.

(II) THE HANOVER EUROPEAN COUNCIL PRIORITIES FOR THE SINGLE MARKET ARE FIRMLY MAINTAINED: AND SOME OF THE NEW ONES IDENTIFIED, IN PARTICULAR TRANSPORT AND ANIMAL AND PLANT HEALTH LEGISLATION, ARE AREAS WHERE WE ARE LOOKING FOR EARLY PROGRESS.

(III) ON FREE MOVEMENT OF PERSONS, THE FIRM ACCEPTANCE OF THE LINK BETWEEN PROGRESS IN THE COMMUNITY AND PROGRESS ON INTER-GOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION AGAINST DRUGS, TERRORISM ETC IS WELCOME. AS IS THE NEW ENCOURAGEMENT GIVEN TO THE LATTER. THE DECISION

TO NOMINATE NATIONAL COORDINATORS (AND NO DOUBT A COMMISSION ONE TOO) COULD PROVE TO BE A VALUABLE WAY TO INJECT A GREATER NOTE OF REALISM INTO FUTURE WORK.

(IV) THE SECTION OF THE CONCLUSIONS ON THE SOCIAL DIMENSION IS, AS USUAL, AS TIRESOMELY LONG ON RHETORIC AS IT IS SATISFACTORILY SHORT ON SUBSTANTIVE CONTENT. THE DUTCH SUCCESS IN SMUGGLING IN THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE'S EXISTING EUROPEAN SOCIAL CHARTER AS THE MODEL FOR FUTURE WORK IS VERY SATISFACTORY, EVEN THOUGH IT MAY NOT IN THE END MAKE A LOT OF DIFFERENCE TO WHAT THE COMMISSION PROPOSES.

(V) THE ENVIRONMENT DECLARATION FROM THE NOVEMBER ENVIRONMENT COUNCIL WENT THROUGH ON THE NOD. THAT IN ITSELF MARKS THE SHIFT THAT HAS TAKEN PLACE IN THE UK'S POSITION IN THE COMMUNITY ON ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS, NO LONGER THE PERMANENT OCCUPANT OF THE DOG-HOUSE.

(VI) THE GREEK TRY-ON TO GET MORE MONEY FOR THEIR ISLANDS HAS BEEN SATISFACTORILY PUT BACK INTO THE STRUCTURAL FUNDS BOX.

(VII) ON AUDIO-VISUAL THE FRENCH FAILED TO BOUNCE THE COUNCIL INTO PREMATURE APPROVAL OF THEIR AMBITIOUS, BUT AS YET SINGULARLY ILL-DEFINED, IDEAS FOR A EUREKA-STYLE SCHEME. ALL REMAINS TO PLAY FOR. BUT WE NOW HAVE AN EXTREMELY USEFUL SENTENCE ON THE COMMUNITY'S DRAFT BROADCASTING DIRECTIVE WHICH HAS BEEN FIRMLY SUBORDINATED, BOTH IN TIMING AND IN SUBSTANCE, TO THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONVENTION.

(VIII) SOME OBJECTIONABLE MELINA MERCOURI LANGUAGE ON CULTURE WAS ALSO SEEN OFF.

(IX) WE PLAYED ANOTHER GOALLESS DRAW ON TAX HARMONISATION. 4. THERE WAS ONE MODEST MINUS, ON TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE. WE SHALL NEED TO WORK HARD TO CIRCUMSCRIBE THAT, BUT THE TEXT SHOULD HELP US TO DO SO.

THOMAS

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