

# The 'New Europe' gets **STAGEFRIGHT**

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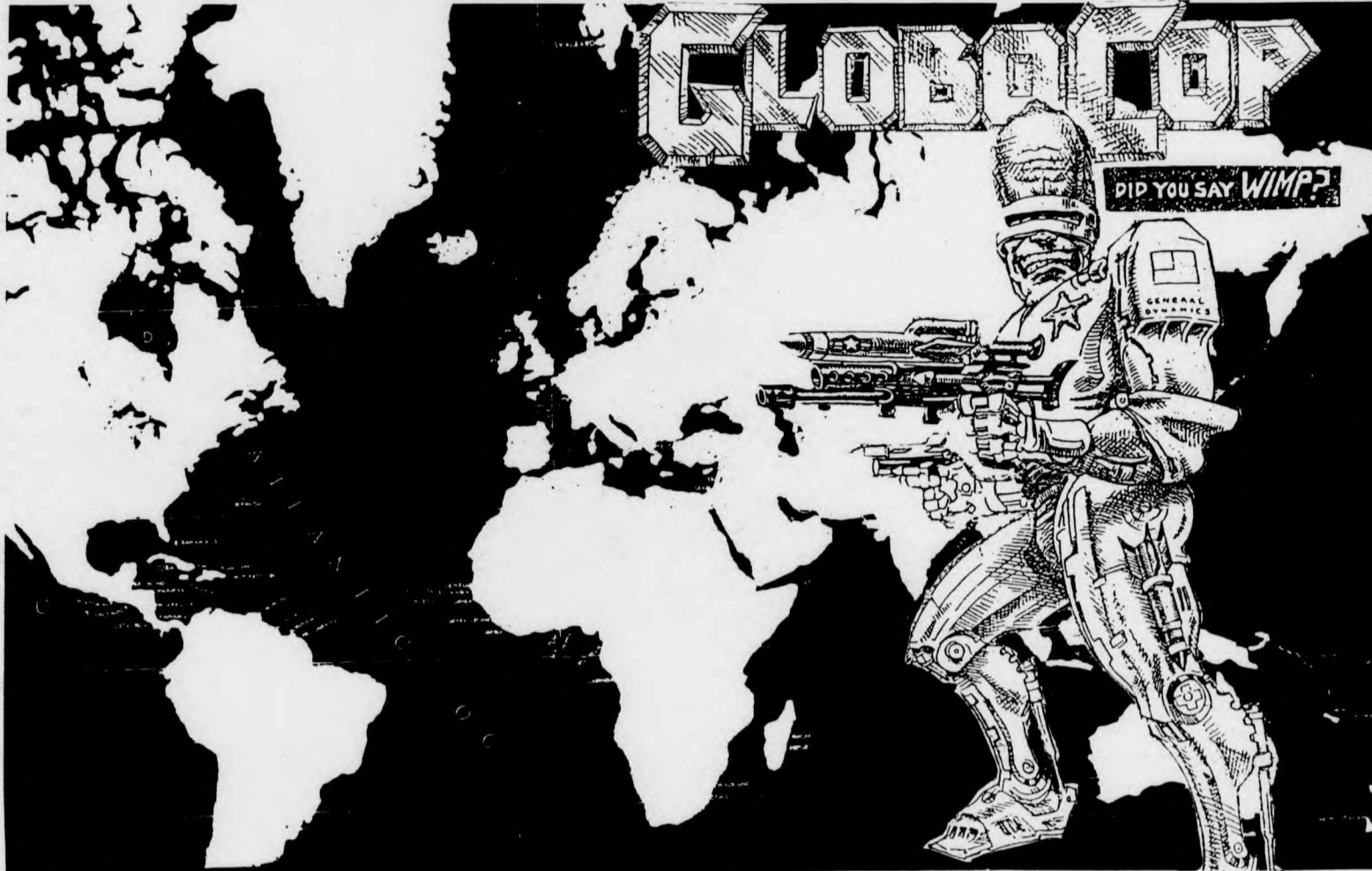
For the last few years Europeans have been feeding themselves a high-cholesterol diet of propaganda. In the mid 1980s the European Community (EC) decided it would finally move towards the long-held dream of full economic and political integration. "Europe 1992" was presented as a project without parallel which would transform Europe and its relation to the rest of the world. Now, with only months to go until 1992, it seems this high-cholesterol diet has led to Eurosclerosis.

With virtually seconds to go until curtain time it seems the New Europe may have stage fright. Two events in particular have called into question 1992 and just what it is all about.

One of the events was the war in the gulf and the other, more important one is the change in Eastern Europe and the disintegration of Yugoslavia. Iraq and Yugoslavia have forced the Euro-architects to look at aspects of 1992 which they previously never had considered.

The twelve nations of the European Economic Community have been hit in the face with the fact that they are actually a minority in Europe, albeit a minority whose wealth far exceeds that of the majority. Europe consists of more nations than just the 12-member EC or the other western countries such as Finland, Switzerland and Austria. How about Poland, Hungary or Slovenia and Croatia? What plans if any does the EC have for these countries?

For long the focus within the EC has been with internal regulation. The creation of a unified market of over 350 million people will require standardization of laws concerning matters such as commerce, labour and transportation. No doubt such matters are important. Yet there are other responsibilities that



Europe will incur after 1992. Such an economically powerful organization of states must look at its political role in the world. Sadly, if Yugoslavia or Iraq are any indication it seems Europe is failing miserably.

Far from pursuing a foreign policy independent of the United States and its conception of the New World Order, it seems as if Europe will still continue to be the lapdog of America. The Gulf War seems to indicate this.

Europe did not present a united response to the war. Great Britain, seeing a

great opportunity to ignore its domestic economic woes and show its admiration for American foreign policy, quickly moved into the Gulf. On the other hand, Germany, whose economic prowess Great Britain would have much to learn from, stayed out of the Gulf at least militarily. Of course one could add that unification kept Germany too busy to seek adventure overseas. Nevertheless, it is ironic that countries with many economic problems are the first to go to war.

Why is it that the economic strength of Germany and other EC nations cannot be translated into diplomatic strength? Why, with the collective economic strength of the EC, can it not challenge the global agenda of the United States? Perhaps it is better to ask whether the EC really wants to challenge the United States. Does Europe have anything to gain from the United States' leadership in the world?

Since the start of the war in Yugoslavia, the United States has remained ominously silent. Left on its own, the European Community has been helpless. Despite repeated attempts at a solution the EC has failed shamelessly. One wonders if Washington is not secretly laughing as the EC blunders in its own backyard. However, there can be no doubt that the people caught in the fighting in what was once Yugoslavia are not laughing. Nor are the other peoples of the East who are seeking to rebuild their countries. Many are now probably wondering what the EC is all about.

The European Community is failing to meet the expectations it has set for itself and for others. During the last part of the Cold War it seemed that the EC provided some kind of a middle way between the United States and the Soviet Union. Europe seemed to rest between the ideological extremes of the superpowers. Europe's political and economic structures depicted a kind of Third Way between Communism and Capitalism.

One hoped that this middle position could have been extended into foreign affairs. However, regardless of Europe's growing economic strength it still did not challenge the United States in global matters. Nicaragua, for example, was not spared the full wrath of the United States.

Despite Europe's economic strength it is still not challenging the repressive

control the United States has over the global monetary system. The Third World will not get a better deal from Europe. There is a reluctance on the part of European leaders to challenge the New World Order.

How long can this go on? How long can the EC ignore the call from Eastern Europe? How long can the EC ignore the recognition of Slovenia and Croatia or other new countries?

Sadly, it seems that for the moment Europe will still be divided. Eastern Europe will not see any economic miracles on the scale of which occurred in the West in the postwar period. At most Eastern Europe will be a periphery of the EC which provides skilled but cheap labour for industries in the West.

For years, Yugoslavia has served as a subcontractor for the French auto maker Renault. Poland has served similar purposes for Fiat, the Italian firm. Considering that Renault is owned by the French state, one wonders if there is a connection to be made between this and France's refusal to recognize the aspirations of Slovenians and Croats. Does France have something to gain by keeping Eastern Europe out of the EC?

Instability in the East is leading many to leave for the West. This is leading to the tightening of the EC's borders with the East — and is causing increasing unemployment in the West, currently averaging 10 per cent. Immigration from the Third World is also a concern for the EC and has caused growing xenophobia and racism in many countries.

Europe's future development will depend on that of the New World Order. The EC must take an active role in shaping this. It cannot ignore the aspirations of its eastern peoples. It must include them in an equal partnership. Nor can the EC ignore the plight of nations in the Third World. Western Europe cannot continue to be a rich enclave in a world of poverty and domination.

Many observers within and outside the European Community see 1992 as a progressive project which could serve as a model for other regions of the world. If 1992 is to be truly progressive then it must move beyond its current parameters. Europe should be more than just a market of millions of consumers. The world needs a progressive force to counter the instability of the New World Order. Washington is not that force.

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