

European Economic Community beset by internal pressures

By Philip Windsor

When Britain finally became a member of the European Economic Community at the beginning of 1973, it appeared that many of the problems of creating "Europe" were now well on their way to solution. Britain, after all, had been a test case for the will and intention of Europe ever since the veto imposed upon its application by General de Gaulle some ten years earlier. The fact that Britain and France had now agreed on the terms of enlargement, that the other members had acceded, that all were prepared to accept the new complications of arriving at agreements and decisions in an enlarged Community, seemed to testify to an abundant political will.

At the same time, the enlargement meant that Europe had finally arrived as an economic super-power. The Community now accounted for 23 per cent of the world's gross national product (GNP). It was also responsible for more than half the foreign trade of the globe. But this measure of responsibility was not confined to the economic sphere. Europe already exercised very considerable political influence throughout the Mediterranean basin and over much of Africa. The pattern of association agreements that were being negotiated or signed between the members of the Community and other states seemed to testify to the growing vitality and the growing "thrust" of Europe in the affairs of the world. Indeed, Dr. Kissinger, at that time still an enthusiast for his own vision of a future world organized and run from five centres of power, was still inclined to see Western Europe as one of these. But not only did this reflect Dr. Kissinger's

personal view of the future "penetration" it also reflected an objective reality.

At that time European currencies were strong and the American dollar weak. It was not unusual to see the American Treasury emerging from the American Treasury in Brussels, cap in hand, to plead for a European understanding of the commercial and economic difficulties caused by the war in Vietnam (in the French answer was negative, in the German answer positive). In other words, Europe appeared to have acquired a decisive voice in West-West relations.

But Europe's purpose appeared to extend to relations between Europe and the West. The Davignon Committee, in effect, the foreign ministers meeting in regular congress — was expected to provide the framework for new initiatives in relations with the Soviet Union and the states of Eastern Europe. This was an area that concerned Europe very closely. And, also at the beginning of a new regulation had come into effect whereby commercial agreements between member states of The Nine were now subject to the scrutiny of the Commission. In fact, to become an instrument of foreign policy.

Frustration

In all these respects, Europe appears to be on the verge of "takeoff". And the record since that time has been one of frustration. This is not to suggest that everything that The Nine have achieved has ended in failure. In some of their achievements have been significant. But the entity "Europe" can still be said to exist.

Does anyone now remember of only two or three years ago of "European identity"? Did it disappear with Pompidou? "Il faut faire l'Europe" was once the common slogan. Does anyone remember it now — does anyone know how or whether "Europe" is now frustrated of the intervening

Enlargement meant Europe had arrived as economic super-power

Professor Windsor is a Reader in International Affairs at the London School of Economics, specializing in European affairs. He is the author of a number of books on foreign and strategic questions and a contributor to the news analysis programs of the British Broadcasting Corporation. The views expressed are those of Professor Windsor.