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"INCONTRO SUL DIALOGO EURO-ARABO"
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La Contribution du dialogue euro-arabe à la paix et la sécurité dans l'aire méditerranéenne.

Une question préalable : qu'est-ce que le dialogue euro-arabe ?

M. Maudling a traité dans le premier rapport des visibilités de ce dialogue.

Ce titre seul montre qu'il y a des problèmes et des limites.

En réalité, depuis les années que se poursuit la tentative, y-a-t-il un dialogue euro arabe ?

Deux questions : quels sont les interlocuteurs ?
quels sont les problèmes ?

1 - Les interlocuteurs : du coté européen, la communauté économique ;

du coté arabe, la Ligue arabe ou un équivalent, deux entités qui cachent, ou ne cachent pas, des désaccords profonds entre leurs membres.

La C.E.E. : le marché commun plus une coopération politique.

Le Marché commun est une réalité, qui a survécu à la crise mondiale, mais il n'a plus l'aspect triomphant d'il y

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a dix ans et certains de ses membres ont de graves difficultés. Cependant il reste un interlocuteur important.

La coopération politique n'est pas une réalité et le Conseil européen n'arrive pas à en dissimuler l'inexistence. La plupart des pays membres n'ont pas l'ambition de définir et de mener une politique commune. Ils ne désirent pas avoir d'autre politique que de suivre les Etats Unis, en tout cas ils ne veulent pas s'opposer à eux.

Les pays arabes, réunis dans la Ligue arabe, n'ont pas la prétention d'avoir une politique commune, même s'ils insistent sur l'unité de la nation arabe. Entre l'Atlantique et le Golfe arabique ou l'Océan indien se trouvent une bonne vingtaine de pays dont la situation, les intérêts et la politique sont fort différents. En gros il y a le Maghreb, puis les pays pour lesquels Israël est le premier problème, enfin les producteurs de pétrole.

Le dialogue est donc difficile : il n'existe pas en fait deux interlocuteurs bien définis. ~~Il devrait s'agir~~ ^{Cela} plutôt ~~de~~ une sorte de conversation générale, où s'exprimeraient de part et d'autre des points de vue très divers. Ce serait là le véritable intérêt. Malheureusement cela n'a pas encore commencé vraiment.

2 - Les problèmes de la Méditerranée.

De quoi devrait-on discuter sur le plan politique entre Arabes et Européens, autrement dit en matière de paix et de sécurité ? Nous reviendrons plus tard sur l'économie.

Deux catégories : les problèmes spécifiques et les problèmes généraux.

a) Problèmes spécifiques : deux grands conflits

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en cours : le conflit arabo israélien

le conflit gréco turc.

Du second, pas question d'en parler dans le dialogue euro arabe.

Turcs et Grecs ne l'admettraient pas et cela ne servirait à rien.

L'autre problème intéresse, donc concerne, tout le monde. La paix est en cause : au Moyen Orient, et même dans le monde puisqu'il y a toujours risque d'affrontement américano-soviétique.

C'est donc un sujet majeur pour la discussion. Celle-ci est-elle possible entre deux blocs, européen et arabe ? Voilà la question. Si la réponse était positive, les conséquences seraient immenses.

Cela supposerait :

que les Européens soient d'accord entre eux,

que les Arabes le soient également,

qu'il y ait du côté européen la volonté,

une fois l'accord entre tous réalisé, d'agir comme une véritable puissance que l'Europe pourrait être alors,

qu'il y ait du côté arabe la volonté de coopérer dès lors que l'on serait assuré du désintéressement et de l'objectivité de l'Europe.

Malheureusement les conditions ne sont pas remplies.

Les Européens n'ont pas de vues communes, dans la mesure où ils ont des vues. S'ils parvenaient à se mettre d'accord sur quelque chose, Washington leur demanderait d'en rester là - cela s'est produit récemment.

Les Arabes eux mêmes sont souvent en conflit entre eux : Syrie et Egypte sur la politique des petits

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pas, Syrie et Irak en permanence, Egypte et Libye, etc. Il existe d'autre part le problème des Palestiniens qui divise tout le monde, y compris les Palestiniens eux mêmes.

Au total une action collective de l'Europe est très largement une vue de l'esprit.

b) Les problèmes politiques généraux de l'aire méditerranéenne sont évidemment la paix et la sécurité dans la région, au-delà des conflits spécifiques qui peuvent menacer cette paix et cette sécurité. Autrement dit il s'agit de l'équilibre général. Dans une zone comme toujours d'importance capitale aux points de vue politique, stratégique et économique, qui intéresse non seulement les riverains, mais des puissances extérieures, européennes aussi bien sûr, avant tout URSS et Etats Unis.

Il en a toujours été ainsi. Les grandes puissances, méditerranéennes ou non, sont toujours intervenues, soit pour dominer, soit pour se combattre. C'est encore le cas aujourd'hui.

Pour la Russie : trouver un accès à la mer libre, défendre les frontières méridionales, organiser une expansion vers le monde arabe et l'Océan indien.

Pour les Etats Unis : contrôler face à la Russie l'Asie du Sud, le flanc Sud de l'Europe, assurer leurs rapports avec les Arabes, surveiller les producteurs de pétrole, leurs accès et leurs voies d'évacuation.

L'idée d'une neutralisation (évacuation simultanée des flottes américaine et soviétique) n'est pas réaliste, en admettant que certains le désirent. Les grands veulent toujours la liberté des mers sous leur contrôle.

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Alors que peuvent faire les Européens et les Arabes pour s'affirmer ? C'est toujours le même problème que pour le conflit israélien.

3 - Quelles possibilités d'action ?

Il faut être réaliste. Cela conduit sans doute à être modeste, mais pas du tout à être négatif.

Ce qui est impossible : des accords entre bloc européen et bloc arabe, plus encore des actions de l'un ou de l'autre, ou des actions conjointes, car ces blocs n'existent pas.

Un exemple malheureusement frappant : la guerre civile au Liban. Il n'y a eu à ce sujet aucune réaction collective en Europe, ne serait-ce que pour exprimer une sympathie et offrir une aide humanitaire. Encore aujourd'hui, on ne pense même pas à une aide commune pour la reconstruction.

Ce qui est possible :

Sur le plan politique, essayer malgré tout d'entamer le dialogue euro arabe, sans prétentions excessives, mais parce qu'il est toujours bon de parler entre amis, parce que ce serait utile pour l'instruction des uns et des autres, pour leur apprendre à mieux se connaître et les inciter à prendre position.

Sur le plan économique il y a sûrement beaucoup à faire pour développer les rapports (M. Ossola en parlera) dans le domaine commercial et dans celui du développement. Il ne s'agit pas du pétrole. Seuls certains pays arabes en sont producteurs, et d'autre part le problème est mondial. Il s'agit des échanges normaux, et de l'aide au développement des moins favorisés, en combinant les capacités techniques et industrielles de l'Europe et les capitaux des pays producteurs de pétrole.

En menant de front ces deux actions, l'action politique

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qui sera forcément un peu académique, l'action économique qui doit être concrète et dynamique, on peut déjà faire beaucoup, en particulier mettre en valeur dans cette zone l'existence et les virtualités d'une coopération entre le monde européen et le monde arabe.

Ce qui est essentiel :

au delà des tentatives collectives, ce sont les rapports bilatéraux, entre pays européens et pays arabes.

Pour le moment, là se trouvent les vraies réalisations et des réalités très riches.

Il y a l'histoire et les traditions (Italie, Grande Bretagne, France...) qui permettent des actions en profondeur :

sur le plan de l'économie et du développement, en liaison avec la Communauté;

sur le plan de la culture, de l'éducation et de la technique,

sur le plan politique.

J'insiste sur la politique, puisque c'est mon sujet, et qu'il n'y a guère de possibilités pratiques en ce domaine dans des contacts collectifs quant à une action réelle;

en particulier à propos d'Israël, puisque c'est aujourd'hui la question essentielle.

Il y a des pays, c'est le cas de la France, qui ont les moyens de prendre position, de faire entendre leur voix et finalement peut-être de se rendre utiles.

Depuis des années, les Etats Unis et l'Union Soviétique entendent être les seuls à s'occuper du règlement israélo arabe, en dehors bien entendu des Etats directement intéressés. Leur action, depuis la création de la Conférence de Genève, a sûrement été utile. Elle ne s'est pas montrée jusqu'à présent déterminante

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puisque en pratique tout reste à faire. Il n'y a pas de raisons pour que les Européens, même s'ils ne sont pas les fournisseurs d'armes aux belligérants, ne puissent jouer un rôle constructif, ne serait-ce que parce qu'ils n'ont pas les moyens, eux, de nourrir des arrières pensées.

Des actions individuelles ne sont nullement en contradiction avec le déroulement parallèle d'un dialogue collectif euro-arabe. En fait les deux se complètent. Les premiers pourraient même être de nature à donner quelque réalité politique au dialogue, celui ci pour l'époque actuelle ne pouvant guère être concret et positif que dans le domaine économique, ce qui serait déjà considérable.

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COLLOQUE DE FLORENCE SUR LE DIALOGUE EURO-ARABE

FLORENCE 22/24 AVRIL 1977

(2)

" LE DIALOGUE EURO-ARABE : OEUVRE DE PAIX ET DE COOPERATION "

Communication faite par Monsieur Ismaïl KHELIL
Ambassadeur de Tunisie à Bruxelles au nom de la
partie arabe au Dialogue.

I. GENESE DU DIALOGUE EURO-ARABE

Avant la guerre du 6 octobre, l'Europe en tant que Communauté manifestait peu d'intérêt aux préoccupations et aux aspirations du Monde Arabe. Son souci de ménager les intérêts et les susceptibilités d'Israël l'emportait, de loin, sur sa volonté de s'engager résolument dans une coopération confiante avec cette région du Monde.

Le Conflit du Moyen Orient, malgré les répercussions énormes ^{avant cela date} qu'il a eues dans les rapports est-ouest, n'a occupé qu'une place secondaire dans l'ordre des préoccupations de l'Europe des Neuf. Les vagues tentatives de concertation et d'harmonisation menées depuis 1969 par les Ministres des Affaires Etrangères de la Communauté en vue de définir une position commune sur ce problème n'ont été qu'un exercice intellectuel qui n'a abouti à aucun accord.

Même le mystérieux document de travail adopté secrètement à Bonn en 1971 et renié par la suite par certains sous la pression d'Israël ne semblait pas avoir rallié l'unanimité des Six qui formaient alors la Communauté?. Pourtant les pays arabes, surtout après la guerre du 5 juin 1967 ont tout fait pour se rapprocher de l'Europe et multiplier les ouvertures en sa direction. Ils pensaient qu'une meilleure appréciation de leurs intérêts conduirait les pays européens à établir de nouveaux rapports fondés sur une coopération mutuellement avantageuse entre les deux rives de la Méditerranée pourtant bien complémentaires sous tous les plans: géo-politique, stratégique économique et culturel.

A tous les appels du Sud, l'Europe, dans sa grande majorité, est restée sourde jusqu'au moment où les Arabes excédés par l'arrogance d'Israël et l'indifférence de l'attitude occidentale à l'égard de leur cause ont décidé de recourir à l'arme du pétrole.

A l'annonce de la décision arabe, l'Europe des Neuf s'est réveillée économiquement et politiquement sur un cauchemar celui des trois vérités (aussi fatales l'une que l'autre à savoir) :

- que l'arme du pétrole est devenue effectivement une force de frappe redoutable
- que l'Europe dépend pour plus de la moitié de ses approvisionnements en pétrole des pays arabes et qu'elle est par conséquent économiquement menacée.
- et qu'enfin diplomatiquement l'Europe des Neuf est quasiment absente de la scène mondiale parce que politiquement inexistante.

Le 6 novembre l'Europe des Neuf se ressaisit et adopte à l'unanimité une déclaration commune par laquelle elle se prononce publiquement sur la totalité des aspects du conflit israélo-arabe, en prenant soin de préciser qu'il s'agit d'une première contribution de sa part à la recherche d'une solution d'ensemble. Face à la détermination arabe et au mépris affichés à son égard pendant le conflit de 73 par les super-grands, l'Europe a réagi en donnant l'impression qu'elle avait, en quelque sorte, enfin retrouvé son identité et pris conscience de ses véritables intérêts.

La déclaration européenne condamnée vivement par une grande partie de la presse européenne et qualifiée abusivement " d'abdication devant le chantage et le dictat arabe impliquant le lâche abandon d'Israël " n'apportait pourtant pas de grandes innovations. Elle ne faisait en réalité que paraphraser des résolutions du Conseil de Sécurité en maintenant les mêmes ambiguïtés quand il s'agissait de réclamer l'évacuation des territoires occupés ou de reconnaître " les droits légitimes des palestiniens ".

Le seul acquis est toutefois que l'Europe est sortie, pour la première fois, de son silence, pour faire droit à la déception et à la frustration du Monde Arabe, en affirmant sans équivoque sa volonté de contribuer à la solution d'un conflit qui la concerne de près.

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En réponse à la déclaration européenne, le Sommet Arabe d'Alger réuni en novembre 73 a préconisé pour la première fois l'idée d'un dialogue euro-arabe et a, à cet effet, lancé un appel à l'Europe en lui rappelant " qu'elle était liée aux pays arabes, à travers la Méditerranée par de profondes affinités de civilisation et par des intérêts vitaux qui ne peuvent se développer que dans le cadre d'une coopération confiante et mutuellement avantageuse ".

La Conférence européenne au Sommet qui s'est tenue à Copenhague en décembre 73 alors que la crise de l'énergie était à son apogée a réaffirmé au plus haut niveau sa position commune sur le Moyen-Orient telle qu'elle est contenue dans la déclaration du 6 novembre. Après avoir réclamé la pleine application de la résolution 242 du Conseil de sécurité, les Chefs d'Etat et de Gouvernement ont exprimé leur conviction " que les exigences en matière de souveraineté et les exigences en matière de sécurité pouvaient être satisfaites par la conclusion d'accords de paix comprenant entre autres arrangements des garanties et l'établissement de zones démilitarisées ".

Par ailleurs, la Conférence a mis l'accent sur la crise de l'énergie ainsi que la menace qu'elle constitue pour l'ensemble de l'équilibre mondial et a confirmé " l'importance que les Chefs d'Etats et de Gouvernement attachent à l'ouverture avec les producteurs de pétrole de négociations sur un régime global comprenant une coopération étendue en vue du développement économique et industriel de ces pays, d'investissements industriels et de l'approvisionnement stable des pays membres en énergie à des prix raisonnables ".

Ainsi le message transmis à la Conférence par les quatre ministres arabes mandatés par le Sommet d'Alger a été entendu et l'idée d'un partenariat arabo-européen dans lequel l'énergie joue le rôle de trait d'union est lancée.

L'attitude européenne a été très favorablement accueillie par les pays arabes. D'aucuns ont même suggéré de brûler les étapes et d'organiser la réunion euro-arabe au Sommet avant le 10 mars. Mais d'autres plus prudents ne partageaient pas cette précipitation ni cet optimisme. Ils savaient que cette coopération était difficile à réaliser en raison des interférences extérieures qu'elle pourrait susciter. En effet, lorsque les Ministres des Neuf ont tenu les 4 et 5 mars 74 à Bonn leur réunion dans le cadre de la coopération politique pour adopter le mandat qui devait être confié au Président Shell pour ses premiers contacts avec les pays arabes, le problème de la consultation " préalable et à tous les stades" des Etats-Unis a été posé : ce qui a suscité au sein de la Communauté des débats houleux qui ont révélé encore, une fois, au grand jour, les divergences fondamentales qui séparent les Etats membres de la Communauté Européenne dans leur attitude à l'égard du leader-ship américain.

Dans ce contexte, la session ministérielle de la Communauté des 1er et 2 avril 74 a donné lieu à un véritable affrontement de thèses mettant aux prises la ligne indépendante française qui préconise que les Etats-Unis pourraient être consultés lorsque le dialogue avec les arabes arrivera à des résultats substantiels et l'attitude des autres qui voulant mettre coûte que coûte dans le même sac le dialogue euro-arabe et la concertation euro-américaine soutenant que les Etats-Unis pourraient être consultés tout au long des contacts avec les arabes sur une base continue afin d'éviter des interférences avec les initiatives américaines.

La situation est demeurée ainsi bloquée jusqu'à l'avènement de Monsieur Giscard d'Estaing à la tête de la République Française et le remplacement de M. Jobert par M. Sauvagnargues qui a pu trouver à Bonn la formule de compromis qui pouvait satisfaire le partenaire atlantique tout en ménageant certaines susceptibilités à l'intérieur, instituant avec les USA une consultation " pragmatique sans formalisme et entre amis ".

Aussi, l'Europe des Neuf a mis six mois depuis le Sommet de Copenhague pour surmonter ses divisions internes et décider enfin d'entamer le processus du dialogue qui s'annonçait déjà au départ difficile et laborieux. L'aide mémoire qui a été approuvé le 4 mars 74 par les Ministres européens et qui décrit le processus devant conduire à la conférence euro-arabe, donne mandat au Président du Conseil de prendre contact avec les Gouvernements des pays arabes afin de connaître leurs idées sur la coopération qui pourrait s'établir entre eux et la Communauté estimant d'ores et déjà que des actions pourraient être entreprises dans de nombreux domaines tels que l'industrie, l'agriculture, l'énergie, les matières premières, les transports, la science et la technologie, la coopération financière, la formation des cadres etc... Le pétrole et la politique ont été expressément bannis du champ d'application de la coopération envisagée.

La première rencontre qui a eu lieu à Paris en juillet 74, entre M. Sauvagnargues alors Président du Conseil européen et MM. Mahmoud RIADH et AL SABAH, respectivement Secrétaire Général de la Ligue Arabe et Ministre Koweïtien des Affaires Etrangères, a buté d'ailleurs sur l'aspect politique qui faisait défaut à l'approche européenne et qui en constituait le point faible.

La première réunion arabe qui s'est tenue du 12 au 14 novembre 74 au niveau des Ambassadeurs a adopté un document de travail destiné à éclairer le partenaire européen sur les objectifs recherchés par la partie arabe dans ce dialogue.

Ce document répond sans équivoque aux propositions formulées par la partie européenne lors de ses différentes concertations avec le partenaire arabe tendant toutes à limiter le cadre de la coopération envisagée à des opérations purement commerciales destinées à promouvoir dans la région, la vente de biens d'équipement, au moyen de pétro-dollars. Il met clairement l'accent sur la signification et les implications politiques du dialogue. Car pour être fructueuse et efficace la coopération envisagée doit être menée dans une perspective de paix et de stabilité dans la région.

Aussi l'Europe doit-elle assumer ses responsabilités en participant plus activement dans la recherche d'une solution équitable du conflit en contribuant positivement à l'avènement d'une ère de paix et stabilité.

Pour ce qui est de la date de la prochaine réunion de la Commission Générale prévue à Paris, il a été décidé du côté arabe qu'elle ne sera définitivement arrêtée qu'après avoir obtenu la réponse de la Communauté Européenne au sujet de la participation de l'OLP à cette réunion. Le Secrétaire Général de la Ligue Arabe M. Riadh a été chargé de prendre contact à ce sujet avec la Communauté.

L'Europe quant à elle a estimé devoir attendre la 21ème session de l'Assemblée Générale des Nations Unies et les résultats de l'examen de la question palestinienne avant de se prononcer définitivement sur la participation de l'OLP au dialogue. Mais lors de cette session l'Europe a adopté sur le fond une position empreinte de réserves et d'hésitation. Elle a révélé encore une fois ses divergences et son manque de cohésion.

Profitant de la visite officielle qu'il effectuait au Caire à la fin de l'année 74, M. Sauvagnargues a préconisé comme moyen de contourner le problème de la participation de l'OLP que le dialogue débute par la réunion de groupes de travail qui discuteraient de projets précis dans le cadre de deux délégations uniques, l'une européenne et l'autre arabe incluant des représentants de l'OLP.

Cette proposition a été renouvelée au Caire par le Secrétaire d'Etat et le Secrétaire Général adjoint de la Commission de Bruxelles au cours des entretiens des 11 et 15 janvier 75 avec M. Mahmoud Riadh. Devant les réticences de la partie arabe, la Communauté a fait un pas en plus en suggérant une réunion générale au niveau "d'experts" qui pourrait ne pas se cantonner aux problèmes techniques et sectoriels. Il s'agit d'une formule intermédiaire entre les groupes mixtes de travail et la Commission Générale, organe du Dialogue retenu par les deux parties.

Lors de leur réunion du 13 novembre à Dublin, les Ministres de l'Europe des Neuf ont confirmé cette proposition appelée désormais " le compromis de Dublin ".

La partie arabe y a souscrit manifestant par là sa bonne volonté et son ferme espoir que l'Europe se ressaisira pour admettre l'OLP comme partie prenante au Dialogue.

C'est un acte de foi que la partie arabe a tenu à faire en acceptant d'amorcer avec l'Europe le dialogue à l'envers, c'est à dire au niveau d'experts. Son seul souci a été de débloquer cette entreprise qui pour avoir connu toutes les péripéties et les rebondissements que je viens d'évoquer devrait être sauvé du discrédit qui commençait à l'affecter sérieusement.

II. EVOLUTION DU DIALOGUE EURO-ARABE.

Dans le cadre du dialogue trois réunions se sont tenues jusqu'ici au niveau des experts et deux réunions au niveau de la Commission Générale.

a) la première réunion d'experts au Caire (juin 1976).

Cette première réunion euro-arabe a d'abord permis de relever la différence fondamentale d'approche qui séparait les deux délégations. Du côté européen, on insistait sur le caractère technique et économique du dialogue. Du côté arabe, on a mis l'accent, par contre, sur la signification et les implications politiques du dialogue, né lui-même dans un contexte essentiellement politique.

Le mémorandum conjoint qui a été adopté au cours de cette réunion et qu'on peut considérer comme la Charte même du Dialogue définit les objectifs qu'il doit atteindre, les principes qui doivent l'inspirer et les domaines de coopération qu'il doit couvrir.

Le document affirme notamment :

1° " Le Dialogue Euro-Arabe est le fruit d'une volonté politique commune qui s'est dégagée au niveau le plus élevé et qui a pour objet l'établissement de relations spéciales entre les deux groupes ".

2° " Les dimensions politiques du Dialogue procèdent essentiellement de la tentative de redécouvrir, de renouveler et de renforcer les liens qui intéressent ces régions voisines, du désir de lever les malentendus génératrices de difficultés dans le passé et de l'intention de jeter les fondements d'une coopération future englobant un vaste domaine d'activités, et cela au profit des deux interlocuteurs. Le développement de la coopération économique euro-arabe doit être fondé sur cette entente qui contribuera à promouvoir la stabilité; la sécurité et une paix équitable dans la région arabe et à faire avancer la cause de la paix et de la sécurité dans le monde".

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3° " L'établissement d'une coopération entre les deux groupes est inspiré par des liens de voisinage et un héritage culturel commun, ainsi que par leurs intérêts complémentaires et convergents."

4° " Dans le domaine économique en particulier, le Dialogue a pour but d'établir une coopération propre à créer les conditions fondamentales du développement du Monde Arabe dans son ensemble et à réduire le fossé technologique qui sépare les pays arabes des pays européens. Cela requiert la recherche de mesures et de dispositions concrètes dans tous les domaines sur la base d'une division équitable du travail entre les deux groupes".

b) La deuxième réunion d'experts à Rome (Juillet 1975).

Cette réunion a été essentiellement consacrée à la mise en place des sept groupes de travail constitués en vue d'examiner tous les aspects de la coopération envisagée déjà au Caire dans les domaines suivants :

- industrialisation
- infrastructure
- agriculture et développement rural
- coopération financière
- commerce
- coopération scientifique et technique
- questions culturelles et sociales et problèmes de main-d'œuvre.

Les sept groupes de travail ont entamé leurs travaux en explorant quelques actions prioritaires dans le cadre du Dialogue.

c) La troisième réunion d'Abou Dhabi (novembre 1975).

Les sept groupes de travail ont adopté à l'issue de cette réunion , un document de travail commun, qui fait le point d'une part des progrès réalisés dans les domaines de l'industrialisation, de l'infrastructure de base, de l'agriculture et du développement rural, et en matière de coopération scientifique et d'autre part des difficultés rencontrées dans les domaines de la coopération financière, du commerce, du transfert des technologies et de la main-d'œuvre arabe employée dans les pays de la Communauté Européenne.

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d) La première réunion de la Commission Générale de Luxembourg (Mai 76).

Tenue au niveau des Ambassadeurs, cette réunion comportait pour la première fois, à son ordre du jour, un premier point intitulé " questions politiques ".

L'examen de ce point s'est déroulé en Commission Générale sous la forme d'un échange de discours à caractère politique suivi de deux déclarations supplémentaires. L'une arabe, relevant les points positifs et négatifs dans le discours européen. L'autre européenne constituant un complément d'explications de la position des Neuf sans toutefois répondre aux questions de la partie arabe.



Le volet coopération a été examiné également par la Commission Générale qui a adopté :

- les recommandations prises, lors des trois précédentes réunions d'experts y compris celles relatives à la mise sur pied des sept groupes spécialisés qu'ils ont constitués.
- un agenda pour les réunions des groupes sus-mentionnés
- une liste indicative de projets proposés par la partie arabe dans le cadre de la coopération envisagée.

En ce qui concerne les difficultés que connaît le Dialogue dans certains secteurs de la coopération financière, du transfert de la technologie, du commerce, l'impression qui s'est dégagée à Luxembourg est que la partie européenne ne voulait pas s'engager et faire des concessions dans ces domaines, avant de connaître au préalable les intentions arabes en matière de financement.

Pour l'Europe des Neuf la partie arabe doit prendre en charge le financement de la plus grande partie des activités et des projets du Dialogue Euro-Arabe.

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X Dans sa déclaration finale à Luxembourg la partie européenne a affirmé son attachement à la paix, à la sécurité et à la justice conformément aux objectifs et aux principes de la Charte des Nations - Unies. Elle a également reconnu que trouver une solution à la question palestinienne fondée sur la reconnaissance des droits ~~éminemment~~ légitimes du peuple Palestinien est un facteur décisif dans la réalisation d'une paix juste et durable. La Partie européenne a également exprimé l'espérance de voir réalisé un progrès rapide dans ce sens, de même qu'elle a affirmé sa détermination de déployer tous les efforts en vue de contribuer à la réalisation de cet objectif.

Enfin sur le plan organisationnel, la Commission Générale a entériné les institutions du Dialogue. L'organe principal en est désormais la Commission Générale conçue au niveau des Ambassadeurs. Sort issus de cette Commission, les groupes de travail, les groupes spécialisés et un Comité de coordination. Si le besoin s'en fait ressentir et sous réserve de l'accord des deux parties, une réunion au niveau des Ministres des Affaires Etrangères pourrait être convoquée.

e) La deuxième réunion de la Commission Générale de Tunis (Février 1977).

Si la réunion de Luxembourg a inauguré un premier échange de déclarations politiques entre la délégation européenne et la délégation arabe il n'y a pas eu cependant de véritable dialogue sur les questions qui préoccupent le Monde Arabe.

A Tunis, par contre, un grand progrès a été enregistré car le dialogue politique a été engagé au sein d'une Commission spéciale créée à cet effet.

Pour la première fois, arabes et européens se sont trouvés autour d'une table pour échanger leurs points de vues et leurs arguments.

De ce fait, le Dialogue Euro-arabe est devenu plus équilibré, car le volet économique et le volet politique évolueront désormais d'une manière parallèle.

Et c'est là l'acquis le plus important de la conférence de Tunis.



Sur le plan économique, la réunion de Tunis s'est employée à définir le cadre général de la coopération que les arabes entendent promouvoir avec l'Europe des Neuf.

En matière de transfert de technologie, il a été décidé d'élaborer une charte euro-arabe qui fixerait les modalités de transfert de la technologie européenne vers le Monde Arabe. Un centre euro-arabe constituera l'instrument de ce transfert.

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XX Le Communiqué finale a consacré une bonne partie au problème du Moyen - Orient et à la question palestinienne. Il a déclaré entre autre que:

- 1) Les deux parties ont exprimé leur vive préoccupation concernant la sécurité au Proche - Orient et les implications de celle - ci sur la sécurité de l'Europe et du Monde. Elles ont déclaré qu'elles avaient pleinement conscience des dangers résultants de la persistance de l'impassé actuelle et de leur intérêt mutuel pour l'établissement d'une paix juste et durable au Proche - Orient.
- 2) Les deux parties ont exposé leur vues sur le problème du Proche - Orient, y compris sur la question de la Palestine. Elles ont noté avec un grand intérêt, les déclarations faites par l'une et par l'autre. Elles ont réaffirmé qu'une solution au problème de la Palestine, fondée sur la reconnaissance des droits légitimes du peuple palestinien, constituait un facteur essentiel pour la conclusion d'une paix juste et durable.
- 3) La partie européenne a exprimé sa conviction que les principes figurant dans la déclaration du 6 novembre 1973, telle qu'ils ont été explicités depuis lors dans les déclarations faites par les Neuf, notamment sur les droits légitimes du peuple palestinien, constituaient les fondements d'un règlement ~~temporaire~~ de paix au Proche - Orient et que les principes devaient être pris comme un tout. La partie européenne a réaffirmé son opinion selon laquelle une solution du conflit ne sera possible que si le droit légitime du peuple palestinien de donner son expression effective à son identité nationale est traduit dans les faits.
- 4) La partie européenne a réaffirmé la préoccupation que causait aux Neuf la poursuite de l'occupation par Israël des territoires arabes depuis 1967. Elle a réaffirmé que la 4^{ème} Convention de Genève était applicable aux territoires occupés et marqué son opposition à la politique visante à y établir des colonies, qui ne pouvait avoir pour effet que de compromettre les perspectives de paix. Elle a également marqué son opposition à toute initiative tendant à modifier unilatéralement le statut de Jérusalem.

Sur le plan du Commerce, la partie arabe a demandé la conclusion entre les deux régions d'un accord global préférentiel et a proposé la création d'un Centre de Coopération Commerciale dont la mission serait :

- d'aider à la formation de cadres arabes dans le domaine du marketing;
- d'élaborer des études de marchés,
- de faciliter les relations entre hommes d'affaires européens et arabes et
- enfin de faciliter la participation arabe dans les quinzaines et les foires commerciales européennes qui pourraient se tenir en Europe.

Par ailleurs, le Centre de Coopération Commerciale pourrait jouer le rôle d'une Banque d'informations sur la vie économique en Europe et dans le Monde Arabe.

Dans le domaine de la protection et de l'encouragement des investissements, l'idée d'une convention multilatérale a été retenue. Jusqu'ici seuls les investissements européens dans le Monde Arabe bénéficiaient de telles garanties; il s'agit maintenant de garantir à la partie arabe par voie de réciprocité l'accès et la sécurité pour les capitaux qu'elle est amenée à investir en Europe.

Dans le domaine de la main-d'œuvre arabe employée en Europe, l'Europe a convenu de souscrire à une déclaration tendant à garantir à cette main-d'œuvre de meilleures conditions de vie et de travail au sein de la Communauté.

III. PERSPECTIVES DU DIALOGUE EURO-ARABE:

Bien que né dans un contexte de crise à la suite d'une décision prise à chaud, la dialogue Euro-Arabe est devenu aujourd'hui une réalité.

Parce que fondé sur une complémentarité naturelle et répondant aux exigences de l'histoire, de la géopolitique, de l'économie et de la culture.

S'agissant d'un dialogue entre deux civilisations universelles il doit déboucher inéluctablement et quelles que soient les difficultés d'ordre conjoncturel, sur une coopération globale, équilibrée dont la finalité est de créer et de promouvoir entre les deux rives de la Méditerranée une entente loyale et une solidarité étroite basées sur l'intérêt commun.

A moins que l'Europe n'accepte de s'engager globalement avec le Monde Arabe toute coopération qu'elle tenterait d'établir dans le cadre du dialogue ne serait pas au niveau des aspirations des pays arabes ^{et} ne revêtirait pas le caractère privilégié qu'ils souhaitent.

que ces derniers

Conçue et placée dans une perspective de paix, une telle coopération suppose la solution de la crise du Moyen-Orient et l'avènement d'une ère de paix et de stabilité dans la région.

Dès lors, l'Europe ne peut pas se cantonner à une action apolitique dans le cadre de ce dialogue et demeurer constamment absente du processus de paix dans la région.

Certes, depuis la déclaration du 6 novembre 1973 qui a, du reste, motivé la partie arabe dans la recherche de relations spéciales avec l'Europe communautaire, la position européenne a évolué dans une certaine mesure. On remarque, en effet, que l'Europe a davantage pris conscience de la légitimité de la cause palestinienne en reconnaissant d'abord les droits légitimes du Peuple palestinien, ses droits nationaux, ensuite, l'identité nationale Palestinienne, et enfin, l'expression effective de l'identité nationale palestinienne comportant une base territoriale.

La partie arabe a également pris acte de l'attitude positive adoptée par l'Europe en dénonçant la persistance de l'occupation israélienne des territoires arabes et la politique de colonisation qu'elle y pratique, ainsi que la violation constante des droits fondamentaux du Peuple Palestinien.

La partie arabe souhaiterait que cette évolution continue et s'accentue davantage. Il n'est plus admissible que l'Organisation de la Libération de la Palestine, membre à part entière de la Ligue Arabe et partie au Dialogue, continue à être ignorée par l'Europe des Neuf alors que la Communauté Internationale dans sa majorité a reconnu l'OLP comme seul représentant du Peuple Palestinien, et que, par ailleurs, le Président des Etats-Unis n'hésite plus à serrer la main du délégué qui la représente à New York.

En outre, l'Europe des Neuf ne peut plus se contenter de proclamer solennellement des principes et des prises de position; encore faut-il que de telles déclarations soient mises en oeuvre et traduites dans les faits.

Le Monde Arabe a certes besoin de l'appui politique de l'Europe, mais il n'entend nullement utiliser le Dialogue comme moyen de pression pour obtenir cet appui. Bien au contraire, le Dialogue constitue avant tout, un forum qui doit permettre l'échange de vues sur toutes les questions qui nous préoccupent au plus haut niveau.

Aussi, la partie arabe, consciente d'élargir le débat politique a-t-elle suggéré l'institution d'un mécanisme permanent de concertation politique couvrant toutes les questions d'intérêt commun. Cette proposition formulée à Tunis est actuellement à l'étude. La partie arabe souhaite vivement que sa proposition soit prise en considération par la Communauté, car elle estime qu'une concertation politique entre les deux régions est en soi, un acte politique d'une haute portée.

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Sur le plan de la coopération, la Communauté semble avoir pris conscience qu'elle n'a pas seulement des intérêts dans la région mais aussi des responsabilités.

Cela devrait pouvoir se traduire par :

- l'ouverture de la C.E.E. aux produits arabes,
- l'accès du Monde Arabe à la technologie européenne ,
- la garantie et la promotion des investissements en Europe et dans le Monde Arabe ,
- la garantie, à la main-d'œuvre arabe employée dans la Communauté, de meilleures conditions de vie et de travail.

dans le bon sens

Si le Dialogue n'a pu dans le passé enregistrer des progrès significatifs du fait des difficultés d'ordre conjoncturel qu'a connues l'Europe il est à espérer que la Communauté, seraient plus à même d'assumer ses responsabilités quant à la réalisation des objectifs fondamentaux de cette coopération.

Les pays Arabes, quant à eux, n'ont cessé d'orienter leurs échanges vers les pays de la Communauté. Ils représentent aujourd'hui le premier partenaire commercial de celle-ci, avant même les Etats-Unis d'Amérique. En effet, les exportations européennes vers le Monde Arabe, ont quadruplé au cours des trois dernières années, pour représenter en 1975, 13 % de l'ensemble des exportations de la C.E.E.

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De même, les investissements des pays arabes producteurs de pétrole dans les pays occidentaux - dont les Neuf - se sont accrus jusqu'à atteindre 56,4 milliards de dollars au cours des deux dernières années.

Il est certain que cet apport arabe à l'économie européenne, revêtira de nouvelles formes et prendra de nouvelles dimensions, au fur et à mesure que la coopération euro-arabe se développera.

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XXX' Les importations du monde arabe en provenance de la CEE ont représenté en 1974, 48% environ de leurs importations totales : ce qui représente plus que le double de leurs importations des Etats - Unis d'Amérique et du Japon réunis.

L'essor économique du Monde Arabe stimulera davantage les importations des biens et des services en provenance du Marché Commun.

Etant par excellence, un vaste marché pour les produits européens le Monde Arabe a besoin de la technologie européenne. Quant à l'Europe, elle ne peut se passer des matières premières du Monde Arabe, ni de ses ressources financières.

En d'autres termes, du développement du Monde Arabe, dépend dans une large mesure, la prospérité de l'Europe et inversement.

Certes, le Dialogue Euro-Arabe est une entreprise ambitieuse, difficile et laborieuse, parce qu'il s'instaure, entre deux groupes de pays forts différents.

En cela, il constitue un pari et un pari pris au plus haut niveau politique. Mais la Communauté, elle même, n'était-elle pas, aux yeux des signataires du Traité de Rome, un pari sur l'avenir ?
Elle n'en constitue pas moins aujourd'hui une réalité.

Si elle a pu relever le défi de Lomé, la Communauté doit être capable aujourd'hui d'instaurer avec le Monde Arabe, un nouveau modèle de relations, qui constituerait un jalon vers un nouvel ordre économique plus juste et plus équilibré, et une contribution au renforcement de la sécurité et de la paix dans le Monde.

Paper presented by Mohamed Sid Ahmed to the Florence meeting (23-24 April, 1977) on: EUROPE AND THE ARAB WORLD; IDEAS AND SUGGESTIONS TOWARDS COOPERATION, entitled:

The Euro-Arab Dialogue and Petrodollars

A new interest has developed in building trans-Mediterranean relations, currently labelled the Euro-Arab dialogue. History, geography, civilization links, cultural affinities, religious heritage, geopolitics, strategy, growing world integration, growing concern with the sea, indeed these and many other worthy notions have been invoked, or remembered, to justify this new interest. But without doubt one compelling factor has been the sudden emergence of a phenomenon without precedent: petrodollars.

Noone can any longer challenge the Arabs' right to obtain adequate prices for their oil. The increasing price gap between finished products and raw materials, including oil, has become a growing factor of disturbance, not only for developing countries but for the industrialized world as well. Because of ludicrously low oil prices, the industrialized nations squandered energy and neglected the quest for sources of energy in proportion to steeply increasing energy needs. What the West is really challenging is the ability of the Arab oil producers to make of their ~~disappearing~~ oil reserves a real Arab asset devoted to Arab needs.

It has often been pointed out that the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries was able to benefit from a favourable combination of circumstances, all of an external nature. The energy crisis, the October war, international Detente, were all regarded as contingencies which the OPEC countries did not create. Because of Detente, and also because of the threat to Detente in the Middle East when the October war broke out, oil consumers in the industrialized West, and specifically the United States, were not able to intervene, militarily or otherwise, to keep oil prices within the limits which European economies, plagued by inflation and monetary disturbances, could stand.

This state of affairs was to bring into being a relationship, across the Mediterranean, of an unprecedented nature. The displacement of fabulous money assets from the European oil consumers to the Arab oil producers was not only made ~~ungrudgingly and with great reluctance~~, but with a view to keeping the transfers more nominal than real. It was claimed that the recipients, belonging to the underdeveloped world, lacked the infrastructure able to absorb the assets they had taken posession of. And so billions of petrodollars were regarded as a "floating" availability which should be taken advantage of. This is what recycling petrodollars is all about. It is also a central issue in the Euro-Arab dialogue.

True, the European Community could note with satisfaction that the Arab accumulation of oil wealth, though adversely affecting Europe economically, could be beneficial politically. It will have introduced a mighty incentive for social stability and political moderation into the Arab world. This could eventually help to overcome many stumbling-blocks still in the way of settling the Arab-Israeli dispute. Already Saudi Arabia has openly challenged OPEC's decision to raise oil prices by 10% at the recent Doha meeting, in the avowed aim of not disrupting European economies and of averting consequent social and political implications, despite the fact that the 10% raise was dictated by OPEC's will to keep oil prices in pace with growing world inflation.

Peace and stability are certainly of equal interest for both Arabs and Europeans. But for real peace and real stability to be achieved, essential requirements must be met. Peace and stability will not be reached on the basis of criteria alien to fundamental Arab national aspirations and rights. Otherwise the Arab peoples can only see the displacement of petrodollars to the Arab world as a western ploy to shift the Arab world back into the western orbit, rather than as the Arab weapon their leaders have so highly praised.

Many of the most advanced Arab countries, because of the Arab-Israeli dispute, suffer today from staggering economic difficulties. A parallel can be drawn with Europe, which emerged from World War II completely devastated. Thanks to American assistance, it was able to rebuild its economy. While Europe recovered, the USA did not get any poorer. Both parties benefitted. Can a similar formula be found for Euro-Arab cooperation, where Arab economies could develop without damaging Europe? Can petrodollars play for the Arab world a role similar to that of Eurodollars for Europe?

The basic ingredients of the formula boil down to technology versus capital: the Arabs need European technology exactly as the Europeans need Arab money. How best to combine these ingredients for the benefit of both parties? Which is the best formula?

- Is it the process, well underway, of recycling petrodollars, with Arab money buying equities, real estate in Europe or shares in European firms and plants?
- Is it the depletion of Arab money in the purchase of costly, sophisticated weaponry, beyond Arab security needs and often at variance with these needs?
- Is it the pursuance of joint ventures combining European technology and Arab capital in poorer parts of Africa and Asia -such ventures, with obvious neo-colonialist overtones, are now under consideration for Egypt.
- Is it to export non-dynamic, polluting industries to the Arab world as a substitute for importing raw materials and cheap immigrant labour?

Obviously all these formulas will benefit only one of the two parties. However, a redeployment of European industries can benefit Arab development, provided these are dynamic industries which would generate an all-round movement in the Arab economy. The technology needed by the Arabs is not only knowhow

embodied in equipment and machinery, but also new ways of thinking which can enable them to produce not only consumer commodities but also means of production. What the Arabs need is not to purchase European technology as much as they need to assimilate it.

But in seeking any formula, it is important to remember that where Arab oil is indispensable to Europe, technology which the Arabs need is not confined to Europe -or to the West- alone.

" THE ROLE OF INFORMATION IN THE PROMOTION
OF EURO-ARAB DIALOGUE"

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SPEECH BY MR. MUSTAPHA MASMOUDI,
SECRETARY OF STATE AT THE PRIME MINISTER'S
OFFICE WITH THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR
INFORMATION

AND

PRESIDENT OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL COUNCIL FOR
THE COORDINATION OF INFORMATION AND THE MASS - MEDIA
IN THE NON - ALIGNED COUNTRIES

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Mr. President,

Honorable Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I must, first of all, express my joy at being among you, in this magnificent and prestigious town of Florence. My thanks go to the organisers of this meeting, and in particular to the Vice-President of the House of Deputies and to the mayor of Florence who invited me to these discussions and who, through me, honour Tunisia.

It is from two standing points that I am going to develop upon the role of the mass media in the promotion of dialogue and the reinforcement of cooperation between Europeans and Arabs -firstly in my status as Secretary of State for Information and then as President of the Intergovernmental Council for the Coordination of Information between non-aligned countries.

This meeting comes at a timely moment when, throughout the Mediterranean, people are throwing "bridges", down towards a type of cooperation better adapted to the history of relations between Europe and the Arab World - relations which have been sometimes calm, and sometimes agitated.

Down through the centuries, the Moslem conquests, on one hand, and the Christian crusades on the other, meant that Europeans and Arabs were engaged in permanent conflict arising from, without any doubt, a lack of knowledge of one another. Such a situation can be explained

because information, in the sense it has today, did not exist at that time and communications were practically non-existent. But situations of conflict always tend up by giving rise to an awakening of consciousness which leads to the desire to change hostile relations to something else. And the saying which says :"you don't choose your neighbour" led to the persuasion that a change was necessary : to get rid of suspicions and give more meaning to those things which link the two edges of the Mediterranean, that is, historical relations, favoured by the economic, geographic and cultural situation -in a word, the relations of civilisation.

Today, relations between our two communities are more realistic and far seeing. And, if the Euro-Arab dialogue has been undertaken, it is thanks to the "political" will, which has progressively animated the two parties. On the other hand, if the dialogue still lags in launching itself on the road to a wider cooperation, it is due to certain hesitations on the European side which can only be explained a residue of mistrust born out of insufficient information on the intentions of and the truth about the Arab partner. Even more, on the European side, a point is made of taking up dialogue only from an economic angle, the political aspect being relegated to second place, if not what you might call totally ignored.

And yet, the need to never disassociate politics from economics does not need to be proved nowadays. It is evident that there cannot be development without peace, that these cannot be cooperation without stability. All the world knows that the Arab community suffers from an "abcess" that poisons all cooperation with Europe. Equally, all the world

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knows that the remedy for this "abcès" is exclusively political. The Arabs are convinced of the position Europe should take to resolve this political situation, thus opening the way to wider and more fruitful cooperation.

How many times must it be explained to the European partner that the situation which exists in the Middle East concerns not only the Arabs themselves, but also Europe, since the Mediterranean washes the shores of many European countries. In addition, the energy crisis has permitted the European States to grasp, once again, all the importance of this political situation. It must be recognised, however, that despite the hesitations, Europe has taken steps which the Arab side has welcomed with undisguised satisfaction and that considerable progress has been made in the field of economic cooperation.

However -and here I come to the subject which I am going to treat- this evolution of relations between the two communities has not been supported, on the European side, by an effort in the field of information. This effort should be made in such a way that European public opinion grasps the true nature of new relations between two worlds which have always turned their backs on each other. This historical "turning" really deserves explaining -popularizing even- to all Europeans, and beyond that, to all international public opinion. More should have been done to take advantage of the situation, the problems, of former adversaries which have today become partners in cooperation to create this osmosis between the peoples on the two sides of the Mediterranean and,

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beyond political or economic relations (at the level of a few individuals or groups) establish relations between men.

But, unfortunately, one can only deplore the "insufficiency" if not a certain deficiency, in the field of the circulation of information.

Equally, one must deplore the state in which we are generally bound to the role of mere consumers of information and foreign cultures. It is not that we refuse ourselves all openings on the rest of the world and its civilisations, but we would like to benefit from the right to inform ^{as we benefit from the right to be informed} other countries, our partners, of the realities about ourselves, our problems, our desires, our activities, our civilisations and that this information gets to them correctly and objectively, even when other methods are in charge of ^{its} transmission.

To us, more or less, the "sickness" from which information suffers in the contemporary world is that developed countries know little and often incorrectly, about less developed countries. Information about our countries is only given in the case of strikes, crises and other "shock" subjects and on other matters which we consider secondary and which are, in effect, signs of progress and development. Through ignorance, or bad intention, these problems are not placed in their real context and thus give a deformed image of us. And as far as our efforts and results on the road of development are concerned, they "interest only the Occidental reader".

As I noted at the beginning of this week, in this same town, at a colloque on Information organised by UNESCO, the current situation

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is affected by an evident imbalance in the flow of information -both as far as quantity and quality are concerned- between the developed world and the developing countries. At a time when radio and television programs from industrialised countries exceed 80 % of total emissions in certain developing countries, in industrialised countries, only very small place is given to programs coming from our countries. Even information which is of interest to millions of immigrants from the Third-World, who have come to give service to the industrialised societies, often does not have the place it deserves in these countries' media

This imbalance is even more obvious at the level of the exchange of news between press agencies. In effect, the international agencies provide to the various media of our countries nearly 75 % of the news used by them when in fact only about 25 % of the information diffused by these big agencies concern the countries of the Third-World, and more than two-thirds of humanity.

It is significant that during the meeting in Tunis last February of the General Commission on Euro-Arab dialogue, very little was made of this important meeting in the European press. Even more, the few information systems which published/diffused commentaries before this meeting did not hesitate to express scepticism shaded with hostility which was far from reflecting the official declarations of the European officials.

As far as the Arab-African Summit in Cairo goes, most European press organs condemned it to failure even before it was held and went even further to ridicule the results, which were in fact positive, of this meeting. On this subject, I cite as example the editorial written

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by the Editor of a large European paper which "attacked" the Arabs and outrageously injured them, the title of the article was "Petrol, and no idées", and I excuse you from its contents. However, the European press should have manifested its reconnaissance to the Arab countries for having contributed to relieving the load placed on Europe by granting nearly 5% of their national revenue to the underdeveloped countries in Africa.

Another example deserves underlining -it is recent and concerns the meeting of Foreign Ministers of Non-Aligned countries in New Delhi. A big international agency resumed in two words the results of the work "morosity and pessimism". On the same day, a story from an Arab agency commented on the same results in the terms "Realism and Modération". I leave it to you to draw those conclusions which impose themselves as a result of the resolution adopted at the end of this meeting.

It is useless to say that such attitudes are far from doing service to the communal objectives followed by the Arab and European States. They do in effect, draw attention to the few problems which persist between the two communities and prolong the misunderstanding which has been so hard to reduce, at a moment when the entire world is becoming conscious of the necessity to entirely transform international relations.

If this information is not balanced, if it doesn't win through objectivity and serenity, if it cannot change a past full of distrust and obstinate opinion (a past which politicians and economists are determined to bury) the Euro-Arab dialogue could, for a large part, be compromised. We are all too aware of the forces of the mass media not to express this fear.

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All the same, it must be recognized that there are encouraging signs which show a certain amount of optimism : another dialogue between Europeans and Arabs was established, in November 1976, at the level of Press Agencies.

And Tunisia is proud to have been chosen as the site of this first meeting. The object of this meeting -which grouped both East and West European countries, sitting at the same table, and their Arab partners- was to lay the first foundations towards building a new world order for information.

This conference resulted in the opening up^{of} new perspectives of cooperation and understanding, witness the constructive spirit which dominated its work, its decisions and communal choices. On this subject I would only like to cite the unanimous choice of the delegate from the Palestinian Agency "WAFA" as rapporteur general of the meeting whereas at the Euro-Arab dialogue of politicians, they got bogged down in deciding what should be the status of the delegation of the organisation for the liberation of Palestine.

Among the concrete decisions made at that "historic" meeting in Tunis was that to open a communal bureau for National Arab Press Agencies in Vienna, responsible with supplying Europe with information from their own countries. And certain agencies such as ANSA have offered to carry such information on their networks.

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Even more recently, a European agency has asked an Arab agency to supply it daily with a certain amount of information coming from Arab countries with a view to diffusing this information "as is" on its nature.

Tribute must also be paid to the initiative of the European radio and television stations, to diffuse, for the benefit of colonies of immigrants, programs in their own language produced by their own countries. I cite that which I know best the program "mosaic" from French radio television (FR 3). These, Ladies and Gentlemen, are some experiences which should be blessed : they are encouraging signs for the new initiative which must be taken at the level of all the European media.

Dialogue should likewise be established between organs of the written press (exchanges of publications, special pages devoted to their respective countries, exchanges of documentations, photos).

Cooperation between existing organisations which unit European radio and television on one hand, (UER) and Arab radio television (ASEU) must be better organised. On this point, I would like to incite an organisation such as EUROVISION to interest itself more in information proposed by Arab countries, even more so when they are active or associate members. The impact of audio-visual information, it is evident, is unequalled since it interested at the same time hundreds of millions of Europeans and Arabs. In this context, we must not be content to agree to the fact that the European reader, listener and television viewer does not interest himself in information in the Arab World, for it falls to the means of information to change this attitude. For proof, I need mention only the growing interest these days in economic information which,

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twenty years ago, was limited to a few specialised publications.

Thus, we see the perspectives for objective information mapping themselves out, circulating in a free and balanced manner ; that is the communal desire of European and Arab "informers" ; that is equally, the desire of the whole of the international community as is witnessed by the resolution adopted in Nairobi at the 19th General Assembly of UNESCO which was not limited to sharing the objective but to proclaiming its determination to contribute to its achievement. It is incontestable that we are decided, one another, to overcome our past differences to create new dispositions favorable to a true dialogue of civilisation appropriate to the more closer drawing together of our people and to joining them to our communal objectives of cooperation, comprehension solidarity, progress and peace. These are words to which, very sincerely we give their true meaning.

If the political economic and cultural institution are able to pay an important role/concretise this desire, the role of the methods of information still remains essentially an "avangarde" role. On it depends the success or the failure of the dialogue. This role consists of clarifying public opinion on the reality, the problems, the preoccupations and the intentions of the partner. It consists, equally, of correcting preconceived ideas, removing doubts and misunderstanding and preparing people to better grasp situation and, thus, be capable of closely following the action of leaders and even controlling them. The methods of information owe it to themselves to get the adherence of people to any action which tends to create optimal conditions for cooperation and drawing together.

.../..

These methods must, equally, place at the disposition of politicians all objective data which may help, and not hinder dialogue.

For his part, the politician owes it to himself to light the lantern of the journalist, who has the job of ensuring communication with the masses so that they may support the action he is undertaking.

These inter-actions between methods of information, leaders, and masses constitute a dynamism which will allow for the guaranteeing of the success of our task, on condition that the factors we call serenity, objectivity, sincerity, absence of preconceived ideas, dominate our proceedings at every step.

This is what is requested of our European partners, and in particular of their methods of information.

Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you

for your attention.

(6)

PROSPECTS FOR THE EURO-ARAB DIALOGUE

(5)

by

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PROSPECTS FOR THE EURO-ARAB DIALOGUE

The Euro-Arab Dialogue is a by-product of the October War and the energy crisis which was associated with it. While the War served to warn the world community against its apathy towards the conflict in the Middle East, the energy crisis provided sheer evidence of the economic interdependence between the rich nations and the poor nations. The economic difficulties which the Arab oil embargo brought to the economies of the rich nations in the West were the price they had to pay for having ignored the grievances of the Arab people for a long time.

The countries of the European Economic Community, being the major trade partner of the Arab World, were the first to realize the political implications of the Middle East conflict and the economic consequences of the oil embargo. In their declaration of Nov. 6, 1973 they sought to play a more active role in the politics and economics of the Middle East based upon their willingness and desire to help in resolving the conflict and in developing the Arab economies. Arabs in their quest for peace welcomed the new European spirit and initiatives and reacted favorably to the Community's call for cooperation. Therefore, the Europeans' attempts to look after their own interests and the Arabs' search for peace were the parents that gave birth to the Euro-Arab Dialogue.

In this paper an attempt will be made to identify the objectives of the Dialogue and define the main political and non-political problems that are limiting its potentials. The possibilities of developing the Dialogue into an effective instrument for achieving peace, stability and economic progress for both sides will be explored.

The Objectives of the Dialogue

Political, cultural and economic interchange between Europe and the Arab World is as old as recorded history. While economic and cultural interests have been the overriding objectives of the Euro-Arab contacts, military conquests and political domination had characterized the relations between the two regions in the past. The disappearance of European colonialism from the Arab World in the 1960's opened the possibilities for the establishment of better and mutually advantageous relations between the two regions.

Arabs and Europeans, being bound to each other by links of neighborhood, common cultural heritage and mutual economic interests, find in the Dialogue an opportunity to exchange views on a wide range of subjects. While it provides a framework for promoting friendship, it opens opportunities for cooperation on a region-to-region basis; and while it expresses the need for Euro-Arab cooperation, it symbolizes the joint will to realize it. But for friendship and cooperation to be long-lasting and mutually beneficial, they must be institutionalized.

The objectives of the Dialogue, as defined in the Cairo memorandum, aim at the establishment of special relations between the Arab countries and the countries of the European Economic Community. They include political as well as economic, social, cultural and technological cooperation. While the Arab countries stand to benefit directly from solving the Arab-Israeli conflict, Europe has a stake in solving that conflict from the security point of view. Politically the improvement of conditions in the Middle East will tend to limit the influence of the Soviet Union, and economically it will tend to help secure the continuation of the supply of Arab oil to the EEC countries.

While Europe has technology, markets and the expertise needed by the Arab countries to develop their economies, the Arab World has financial resources, markets, human resources, oil and other raw materials needed by Europe to maintain its economic prosperity. The European need for Arab oil and petrodollars is matched by the Arab need for Europe's technical and managerial know-how. And since the exports and imports of both sides are of a different nature, Arabs and Europeans stand to benefit directly and indirectly from each other's markets.

The ambitiousness of the Dialogue and the complicated nature of its objectives gave rise to certain organizational and conceptual problems. While the Arabs tend to emphasize the political aspects of the Dialogue, the Europeans have emphasized the economic and the technical aspects; and while the Arabs have been trying to define the principles of friendship and to lay down the foundations for cooperation, the Europeans have been trying to limit the range and the scope of the Dialogue to specific projects and areas of possible cooperation.

The economic pressures of the oil embargo imposed by the Arabs in the 1973-74 period provided the impetus for the countries of the EEC to introduce a political dimension into their relationships with the Arab countries. Therefore, Europe's interest in the political dimension of the Dialogue seems to be limited to those aspects capable of normalizing its relations with the Arab countries. The Arabs' search for a global solution to the conflict in the Middle East was the overriding motive behind their favorable reaction to Europe's call for cooperation.

Creating the conditions conducive to the development of the Arab world, and restoring the rights of the Palestinian people through a peace-

ful solution to the Middle Eastern conflict are the main objectives of the Arabs. Securing a continuous supply of Arab oil at reasonable prices, and recycling petrodollars through the Community are the main objectives of the Europeans. While the objectives of both parties are vital and legitimate they can only develop in a framework of confidence and mutually advantageous economic and political cooperation.

Difficulties Facing the Dialogue

The Arabs' heavy emphasis on the political dimensions of the Dialogue has been the Europeans' major problem in dealing with the Arab countries, and the European tendency to play down the political aspects of the Dialogue has been the source of most of the difficulties encountered by the Euro-Arab negotiators. While both parties aspire for better relations and more cooperation, mutual understanding is proceeding at a very slow pace.

The dialogue, being a unique experience in international relations, poses unusual problems of organization and conceptualization. Although the political difficulties are the most important, organizational, as well as technical, financial and economic difficulties exist and serve to limit the potentialities of the Dialogue. While they tend to impede its development they are threatening to cripple the whole process of negotiations. Though difficulties facing the negotiators are many and complex in nature, it is possible to reduce the magnitudes of most of them significantly by redefining the positions held by each side on the different aspects of the Dialogue.

The Political Difficulties:

The creation of the state of Israel in Palestine in 1948 has been

the major factor contributing to political instability and economic and social disruption in the Arab World. Since then the Arabs have been diverting an extremely large share of their limited resources (especially in the non-oil producing countries) to build up their defense forces, thus reducing the available resources committed to development. The Arabs for example, pay for a fighter bomber with funds capable of building new schools that could have housed more than 25,000 students, and pay for a modern tank with money that would have built new homes capable of housing more than 1000 families.

While Israeli wars have increased the economic and human burdens on the Arab societies, Israeli expansionist policies have been a continuous threat to Arab security, territorial integrity and political stability.

The Arabs' desire and search for peace is necessitated by economic, political, human and security reasons. Therefore, the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, from an Arab perspective, is a prerequisite for economic and social development and takes priority over all other internal problems and international considerations:

The desire expressed by the countries of the EEC to contribute to a global solution of the Middle Eastern conflict lacks the practical measures needed to transform this desire into an effective policy. While no steps have been taken to push for the implementation of the United Nations resolutions concerning the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Community has not taken any initiatives to try to narrow the gap separating the feuding parties. And as the Israelis continued to defy the UN resolutions and violate the four principles of the 5th of November declaration, the Community continued to support the Israeli economy. The failure to take

a firm position on the Palestinian right of self-determination, and the continued political and economic support extended to the state of Israel has had the effect of strengthening the Israeli occupation of Arab lands. In doing so, the Community is actually violating the human and political principles it claims to stand for.

"The inability of the Nine to reach a political accord with the Arabs also stems from their relations with each other and from prevailing attitudes in Western Europe... They are also more hesitant to become politically involved with the Arabs because of the priority they place on strategic concerns and on a greater sense of affinity with Israel."¹

The European objections to Palestinian representation on the Arab side and the signing of a preferred trade agreement with Israel in May, 1975 were the first difficulties facing the Dialogue at its inception. The PLO, being aware of the advantages of the Dialogue as a potential force for advancing the causes of peace, political stability and economic progress in the whole world, moved unhappily but willingly to participate in the Dialogue on the basis of a de facto recognition. And as the Euro-Arab relations were deteriorating due to the signing of the May agreement, it was the PLO presence which helped define the Arab position on this issue and ease the tension which was developing on both sides. Without the active participation of the PLO in the Arab preparatory meeting which was held in Cairo in May, 1975, the Euro-Arab Dialogue would have remained a potential without real prospects for actualization. While the PLO presence in the Dialogue has been a force for rationality, it helped consolidate the Arab political position and served to hold the Arabs together.

The Europeans, in deepening their position on the Arab Israeli conflict, will not be compromising their fundamental values or political integrity, but standing for justice and human rights. While the Community recognizes its vital economic interests in the Arab World, it fails to fully recognize its political responsibilities.

Organizational Difficulties

The many orgnaizational difficulties facing the Dialogue are not limited to one side, though they are more visible on the Arab side. While the Arabs as well as Europeans have their own internal difficulties the organizational problems that are contributing most to limiting the potentials of the Dialogue emanate mainly from the structure and functions of the General Committee. The General Committee, being the main body of the Dialogue, has the responsibility of guiding the Dialogue's other organs, supervising the work of all other committees and introducing changes deemed necessary to achieving the objectives of the Dialogue.

The two meetings of the General Committee held in Luxemburg in May, 1976 and in Tunis in February, 1977 proved capable of introducing few changes but failed to guide the working committees or to solve any of the problems they have encountered. And while they succeeded in including the political dimension in the exchange of views, they failed to deepen the interaction between the participants on both sides. In fact, the procedure adopted by the General Committee served to put an end to the intellectual interaction between the Euro-Arab experts and provided as a substitute a monologue type of exchange of views through a group representative.

The main difficulties that emanate from the present structure of the General Committee, and the duration of its meetings, may be summarized in the following points:

1. Being held at the ambassadorial level, it lacks technical expertise and becomes a consultation body without the responsibilities for taking any significant decisions.
2. The short duration of its meetings limits the ability to study in depth any of the problems or suggestions that may be referred to it for consideration.

As a result, the working committees have not been able to get any of their problems solved through the General Committee. Therefore, the considerable efforts exerted by the enthusiastic participants on both sides were undermined and frustrated. In fact, the ineffectiveness of the General Committee has caused the Dialogue to lose its momentum.

In order to enable the General Committee to take into serious consideration all problems and suggestions presented to it, and to develop the Dialogue into a framework capable of effecting an intellectual interaction between the men and ideas on both sides, we feel that the following should be introduced:

1. The General Committee should be held at the ministerial level.
2. All members of the working committees should attend the meetings of the General Committee.
3. The Committee should meet for a minimum of five working days, with two days devoted to a conference-type meetings to review the progress of the Dialogue in general. Such meetings will be opened to all the members who will be encouraged to participate in the discussions without any commitment to either side or delegation.
4. The creation of a general secretariat with two offices, one in Cairo and one in Brussels, to improve the communications and coordination systems at all levels.

Other Difficulties

The difficulties facing the Euro-Arab Dialogue are not limited to its political and organizational problems. All attempts to institutionalize cooperation are encountering difficulties of different magnitudes in almost all fields. Among the most important ones are those facing cooperation in the fields of technology transfer and trade.

European unwillingness to reach an understanding with the Arab countries governing the principles and rules of transferring technology to those countries stem from the following:

1. Fear of setting a precedent which might encourage other under-developed countries to ask for the same thing.
2. The belief that Arabs are not willing to pay the right price for the technical know-how they seek to acquire.
3. Fear of potential Arab competition.

Since many of the UN agencies and the so-called South-North Dialogue are trying to deal with the question of technology transfer from the rich countries to the poor countries, Europeans will have to face this issue sooner or later. The Community, being involved in a dialogue with the Arabs, is much better off to deal with the question at a time when her partners are prepared to pay for whatever knowledge they seek to acquire and can afford to do so.

The fear of Arab competition, while understandable, is not really a threat in the foreseeable future. While such possibility exists theoretically, it can hardly be considered an immediate problem. Though the Arab World is potentially one of the richest in the whole world, it is in fact one of the poorest: some 75% of its population is illiterate; only 50% of the children in 5-15 years of age group attend school; about

half the population still suffers from ill health and malnutrition; the population - doctor ration is in excess of 3500 to 1; not more than one third of all families live in decent houses; about 10% of its active labor force has emigrated outside the Arab countries, and most of its natural, financial and human resources are very much underutilized.

The gap that separates the Arab countries from the countries of the EEC, as the above-mentioned figures demonstrate, is very unlikely to be bridged for a long time. Therefore, it is unrealistic for any one to think that Arab industries are a potential threat to the European industries. On the other hand, any contributions Europeans make to help develop Arab economies will profit the European economies directly and indirectly, as we will try to demonstrate later.

The matter of concluding a preferential trade agreement with the Community has been one of the Arabs' main concern since the beginning of the dialogue. The Europeans so far have shown themselves unwilling to embark upon a global trade agreement with the Arabs. They claim that differences between the Arab countries and their commercial interests are such that a pragmatic approach is more applicable. This in fact is an attempt to preserve a limited approach, demonstrated in their adherence to the Lomé Convention and the Mediterranean policy, under which ten Arab countries have been included.

Arab oil exported to the Community, which is not subject to customs duties, makes up 10% of its total imports from the Arab countries. About 50% of the other imports are duty free since they come from Arab countries included in the Lomé or Mediterranean-type agreements. This means that

only 5% of all Arab exports to the EEC are subject to customs duties, which equals less than 1% of the Community's total imports.

Therefore, it seems that the Community's unwillingness to negotiate a global preferential trade agreement with the Arab countries lacks any substantial economic reasoning. Considering the positive impact the conclusion of such an agreement would have on the Euro-Arab Dialogue, it would be unreasonable for the Europeans not to take the Arabs' desire into serious consideration. Despite all these facts, the Europeans are not expected to consider negotiating such an agreement unless external political pressures are eased or eliminated. While the Arabs feel free to move ahead with their plans to expand and intensify their cooperation with Europe, the Europeans for reasons of internal division and external pressures, have not been able to pursue the Dialogue in the most constructive manner.

The Prospects for the Dialogue

The Euro-Arab Dialogue at the present time is an expression of friendship which each side is trying to extend to the other and a symbol of the joint will to expand cooperation between Western Europe and the Arab World. It is an unprecedented attempt to establish special relationships between two different groups of countries through an institutionalized negotiating process.

Although the progress achieved thus far has been insignificant, any problems that may be created or developed to impede negotiations will be viewed, particularly by the Arabs, as a sign of reluctance to pursue cooperation with the Arab countries on a mutually advantageous basis. Attempts to disrupt the process of negotiations and to halt the Dialogue

will be interpreted as a proof of the Community's unwillingness to commit itself to the development of the Arab countries in particular, and the Third World countries in general.

The future of the Euro-Arab Dialogue, and therefore the future of the Euro-Arab relations, depends heavily on the ability of each side to understand the other's needs and aspirations in a world of turbulence, challenge and continuous change. Both Arabs and Europeans have political and economic interests in each other's region which ought to be pursued and looked after. The Dialogue provides both parties with an opportunity to expand those interests and with the means to legitimatize them. To enter the process of give-and-take, which is very essential to the success of the desired Euro-Arab relationship, both parties have to define their needs, priorities, and aspirations and articulate their respective positions on issues to be discussed.

While Arabs have been able to articulate their political position they have failed to define their economic needs and priorities; and while Europeans have been able to develop a position on the economic dimensions of the Dialogue at this stage, they have failed to articulate their political position. Both parties, as a result, have failed to define together how the political dimensions of the Dialogue relate to the economic ones.

Internal divisions among the Nine countries of the Community have been an obstacle to any significant progress in the political field. The Community, informulating its political position, tends to defer to the most pro-Israeli position taken by any of its member states. Despite all

the political, economic and security interests the Community has in the Arab World, it has yet to assume its responsibilities towards promoting stability and economic progress in the region. Playing an active role in resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict will not only enhance Euro-Arab cooperation, but will contribute positively towards rebuilding Europe's status and power.

Since most member states of the Community believe that their own political stability and future lies in maintaining close relations with the United States of America, the Community has yielded to American pressures. While Americans imposed a veto power over any European political role in the Middle East, Europeans have been asked to avoid getting involved in the economics or politics of the Arabian Gulf. This position is not only preventing the Community from exploiting the potentialities of the Dialogue, but can be expected to deepen the division among the Nine when national interests are weighed against the importance of maintaining the American connection.

If maintaining strong political and military relations with the U.S. is a guarantee for world political stability, economic cooperation with the Arab world is the guarantee for world economic recovery. The continued reluctance of the Europeans to free themselves from American influence is being interpreted in the Arab world as playing for advantages without a corresponding willingness to take Arab interest into serious consideration.

While total involvement in the politics of the Middle East, which most of the Nine maintained during the colonial era, is dangerous and

unacceptable, total withdrawal is more dangerous and demonstrates an act of irresponsibility. Europe's political role and presence in the Middle East ought to be commensurate with the force of its economic interests.

If the stalemate continues in the Middle East, war could erupt again and probably before Europe gets over its economic problems. The Arabs, being at a disadvantage vis-a-vis Israeli military power, will be inclined to use their oil weapon. Since the 1973-74 partial oil embargo failed to accomplish its political objectives, the new oil embargo will most likely be a total one. While the previous embargo is estimated to have resulted in a \$30-60 billion loss in the American GNP, a total embargo will have a devastating effect on the world economy.

Since the EEC countries depend heavily on Arab oil, which supplies about 70% of the Community's oil needs, European economies will be the first to suffer from any renewed disruption of oil production. And if the partial embargo resulted in the present European economic recession, a new one, even if less than total, will definitely cripple the European economies.

If Americans succeed in resolving the conflict in the Middle East, which is unlikely in the near future, their rapprochement with the Arab World might provide the Arabs with an alternative to the Community. Therefore, Europe will be the main loser, regardless of what happens in the Middle East. And if the American move first to recognize the PLO Europe is bound to suffer.

It is very unfortunate that Europeans tend to underestimate the role they can play in solving the economic and political problems facing the

World community. For the Europeans to avoid misfortunes due to any renewed hostilities between the Arabs and the Israelis, and to benefit most from the opportunity provided by the Euro-Arab Dialogue, they have to assume a leading role in the search for a just peace in the Middle East. Only a contracted political agreement with the Arab countries can safeguard Europe against oil embargos and enhance its prestige and interests in the Arab World.

American and European interests in the Arab World are, to a large extent, contradictory. While both sides at the present time are competing for Arab markets, they may be competing for Arab oil and other raw materials in the near future, especially if Arabs decide to use their unrenewable natural resources rationally. The latest CIA(Central Intelligence Agency) report on energy has concluded that world demand for oil will exceed world supply by 1985. Estimates by other international oil companies while confirming the conclusion of the CIA report, have indicated that world oil demand by 1985 is expected to reach between 65-67 million barrels per day, and world supply is not expected to exceed 66 million barrels per day.
3

The economic, political and social systems in the West are built on the assumption that natural resources are abundant and inexhaustible. Therefore, modern economic systems are built to deal with problems arising from technological changes, but can hardly adjust to shortages in raw materials. Since natural resources are limited and tend to be exhaustible, a new international economic order in which region-to-region cooperation plays a leading role is the best way to avoid serious economic problems of an international magnitude.

It was always thought that economic interdependence exists mainly between the rich nations. Therefore, Americans as well as Europeans still believe that the economic recovery of one side would contribute positively and directly to end the economic troubles of the other. But the changes in the world economy since the early 1970's have proved that economic interdependence exists mainly between the rich nations and the poor nations. While the absorptive capacity of markets in the industrial nations of the West put together have failed to match the productive capacity of their economies, the energy crisis has increased their dependence on the economies of the poor nations. The failure to acknowledge this fact and adjust to it has been a major force contributing to the ever increasing economic troubles of the world.

Markets as well as sources of raw materials are needed by the rich nations to help ease their economic and social problems. Since the Arab markets are the fastest growing in the world, and the largest single supplier of energy, the Arabs seem to be holding one of the keys to the world's economic recovery. Therefore, a European commitment to development in the Arab World is at the same time a commitment to the West's economic recovery.

Considering the natural economic interdependence that exists between the Arab countries and the countries of the Community, it is disappointing to realize that the Euro-Arab Dialogue has not been able to register any significant progress. During the period 1970-75 the exports of the Community to the Arab countries have more than trebled, rising to 314%, while imports from the Arab World have almost doubled, rising to 191%. The EEC exports to the Arab countries constitute about 13% of its

total exports, and imports about 20% of the total, which makes the Arab World the Community's largest single trade partner.⁴

While Arab oil provides the Community with 70% of its oil needs, investment by the Arab oil exporting countries in the industrial nations of the West have reached \$56 billion, and while about 50% of Arab imports come from the Community, about 50% of its exports go to the Community, which is more than twice the total Arab exports to the United States, Japan and the eastern European countries put together.⁵

Europe's awareness of its security needs in the Middle East should encourage a more active role in the search for peace. Similarly, the natural economic interdependence between the two regions should make it more attractive to expand cooperation. And as competition between the industrial nations intensifies over the existing and the potential markets, the Community will feel inclined to make commercial concessions to the Arabs in order to guarantee a permanent access to their markets.

Mutual advantages gained by both sides, together with the betterment of understanding, will serve as a solid base, on which the aspired Euro-Arab friendship and cooperation will be built and enhanced. Since aspirations towards unity on both sides are being realized very slowly but gradually through the Dialogue, we feel confident that progress is forthcoming. And despite the gloomy picture in the short range, long range prospects are promising.

Footnotes

1

Alan R. Taylor, The Euro-Arab Dialogue: Quest for an International Partnership. American University, Washington, D.C.

2

Mohamed Rabie, The Future of Education in the Arab World, A paper delivered at a Symposium on "Arab Future: Critical Issues", Georgetown University, Washington, D.C., April 1, 1977.

3

Washington Post, CIA Foresees Global Oil Shortage, April 16, 1977.

4

Opening Declaration of European Co-Presidency, General Committee Meeting, Tunis 10-12 February, 1977.

5

Statement by the Chairman of the Arab Side, General Committee Meeting, Tunis 10-12 February, 1977.

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TEXT OF THE ADDRESS DELIVERED BY MR VIRGINIO ROGNONI VICE - PRESIDENT OF THE CHAMBER OF THE DEPUTIES

Ladies and gentleman, good evening, I am pleased to welcome you on behalf of the organisation which, together with Florence Town Hall, promoted this meeting: the Italo - Arab Friendship National Association, the Center for Italo - Arab Relations, the Italian Forum for Security and Cooperation in Europe and in Mediterranean, IPALMO (Institute for relations between Italy and African countries, South America, Middle East).

Our object is that of putting forward ideas and proposals for an always more significant cooperation between Europe and Arab World. These ideas and proposals do not mature nor find their place in an aseptic contest, but within a framework which is already rich of contests, lights and shadows.

This is why during the meeting, there will surely not be lack of good reasons to focus, first of all the situation of the euro - arab dialogue and of how from the diplomatic point of view, it is configured after the last meeting held in Tunis by the General Commission appointed to this dialogue.

The object is clear: Confronting the positions of the different countries and of the different policies, present in the EEC, trying to outline if possible, a common policy of the continuation of the dialogue and over the contents and the modalities of such a development. For this reason we have met here in Florence to listen to and to discuss about important reports on the subject. Authors of these reports speak on their own behalf but they represent besides a quite high level of technical and political culture, also prominent currents of economic and political currents in the EEC.

This restatement does not take place in a closed and reserved seat but in an open one, so that the meeting take the charac-

term of a frank debate with the very same ~~undetermined~~ operators - politicians economists, men of culture - of the arab world. We want and we wish a confrontation rich of contents, between positions which are still different and full of conflicts. So a debate which places itself within the wide and laborious dialogue between the European Community and the Arab World in its whole. If we shall succeed in attaining our object it will be the course of this meeting itself that will give us evidence of this; in the end.

Opening the meeting, I would like to outline the actual situation of the euro - arab dialogue as it has come out of the already mentioned Tunis meeting. It is well known that the final communiqué of the Tunis meeting served not to reflect completely the variegated contents and the different moments of the discussion which took place between the representatives of the nine countries of the EEC and that of the 21 countries members of the Arab League.

Infact the final text approved softens, for easily understandable considerations, the motives, also polemical which could be felt in the discussion especially during the first meeting day when the parties expressed their general attitude. In the conclusive communiqué satisfaction is evinced for the positive proceeding of the talks and the convergences realized, between the parties, in the evaluation of the middle - eastern problem are mentioned. On the subject it is well known that the positions of the nine countries of the Community, standing from the November 1973 bulletin, have undergone an evolutive process tending to gather even though with different shades and different accentuation around the three following items:

- a) With drawal of the Israeli troops from all territories occupied during the 1967 war;

- b) Recognition of the legitimate right of the Palestinian Arab people to set up its own independent state;
- c) Safe existence for all states, the State of Israel included.

As to Arab proposal to set up a permanent committee for political consultation the communiqué says only that the "NINE" will examine the proposal with the "due care". Nothing is said about the request made by the Arab side that the "Nine" acknowledge PLO as the only representative of the Palestinian people, nor of the request of Arab presence at the newt place ~~is to~~ of the Conference for the Security and Cooperation in Europe which/~~be~~ held in Belgrade. For what concerns the aspects of cooperation in the technical, economic and cultural fields the communiqué mentions the work of the competent commissions and emphasizes, in a ~~markedly~~ particular way the improvements accomplished especially in the agricultural fields. About the other questions which are considered delicate especially for the european countries, difficulties to meet the Arab wishes, the final tewt adopts compromised conclusions, essentially not binding which open new prospects, even though not immediate. Finally, the subject of financing studies for projects to be rcalized in the frame of the euro - arab dialogue, the final document mention's that the Arab party put at disposal fifteen milions dollars;it mentions ~~an~~ also the committee that should supervise the utilization of those sum and of that which will be appropriated by the EEC.

So, the communiqué has subordinated the divergences emorged, a emphasizing the concrete results accoplished; this has pointed out that another step was done on the path of dialogue. This is a correct evaluation if we consider the real difficulties of such a difficult and articulate dialoguc as indeed the dialogue between EEC conntries and the Arab World, is.

In spite of all the diplomatic prudence and forms, in the communiqué, there is a positiv aspect: it evidencies the two parties

belief in the necessity of developing the actual process. After Tunis the process continues and develops itself in the wider framework of the North - South dialogue even if, up to ~~now~~, date, it was not possible fixing the date for the convocation of the foreseen Foreign Ministers Conference and, even if no agreement has been attained as to the sitting up of a body apt to allow a permanent consultation on the political problems between EEC and the Arab countries ~~including~~ League.

The will of going ahead and the consciousness of the process usefulness for both parties are surely stronger than the difficulties, as it has appeared in Tunis meeting. All this is true, indeed, but not to idle on this truth it is necessary that the obstacles, just ~~because~~ because they exist~~in~~ and they are of different kinds even within the two parties , that these obstacles, we said be examined calmly and that they undergo a strict and precise analysis.

These things can be easily accomplished in such a meeting as this one , which have only one pregiudicial, that of the argued discussion, of the great mutual willingness to listen on the ground of a reaffirmed option of friendship and mutual interest.

So, what chances are there on the table?

Everybody can notice the different point of view from which the two parties look towards the dialogue; this diversity made someone say that, mischievously that it is not a dialogue but a double monologue.

The Arab friends underline the political aspects and, in this view, they assert prospects concerning to mention the most important points:

- a) An always more operating and unitarian european willingness at solving the arab - israeli conflict;
- b) The recognition of the PLO as representative of the Palestinian people within the sphere of the more general consideration

tion of the Palestinian people's national rights;
c) Participation of the Mediterranean Arab countries to the next Belgrade meeting of the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Certainly, these are delicate and complex questions on which the opinion of some European countries and of the Community in its Whole do not coincide completely between them, nor they do with the positions of the different Arab countries. But this are also the main political themes opened by the debate and for this we repropose them to the people attending this meeting.

In our opinion the unavoidable importance of political themes and of the divergences on them must not overshadow the themes and problems of the economic cooperation. We know very well what are the contents of this cooperation. We Europeans, ask the oil producers, Arab countries a certitude in the supplies and a stop in the prices rush. But, on the other hand, we must find the right solutions to the problems strongly underlined by the Arab countries of the transfer of technologies, of the protection of Arab investment in Europe against the risks of inflation and of ~~unforeseen~~ alteration changes, of the opening of european markets to arab products , the treatment of arab workers in the European Community.

Also those are delicate and complex problems which engage our meeting. They are so important that ~~that~~ they condition ~~the~~ those further developpments of the economic cooperation between the EEC and the Arab countries, upon which point all changes of positive evolution of the political framework and of the mutual confidence and solidarity...

As far as we are concerned - that is, for what concerns the associations which organized this meeting and which represent all the political, democratic and constitutional forces of our country - we would like to stress the need that the Community and the

Arab countries pass over the actual ~~final~~ phase, characterised by intense commercial business to a more significant phase of bilateral and multilateral cooperation which is already outlined by the treaties between EEC, the Maghreb countries and Mashrek. This passage is an important condition for a wider and higher political convergence and for the peace and security of all the European and Mediterranean area. So, for the extension of the security and cooperation system from Europe to the Mediterranean and for a peaceful Mediterranean, it is necessary to develop the economic cooperation and the approach of the two ancient cultures. We do not dream of an utopistic Mediterranean Community as a reproduction of what has already been in the ancient and in the middle age world, but of a Mediterranean which act as a bridge between the Arab, the African and the European Community. Even on this themes we would like to discuss in this Florence meeting and we would like to examine them freely and frankly, ~~now~~ without any officialism or diplomatic prudence.

To tell the truth, the euro - arab dialogue, its vicissitudes and its outcomes are some basic elements and factors of peace in the Mediterranean area and, therefore, for the whole world. But there is more: the euro - arab dialogue is an example for it shows us, in an important and interesting way, the wider dialogue between the North and the South; considering this an instrument for new and balanced and more just policies and economics in the world, it easy to understand the importance of them which in these days engages us and the suggestive direction which the discussion could take.

Can Europe stand the responsibilities connected to the development of the Euro-Arab Dialogue which is necessarily placed in a context having such wide and diffuse effects?

This is the final question which could emerge from this meeting and from its statements, based on three reports of the european

side.

Arabs can start looking at Europe as an interlocutor less conditioning than the two Big Powers. But which are the conditions? What the European common effort must be done to attain them and consolidate them.

For what concerns Italy, our country, feeling that it is Mediterranean nation and facing the consequent responsibilities, accomplishes the task of "being"Europe and of contributing, concretely, to the construction of its unity.

In fact, Europe's unity can be attained institutionally certainly; but it can have breath and real legitimate only by opening wide spaces to its self-governing political determination....

No doubt an extremely important direction -political, economic and commercial-is the one towards the Arab world and of this affection becomes seriously and producing, it can last and resist only if it is applied by an European common policy and not by this or that country's policy.

I know very well that this view is the outlet of an uneasy process and that in short and medium terms the relations between single EEC countries and single Arab countries do not loose their value. But these agreements should be made in that view which, in our opinion, is the only one to be adopted, also because it involves and drags with it the same political unity of the arab world.

Ladies and gentlemen, it was not my task to give a short summary of the three reports of this meeting; I only wanted to outline, on behalf of the Association that promoted it, a possible frame work.

I will add that we deeply hope the discussion to be frank and sereno enlivened by an objective researching spirit and by friéndship.

It is by this OMEN that I renew my greetings and my thanks first of all to the illustrious rapporteurs and, then, to all those

who, accepting our invitation, took part in the meeting; from them -Arab or Europeans- we wait for a contribution of ideas and experiences useful to the development of our dialogue.

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COMUNICATO FINALE

L'Incontro di Firenze sul dialogo euro-arabo ha riconosciuto che i recenti colloqui di Tunisi rappresentano un passo in avanti rispetto al passato avendo creato le premesse per il superamento della contrapposizione tra contenuti politici e contenuti economici del dialogo.

Tale contrapposizione ha finora condizionato una migliore definizione della finalità e dello sbocco del dialogo in atto. Il superamento di questa contrapposizione, secondo le più diffuse espressioni del dibattito fiorentino, deve essere perseguito con realismo, senza ambiziose forzature, ma con tenacia e fermezza.

Esso è condizione per nuovi sviluppi positivi in due direzioni poste in progressione l'una dell'altra: il conseguimento, innanzi tutto di una pace giusta in Medio Oriente, con il riconoscimento e l'attuazione dei diritti nazionali del popolo palestinese nell'ambito di un assetto politico di salvaguardia e di rispetto di tutti gli stati che sia frutto di una intesa tra tutte le realtà nazionali interconnesse.

poi

La creazione, nell'area del Mediterraneo, di un sistema di sicurezza, che sia da un lato, una specificazione rilevante del processo di distensione e, dall'altro, il risultato politico di un rapporto di fiducia fra l'Europa e i Paesi Arabi, e dei legami e sistemi di cooperazione economica, sempre più intensi e articolati, tra le stesse larghe geopolitiche.

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A tali sviluppi occorre che siano dedicati più efficaci e convergenti sforzi sia da parte dei singoli paesi della CEE, che da parte della comunità nel suo complesso. Infatti i progressi in atto vanno consolidati sia attraverso accordi multilaterali che bilaterali, a condizione che questi siano coordinati in una visione generale unitaria e aliena da interessi nazionalistici.

Il prossimo incontro di Belgrado che dovrà misurare lo stato di attuazione del trattato di Helsinki, può essere il luogo ed il momento adatto per porre l'esigenza di un ampliamento a tutte le nazioni mediterranee e ai paesi del mondo arabo, per coinvolgerle in un discorso più generale di pace e sicurezza.

L'incontro di Firenze pur consapevole degli ostacoli e delle difficoltà che permangono tanto nel quadro politico che in quello economico, ha espresso speranza e fiducia in tali sviluppi. Esso ha auspicato altresì che il dialogo tra i governi, dopo Tunisi, continui più speditamente e, rilevandone l'importanza, ha pure sottolineato come altri incontri non ufficiali tra rappresentanze politiche e popolari, simili a questo di Firenze, possano essere un fattore importante di spinta e di chiarimento dello stesso dialogo tra i governi.