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EXTRACTS FROM THE SPEECH ADDRESS BY  
GEORGE CONTOGEOORGIS, MEMBER OF THE  
COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

TO THE MEETING OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF  
TRANSPORT IN THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA

THESSALONIKI, 2 OCTOBER 1984  
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Europe's future depends to a large extent on the coherence of its Mediterranean front and the development of its links with its partners in the Near East and Africa. In this context, the development of transport is of vital importance. In my capacity as Commissioner responsible for Transports this difficult portfolio at the European Commission in Brussels, I wonder if the Mediterranean could not in fact constitute a model capable of helping us to overcome our internal difficulties, since in this area, as the Barcelona Seminar has already shown and your deliberations here should confirm, a radical change is underway in traditional thinking about transport and a new generation of techniques and technologies is emerging. Increasingly, in the Mediterranean area, the different modes of transport are no longer in opposition but complement one another. The fact that container and roll on/roll off traffic now account for two-thirds of total traffic compared with less than 20% in 1970 appears to me to be symptomatic of a process at the end of which sea transport and inland transport will be no more than links on the same chain.

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In summary the following reasons are given for the spectacular development of this new technique in the area.

For one thing, the physical features of the area give rise to 24 or 36 hour crossings for which roll-on/roll-off services are particularly suitable and efficient. Secondly, short distances variety of cargoes and low-tidal facilitate the operations. And thirdly roll-on/roll-off vessels do not require substantial port facilities and mechanical equipment. All that is needed is a ramp and the time spent by the vessel at the port is minimized.

In addition, the development of modular transport has been boosted by the change in the structure of traffic away from trade in raw materials and agricultural products towards trade in manufactured products. A big push was also given by the trade boom in the Middle East and the opening of the Suez Canal which brought new lines from Northern Europe and from Mediterranean ports in these areas.

Lastly, congestion - which is endemic in many Mediterranean ports - has provided an incentive for developing new technologies more rapidly than other routes. Improved vessel turn-around times, the priority given to efficient loading and unloading techniques, and the limitations of the time spent in storage have all helped to improve the interpenetration of inland infrastructures and give ports a completely new face.

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Of course, much still remains to be done, particularly as regards rationalizing and improving inland infrastructures. On the European side, the north west - south east route deserves particular attention. On the African side, the modernization of facilities in the context of the transport decade should continue and be intensified. On all the shores of the Mediterranean port and maritime management needs to be improved, the key words being training and computerization.

The Community is willing to support these efforts within the limits of its resources. Mention should be made, for example, of the contribution since 1982 from the Community budget for the financing of infrastructure projects. The Community intends to expand these programmes and to make appropriate provision for the peripheral areas, following the example of the 1984 budget, in which a contribution of 25 million of the 80 million ECU totally available are intended for the modernization of the north-south route in Greece and consequently the links of the European Community countries with Middle East.

These funds are in addition to the other Community contributions earmarked for the Mediterranean area by the Regional Fund (over 1.000 million ECU). Furthermore, loans by the new Community instrument (50 million ECU), and the European Investment Bank (also 1.000 million ECU) were granted for the same regions.

In the 1985 Budget the Commission proposed a total contribution of 110 MECU's for Transport out of which 30 MECU'S are for Greece. In addition, many projects are in receipt of the funds available under the agreements concluded by the Community with the Maghreb and Machrek countries and Yugoslavia and Spain. Other projects are envisaged in the context of the Euro-Arab dialogue, e.g. the study concerning the improvement of Syrian ports.

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I would also like to say what a good idea I think it would be, as proposed in Barcelona, to set up agencies responsible for coordinating the development of transport in the Mediterranean area. It would be an excellent thing if this idea could give rise to concrete decisions. If it were decided to establish one or other of these agencies in one of our Member States it would be an honour which of course the Commission which I am representing here would welcome and appreciate.

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