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EUROFORUMS

THE ARTS: The Delphi declaration

From Parnassus, the charter for the defense of European cinema and television.

"Act while there is time!" This is the message addressed to the governments of Europe by the 150 directors, actors, writers and critics of the audio-visual arts who gathered in Delphi from a score of European countries.

They were driven by a sense of urgency, these European intellectuals who went back to their roots by undertaking a pilgrimage to Parnassus, in the hope, perhaps, that Apollo and his train of muses would come to the rescue of a culture which saw the light of day thanks to them - and which even today owes its basic unity to them.

But a unity and identity which appear increasingly threatened, especially in the audio-visual arts. Gathered in the entrancing setting of Delphi the participants, over a 3-day period, drew up and adopted a charter intended to give a legal basis to the defense and future of the audio-visual arts in Europe.

The "Delphi Declaration" is the culmination of efforts since 1980 by the European federation of audio-visual film-makers, which groups some 6,000 European directors, headed by the Italian film-maker, Ettore Scola. It was proclaimed in the Stadium at Delphi, in the presence of the European Cultural Commissioner, Carlo Ripa di Meana, and the President of the European Cinema and Television Year, Madame Simone Veil.

Governments have not only the right to intervene in audio-visual matters but also an obligation. "In the name of liberalism," Mr. Scola declared, "they are handing over their cultural responsibility to businessmen, whose first concern is to refuse it." The charter of Delphi calls on governments to do their duty and prevent both the invasion of the cultural arena by the profit motive and the use of works of art to sell toothpaste and soap powder. Commercial television in fact confounds the rules of the market; instead of selling programmes to television audiences, it sells the audiences to the advertising companies.

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The Declaration adopted at Delphi reaffirms, to begin with, the right of each person to enrich his personality, the public's right to freedom of choice and the right of directors to express themselves freely. Audiences have the right, notably, to seek works as a whole, free from the intrusion of advertising.

The charter's 14 articles reaffirm the author's right "to claim the paternity of his work and oppose, at all times, any changes to it by way of additions, suppressions or changes to any part of it." Similarly, "the final editing of an audio-visual work is decided by the director."

As for the definition of author, "only the individual or individuals who make a film for cinema or television - the director, the author of the original work or of the screenplay - have a right to this title and to the exclusive and opposable property rights flowing from it."

"All forms of censorship, whether direct or indirect, are abolished," the Declaration continues. It also reaffirms the right of every people "to accede to the film and television works reflecting its social and cultural characteristics, language being the first of these." The public authorities have a duty, therefore, to safeguard cultural and linguistic identities by means of financial support. European governments must make a joint effort to support the development of the film and television industries of countries that are economically weaker and to favour the works of national minorities."

"A veritable cry of alarm," according to Mr Ripa di Meana, who stressed the importance of the fact that the world of the arts should have arisen to defend the audio-visual arts at a time when they are becoming not only an important cultural vehicle but also a major industry. "For the European Commission and the EC governments the Delphi declaration represents an invaluable basis for reflection on the measures to be taken."

EDUCATION: The EC Court of Justice strikes down discrimination ...

... in higher education and training courses abroad.

Workers who make their home in a European Community country other than their own have the same rights as nationals. This is the basic Community principle, which applies to access to education also, including higher education outside universities and vocational training, even when it is given in a third Community country.

The principle was reaffirmed by two rulings which the EC Court of Justice handed down on September 27. In both cases the Court held measures taken by Belgium to be discriminatory.

The first of them dealt with the registration fees which students who are nationals of countries other than Belgium and Luxembourg must pay. Belgium limits the number of students from outside the Belgo-Luxembourg Economic Union to 2%. And while it meets the tuition fees of students from within the Union, the others must pay a registration fee. With some exceptions, Belgian institutions of higher education have the right to refuse to register "foreign" students once the 2% quota has been exhausted.

In holding the system contrary to EC regulations, the Community's judges ruled in favour of the European Commission, which had brought the case, thus ending a controversy lasting three years. The Court had already ruled that European students need not pay the registration fees pending its general ruling.

It has now confirmed its earlier ruling, which applied to individual cases. As a result, students will feel a sense of relief. The Belgian educational authorities, on the other hand, will have to abolish the 2% quota as regards students from other Community countries, at least in the case of vocational or professional training. This is because the EC guarantees the free movement of workers only so far.

The Court found another decision of the Belgian authorities to be discriminatory. It involved Annunziata Matteucci, an Italian working in Belgium as a teacher of rhythmic dancing. She had applied for a scholarship to follow a training course in her field, offered at the Academy of Fine Arts in Berlin. The course in question was covered by a cultural agreement between Belgium and Germany. But as scholarships can only be granted to nationals of the two countries under this agreement, the Belgian authorities had felt themselves to be on safe ground

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in rejecting Ms Matteucci's application. The Court held, however, that as a salaried employee in Belgium, Ms Mateucci was entitled, under Community "legislation", to the same social benefits as Belgians. She could therefore take advantage of all the facilities offered Belgians to "acquire professional qualifications and gain social advancement."

The fact that the course was being conducted in another Community country was irrelevant. The Court had already ruled, in another case, that improving one's professional qualifications represents a social gain.

COMPETITION: EC regulations apply to everyone ...

... even companies outside the EC.

The European Commission has the right to fine companies which engage in price-fixing at the expense of customers in the 12-nation European Community, even though the companies in question may be registered outside the territory of the Community.

This is the main conclusion of a ruling of the European Court of Justice on September 27, in a case brought by the European Commission against some 40 manufacturers of wood pulp in the United States, Canada, Sweden, Norway and Finland.

The Commission had fined companies in December 1984 for violating Article 85 of the Treaty of Rome, which bans agreements between undertakings aimed at restricting competition within the EEC. Several of these companies, established in non-EEC countries, had challenged the Commission's decision in the Court of Justice. They argued that the Commission had no powers over companies registered outside the Community.

The Court has upheld the Commission's decision. For the Court, the location of the registered offices of the companies in question is less important than the countries in which their price-fixing arrangements is implemented. The European Competition Commissioner, Peter Sutherland, expressed his satisfaction at the Court's decision, which he saw as a "landmark" and "especially important in the light of the completion of the single market."

CONSUMERS: What's on my plate?

Two new directives on the labelling of foodstuffs sent to the Twelve.

Do you know how much protein, or carbohydrates, or vitamins or even polyunsaturated fats the attractively packaged foodstuffs you regularly buy contain? Should the manufacturer want to provide you with this, or similar, information on the nutritional value of his products, he will have to present it in a standard format, set out in one of the two proposals for Council Directives adopted by the European Commission and now before the EC Council of Ministers.

The European consumer is becoming increasingly aware of the link between nutrition and health. He is determined, as a result, to exercise an informed choice as regards what he eats and drinks. Producers, for their part, are responding by providing information on the nutritional value and composition of many of their products.

But only too often the information they provide does more harm than good because of differences in presentation or undue emphasis on one particular characteristic of the food in question. Governments are beginning to meet this situation by fixing labelling standards for foodstuffs.

Their efforts could hinder the free movement of foodstuffs, however. The European Commission therefore decided to bring forward a proposal originally scheduled for next year. It has drawn up two legal instruments that can not only respond to immediate needs but also allow Community provisions to be adapted to future imperatives.

Producers who want to keep their customers informed will have to use a standard format, so as not to confuse them. This labelling will be voluntary under the first proposal. But the Commission can introduce compulsory labelling under the second proposal, if evidence shows this to be imperative or if the manufacturer makes nutritional claims on the product itself or in his advertising. Forewarned is forearmed, in the supermarket as elsewhere.

SPORT: 115 medals for the EC at Seoul

To be shared among the Twelve for the present.

With the ending of the Olympic Games in Seoul, the time has come to draw up a balance sheet. While the Soviet Union led the field with 132 medals, the honours went to the East Germans, who garnered a total of 102 medals, for a population of 16.6mn.

As for the Twelve, they competed as 12. Even so, to find out how the Community as such performed, the medals won by the Twelve must be added up. With 115 medals in all, the EC was placed behind the Soviet Union but was well ahead of the United States, which secured 94 medals. Of course, the Twelve fielded far more sportsmen and women than the Soviet Union and the United States, but they were handicapped by their inability to field a united side in the team sports and relay races.

But the Twelve could demonstrate their unity at the next Olympic Games, which will be held in Barcelona in four years' time - that is, on the eve of the opening of the Single European Market, set for 1992.

The European Parliament wants 1992 to be declared an Olympic Year. It would give the Community an opportunity to meet the challenge of the other great powers and to strike medals showing its 12 stars.

AGRICULTURE: A year's free surplus given away in 9 months

The main beneficiaries this year: Spain and France.

The ECU 100mn.* which the European Community Council of Ministers had earmarked to finance the free distribution this year of some of the Community's agricultural surpluses to its neediest citizens is all but used up. Some ECU 97mn. had been spent by the end of September. Spain, with ECU 22mn., received the lion's share, followed by France (ECU 18.5mn.), Italy (almost ECU 18mn.) and Britain (ECU 15mn.).

Although no Member State was obliged to avail itself of these funds, all of them did so, prompted by memories of the help given to the victims of the cold wave in the winter of 1987.

The sum available this year was well below the ECU 160mn. spent in 1987. Because of changes in the make-up of the Community's surplus stocks, the items distributed this year have not always been the same as in 1987. Thus ten times less soft wheat has been distributed and half as much butter. However, the quantities of beef, hard wheat and olive oil have been larger.

* 1 ECU = UK£ 0.65 or IR£ 0.77.

UNEMPLOYMENT: Unchanged in August

But the situation is not the same everywhere.

The number of registered unemployed in the 12-nation European Community stood at 15.6mn. in August, an increase of 0.1% over July, according to Eurostat, the Community's statistical office. In the 12 months to August, unemployment fell by 0.4% in the EC as a whole.

But the Community-wide trend does not reflect the situation in individual EC countries. In the Netherlands and France unemployment fell by 0.2% and 0.9% respectively. It fell more sharply in Spain and Ireland (2.4%). Even more substantial falls were recorded in Belgium (7.2%) and Luxembourg (9.2%). In Britain the number of jobless fell by as much as 20.1%.

Unemployment continued to rise in other EC countries in the 12 months to August. The increase was slight in Germany (0.1%) and Greece (0.2%). In Portugal unemployment rose by 2.7%, and by 13.6% in Denmark and 18.6% in Italy.

INFLATION: Picking up again

Up 0.5% in August.

The rate of inflation picked up in August, when the consumer price index went up by 0.5% for the European Community as a whole, as compared to 0.3% in June and July. Most EC countries experienced this rise, which exceeded 1% in Britain, Spain and Portugal. Only in Belgium, Luxembourg and Germany did inflation remain moderate.

Even so, it has been accelerating in recent months. Prices rose by 3.6% in the 12-nation Community in the 12 months to August 1988, as compared to 3.2% in July, 3% in June and an average of 2.6% during the first six months of this year. However, the EC has been more successful in containing price rises than the United States (4%), but much less so than Japan (0.3%).

In all Community countries, except Belgium and Denmark, the rate of inflation in the 12 months to August was higher than during the average for the first six months of the year. In Portugal it had risen above the symbolic 10% mark and above the 5% mark in Britain and Spain.

INVESTMENTS: Recovery in the first half of 1988

Eurostat's experts give European industry high marks.

During the first six months of this year, the EC economy was growing at an annual rate of 3%; according to estimates published by Eurostat, the Community's statistical office, at the end of September. The rise, equal to that recorded by the U.S. economy, was attributed by the experts to a higher level of investment in nearly all EC countries.

The index of industrial production rose by some 3.5% during the first half of the year, according to Eurostat estimates, as compared to the corresponding period in 1987, when it rose a mere 1.5%. Production rose more sharply in the case of capital goods (6%) than consumer goods (3%) and semi-finished products (2.5%). The first semester of 1988 is seen by experts as one of the best this decade.

Industrial production rose in all EC countries except the Netherlands, where there was a fall in gas production. The largest increases were recorded by Luxembourg and Ireland - around 10% - followed by Spain, Portugal and Greece, where it was between 5 and 6%.