

**Summary of the First Meeting of the Reflection Group on  
“The Spiritual and Cultural Dimensions of the Enlarged European Union”  
(Brussels, 29 January 2003)**

As President Romano Prodi announced in his introductory remarks, the Reflection Group has been called to deliberate on the question of European identity and common European values in their relation to the social and political structures of the Union, which is about to take new shape due to the enlargement and the setting up of a common European constitutional order. If we are to build a Europe inspired by a sense of common destiny, the President argued, we need to reflect on the cultural background which allows for the specifically European phenomenon of a unity within diversity. Krzysztof Michalski proposed four topics to be considered during the debate: culture and religion as the basis for European solidarity and homogeneity in the face of upcoming economic and political challenges; ways in which these values are reflected in the socio-economical order; their relation to European foreign policy; and the possible cultural differences between Europe and the US.

Two central issues emerged during the discussion: economic inequalities and European solidarity. As Kurt Biedenkopf (1,3) pointed out, followed by Bronislaw Geremek (1), the enlarged Union is likely to undergo grave tensions resulting from economic differences between old and new member states, which may seriously undermine the legitimacy of the new order. In view of this major challenge, most if not all of the participants agreed on the need for solidarity, which could serve as the essential unifying force in the future Europe. Some of the speakers argued, that in fact it is in its own cultural resources that Europe may find solutions to future problems, since solidarity is a value deeply rooted in European history. Will Hutton (1,2) pointed out that European countries have a common successful tradition of coping with inequalities, that embraces ideas such as the social contract, the public realm and fair enterprise and is embodied in a variety of institutions. Simone Veil (1) and Bronislaw Geremek (1) emphasized the role of solidarity and social rights in the shaping of European cultural specificity.

However, a number of arguments were raised, highlighting the complex and problematic nature of the solidarity concept. Alberto Quadrio Curzio (1,2) distinguished between two major types of solidarity. While what he called ‘static’ solidarity refers to distribution issues, ‘dynamic’ solidarity is related to the process of growth and development and requires, as such, a distinct analytical approach. Kurt Biedenkopf (2), followed by Simone Veil (2), pointed to the essential distinction between institutional (collective) and personal (individual) solidarity. They argued that excessive collective solidarity may undermine personal solidarity attitudes and that both should be taken into account in their mutual relation. Silvio Ferrari (1,2) argued along these lines that European solidarity could be strengthened, if Europeans gained a sense of sharing a common cultural project. He also pointed out that the problem under discussion involves a distinction between core and peripheral values. Accordingly, in an attempt to grasp the nature of European solidarity, one should try to elicit the core values underlying it in order to distinguish solidarity in Europe – he was joined by Simone Veil (2) here - from its manifestations in other parts of the world. Michel Rocard (1) claimed, on the other hand, that these core values have always had universal vocation, which makes the very idea of European cultural specificity questionable. And when it comes to ways in which

solidarity is institutionalized, he argued, there are significant differences within Europe itself, related to two opposed, predominant models of the state, the British and the French.

The problem of solidarity as a European value reappeared in the context of the discussion about the differences between European and American cultures. Will Hutton (2) pictured the main tensions in historical perspective, focusing on two opposed conceptions of the social contract, that had been created by the English and American Puritans. Alberto Quadrio Curzio (2) pointed out that economic differences between America and Europe could be traced back to differences between philosophical premises underlying economic theories of human action reflected in policy. Michel Rocard (1) expressed an opposite view, questioning any substantial differences between European and American cultures. Even if we can witness conflicting foreign policy strategies (multilateralism as opposed to unilateralism), he argued, the official position of the US government should not be considered as representative for the American society.

Besides the question of the differences between Europe and the US, a number of further arguments were raised, regarding the relation between Europe and other cultures. Simone Veil (1) evoked an important aspect of the European tradition - solidarity with the world - reflected in policies of support for poor and distressed countries. Bronislaw Geremek (1) pointed to the need of creating a thoughtful Union strategy towards its closest neighbours, which might be based on Mitterand's conception of a European confederation. Silvio Ferrari's (1) contribution focused on future challenges that are to result from the enlargement of the EU to countries with orthodox religious background and the migrations of people from islamic culture. Following his point, Michel Rocard (1,2) emphasized the need for stressing the secular roots of Europe in intercultural dialogue and warned against the moral costs of European political separatism.

A problem that provoked disagreements as well as illuminating argumentation was the relation between cultural values and socio-political institutions. Kurt Biedenkopf (2) argued that in substance the state and the institutions of society are founded on values that cannot be created by political or institutional measures. Simone Veil (1) claimed that even though European communality of values has been seriously undermined, citizens of Europe have similar economic and political aspirations, which should serve as guidelines in structuring the enlarged Union. Bronislaw Geremek, on the other hand, expressed a belief in the Europeans' attachment for their common cultural heritage and focused on the question of how this shared allegiance could be transformed into active European citizenship. He pointed to the idea of Constitutional Patriotism, developed by Jurgen Habermas in the recent years, as a possible model for the new European political identity.

Solidarity emerged as the central problem of the first meeting and was agreed to serve as the main theme for the next session. Other values, that were proposed for further discussion, include: dignity (Geremek 2), tolerance (Veil 2), interdependence (Hutton 2), subsidiarity (Curzio1,2), self-doubt (Geremek 1, Rocard 1). It was confirmed that a report from the first meeting will be produced by the IWM and sent to all members along with those who were not present, who will then deliver further comments. As the Chairman announced, about four meetings on different topics are planned, along with public debates to be organized in collaboration with local media in some major capitals of Europe in order to foster public discussion on the relevant issues. The final report will be presented to the European Commission.