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REPORT

ON LOCAL DEMOCRACY : A CIVIC PROJECT

(Rapporteur : Mr Leonard DUVALL, United Kingdom)

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

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I. INTRODUCTION

I.1 The Vienna Declaration

Like the other organs of the Council of Europe (Parliamentary Assembly, Committee of Ministers, Court of Human Rights), the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (CLRAE) has constantly worked to promote mutual respect and the application of the principles that determine peaceful co-existence in civilised societies.

In this perspective, the Declaration and Plan of Action on combatting racism, xenophobia, anti-semitism and intolerance adopted by the Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe member states in Vienna in October 1993 have merely given the CLRAE further reasons to take action in areas to which it has already made an important contribution (such as multi-cultural integration, citizenship and extreme poverty, the implementation of the right to housing, participation by young people in local and regional life, the protection of Gypsies and other minorities).

The Plan of Action comprises three fundamental strategies:

- the organisation of a European Youth Campaign (which was officially launched on 10 December 1994);
- the establishment of a "European Committee to combat racism and intolerance", to review the efficacy of the legal, political and other measures taken by member states to combat racism and intolerance, with a view to improving them where necessary;
- the strengthening of intergovernmental co-operation.

The role of local and regional authorities in implementing the Plan of Action was referred to several times by the Heads of State and Government, who also approved the principle, at the same Summit, of the creation of our Congress as a consultative body truly representative of both the local and the regional authorities in Europe.

I.2 The contribution of the CLRAE to the Council of Europe Campaign and Plan of Action

As suggested above, the CLRAE is in a position to make a specific contribution to the success of the Campaign and Plan of Action, both in principle and in terms of action in the field.

Of all the texts it has adopted in recent years¹, the Congress considers that the best way to combat lack of respect, intolerance and physical violence, and the inevitable consequences of such behaviour, is to reaffirm and regularly update the democratic principles of free and civilised peaceful co-existence and to devise new strategies for achieving this.

¹ Including:

- Res. 232 on autonomy, minorities, nationalism and European Union;
- Res. 236 on a new municipal policy for multi-cultural integration in Europe and the Frankfurt Declaration;
- Res. 237 on the Charter on the Participation of Young People in Municipal and Regional Life;
- Res. 243 on Citizenship and Extreme Poverty: the Charleroi Declaration;
- Res. 244 on the Right to Housing and its Implementation by Local and Regional Authorities;
- Res. 249 on Gypsies in Europe;
- Rec. 5 on Europe and its elderly people: towards a pact between generations.

The Congress intends in particular to base its efforts on Resolution 236 and the Frankfurt Declaration on "a new municipal policy for multi-cultural integration in Europe", and on Resolution 243 and the Charleroi Declaration on "Citizenship and extreme poverty".

These texts stress the need for a new European social bond based on citizenship and respect for others, and the importance of comprehensive, coherent and forward-looking policies to combat all forms of exclusion and marginalisation: as such, they are at the very heart of any democratic project, while at the same time illustrating the specificity of the CLRAE's efforts in favour of tolerance.

On the basis of these principles, the CLRAE intends not only to engage in a battle "against intolerance", but above all to take comprehensive, integrated action "in favour of tolerance and mutual respect". In this respect the CLRAE contribution to the Council of Europe's Campaign and Plan of Action consists in revealing the economic, social, political and cultural reasons behind the attitudes that lead to intolerance and rejection of others, and on this basis encouraging the emergence of positive attitudes and implementing effective prevention policies.

A veritable observatory of local realities and associations, the CLRAE addresses local, regional and national authorities on the one hand, encouraging exchanges of experiences and the implementation of common policies and actions, while on the other hand it works in partnership with particularly representative NGOs, through which anybody, any citizen, may join in the actions proposed by the Congress.

The Congress therefore immediately set up a "working group" to develop its contribution to the Campaign and the Plan of Action. Its first decision was to organise a Hearing of municipalities and associations conducting bold projects, to show the other cities and regions of Europe, but also the media, citizens, associations and governments of member states how determination and commitment can open up new horizons for democracy on our continent.

The Hearing was held at the Council of Europe on 20 February 1995, on the theme: "Local Democracy, Citizenship and Tolerance: a project for an exemplary democratic town".

At the same time, the Congress has supported several initiatives in the context of the Youth Campaign against Intolerance: as a first step, on the occasion of the launching of the Hearing throughout Europe, the Congress invited local authorities to help European youth by supporting the organisation of local campaigns against intolerance.

At present, the CLRAE is supporting the "European Youth Train" project, with trains crossing the continent during the first week of July 1995 (from 3-9 July) and converging in Strasbourg, for European Youth Week, from 9-16 July 1995. Mr Tchernoff, President of the CLRAE, has written to the local and regional authorities asking them to organise welcome ceremonies in the stations where the trains stop, and various events around the themes of tolerance and respect for others.

II. LOCAL DEMOCRACY, CITIZENSHIP AND TOLERANCE: THE HEARING OF 20 FEBRUARY 1995

The Hearing was an excellent opportunity to compare local methods and schemes for combatting intolerance and the different forms of exclusion it engenders. Each participating city made its contribution to the development of a project for an "exemplary democratic town", this being the driving force behind the draft recommendations which are reproduced in a separate text.

The presence of representative non-governmental associations made the debates particularly lively. The different local policies were assessed, so to speak, in the light of the direct experience of NGOs working with people and groups who are victims of intolerance and exclusion. It is no exaggeration to say that the project for "an exemplary democratic town" which this Hearing was designed to propose to Europe was considerably enhanced as a result.

The first opening address was given by Mr Tchernoff, President of the CLRAE, followed by Mr Leuprecht, Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe, and Mr de Puig, representative of the Parliamentary Assembly.

From the outset, Mr Tchernoff stressed that the main ambition of the new Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe was to protect and reinforce the principle of local autonomy, and that its primary objective was to work to renew public policies, based on the values of liberty and democracy, by promoting active citizenship and participation.

In the face of the horrors of the second world war, the violence perpetrated under the Communist regimes, and the atrocities currently being committed in former Yugoslavia, it was urgent to consider what role the Council of Europe should play to defend the rule of law and democracy. In this respect Mr Tchernoff stated quite forcefully that it was essential to make sure that principles which had been solemnly adopted were effectively applied and respected.

The local and regional authority representatives in the CLRAE had a vital role to play in this respect, for they were in direct contact with the needs and problems of the people. Mr Tchernoff stressed that the Hearing was a major contribution by the CLRAE to the battle against intolerance, its primary objective being to present the towns and regions of Europe with practical examples to follow, by proposing a genuine project for an exemplary democratic town.

Mr Tchernoff concluded by addressing European youth, which was well represented at the Hearing, to deplore the fact that the economic, social and political crisis a number of industrialised countries were going through was undermining solidarity between the generations and, in so far as young people were becoming increasingly marginalised, was encouraging racism and intolerance.

However, young people were the foundation on which the society of tomorrow would be built, so it was essential that we made it possible for them to play an active part in public life: this meant encouraging the creation of associations of young people (such as clubs, cultural centres, neighbourhood associations) all over Europe, with particular emphasis on central and eastern

Europe. It also meant implementing the Charter on the participation of young people in municipal and regional life adopted by the former Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe.

After having spoken on the main activities and objectives of the Youth Campaign and the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, Mr Leuprecht presented some different initiatives which have been realised in the context of the programme on teaching history, aiming to eliminate prejudices through this and in the program on media which intends, inter alia, to awake consciences on the problems of racism and intolerance.

Mr de Puig began by stressing the need in our increasingly multi-cultural and multi-racial societies to favour dialogue and mutual knowledge. In this respect, education had a central role to play in the battle against intolerance.

For years now, Mr de Puig continued, the Parliamentary Assembly had been denouncing racism, xenophobia and all other forms of intolerance: inter alia the representatives of the 34 member states had addressed such questions as the rights of migrant workers, religious tolerance, exclusion, minority languages and just recently, history teaching in Europe.

Before concluding, Mr de Puig highlighted the specific nature and the importance of the work of the local and regional authorities: not only did they make sure that laws and regulations adopted by parliaments and governments were properly applied, but they were also in direct contact with the people concerned, including both the victims and the perpetrators of acts of racism and intolerance.

Mr Zahn, Chairman of the Congress' Working Group on the Council of Europe's Campaign against Intolerance, chaired the meeting during the introductory statements by Mr Kpenou, who read a message from Mrs Ogata, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and Mrs Trautmann, Mayor of the City of Strasbourg and member of the European Parliament.

Mr Kpenou said that large numbers of refugees (more than 23 million at present) and displaced persons were increasingly the victims of prejudice, racial discrimination and intolerance.

Consequently, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees could but welcome the Council of Europe's decision to adopt a Plan of Action against all forms of intolerance. It was important to drive home the principle that the presence of different ethnic groups and cultures was not a threat for the Council of Europe, but an opportunity to foster the birth of a multi-cultural society based on a tradition of tolerance and human rights.

Amongst the many courses of action open to local and regional authorities for promoting tolerance towards refugees and asylum seekers, Mr Kpenou mentioned:

- the promotion of strictly correct information in order to "defuse" prejudices against foreigners;
- the organisation of awareness campaigns and education in tolerance;
- training for civil servants in various fields, such as education, the police force, health and social services.

The city was at the heart of Mrs Trautmann's statement, being the level at which the consequences of the economic and social crisis and the undermining of the rule of law were becoming particularly clear and ominous. There was no denying, for example, that citizens were becoming increasingly detached from political life and generally more isolated, and that this was weakening social cohesion and was frequently the cause of violence and intolerance.

The city was still the first bastion of democracy, however, and it was in the city that the battle for a society of inclusion and for genuine local democracy should be waged.

Mrs Trautmann mentioned various examples of projects set in motion by the city of Strasbourg to foster the participation of all citizens in public life by establishing a new form of "residential citizenship":

- the Foreign Residents' Council, which could question the authorities, make proposals or participate in their work in various ways;

- the Youth Council, which had similar powers and on which young people of all origins were represented;
- the city's activities as a "city of asylum", as part of an initiative of the International Parliament of Writers;
- efforts to foster the rehabilitation of disabled people;
- the formation of a municipal committee on elderly people.

Mrs Trautmann concluded by stressing the need to encourage dialogue and co-operation between the different sectors of the population: in Strasbourg a city-wide community project had been developed with the help of neighbourhood committees, consultations and meetings between the inhabitants and the public authorities.

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The remainder of the Hearing took the form of three working sessions devoted to the following themes:

- enabling minorities and foreigners to participate in community life;
- combatting social exclusion: strategy for a "civic democracy" project;
- safeguarding freedom of expression (including freedom of association and participation) for the building of a tolerant society.

Each working session was followed by a debate in the course of which numerous questions were put to the rapporteurs.

The speakers in the first working session, under the chairmanship of Mr Slafkovsky, were Mr Demszky, Mayor of the City of BUDAPEST, Mrs Del Mugnaio, Deputy Mayor responsible for Social Affairs of the City of BOLOGNA, and also Mr Gheorghe, Secretary and Co-ordinator of the Roma Centre for Social Intervention and Studies (Bucharest), Mr Menebhi, Vice-Chairman of the Migrant Forum, and Mr Cortes Tellez, President of the National Campaign Committee in Finland.

The speakers in the second working session, chaired by Mr Duvall, were Mr Taylor, Leader of NOTTINGHAM City Council, Mr Van Cauwenberghe, Mayor of CHARLEROI, and Mrs Von Viegen, Alderman of the City of HAARLEM, as well as Mr Brand, Secretary General of the International Movement ATD Fourth World, and Mr Franco, Vice-President of the Council of European National Youth Committees (CENYC).

The speakers contributing to the third working session were Mr Rupel, Mayor of LJUBLJANA, Mrs John, Commissioner for Immigration Questions for the Senate Department for Social Affairs of the City of BERLIN, plus Mr Salmon, Secretary General of the International Parliament of Writers, Mrs Buitenweg, Vice-President of the European Co-ordination Bureau of Youth Organisations (ECB), and Mr Merminod, Executive Secretary of the European Ecumenical Committee for Church and Society.

The first part of this third session was chaired by Mr Duvall and the second part by Mr Martinez Lopez.

In his closing address, Mr Zahn said that there was no denying all the forms of economic, social and political exclusion and rejection of which individuals, families and groups were victims in Europe, often as a result of indifference, intolerance and racism. This rejection and exclusion took a wide variety of forms and was encountered in so many fields that combatting them effectively became all the more difficult and delicate. A very broad approach was therefore required, with a series of concrete actions leading to a project for an exemplary democratic town. "The City must be considered as a *veritable integration workshop*", said Mr Zahn.

III. TOWARDS A PROJECT FOR AN EXEMPLARY DEMOCRATIC TOWN: CONDITIONS REQUIRED

We shall now examine to what extent the Hearing contributed to the outlining of a project for what might be called an exemplary democratic town.

The idea was that policies actually applied in practice and projects currently under way in different parts of our continent could be used as the raw material for a valid model applicable to a multitude of other European towns and associations.

The different written and oral contributions and the ensuing debate all highlighted the need to renew social cohesion in Europe based on a new approach to citizenship and participation.

Several prior conditions were required before this could be achieved. Two in particular were essential because they coincided with strategies already employed here and there in Europe: the first was to create a society of inclusion, which meant full civic participation in community life by all ethnic, religious and social minorities, combatting all problems of social, economic and political exclusion and banishing xenophobic, racist, anti-semitic, violent, discriminatory or insulting behaviour.

The second was to open up society, the city (the region, the country) to mutual understanding of differences and to "multi-culturalism".

The material available, particularly after the Hearing of 20 February, is classified hereafter into three sub-sections.

Note, however, that there are no airtight separations between them. The examples have been classified in one category or another according to what seemed to be their main characteristic, but was never their only characteristic. The order in which they are presented should make it easier to move from one category to another.

A. For a tolerant and united, open, multicultural, cosmopolitan and democratic European town

LJUBLJANA **Solidarity: an answer to war**

Since the beginning of the war in former Yugoslavia, Ljubljana has had to cope with a massive influx of refugees (6,000 by 1 February 1995): they live in makeshift accommodation and unemployment is one of their major problems. Concerted action is being taken by the city and various organisations to provide the refugees with meeting places and the prospect of work.

Inter alia, Mr RUPEL, mentioned the city's efforts to provide refugee children with schooling and gradually to integrate some of them into the city's education system.

Initially, during the 1991-1992 school year, lessons for refugee children were held outside the city's schools, in encounter centres. In the following year, because of the increase in the number of children, the lessons were held partly in encounter centres and partly, in the afternoon, in the city's schools. In school year 1993/1994, 1060 refugee children attended the four primary schools in Ljubljana.

On the question of employment, Mr Rupel said the city was supporting the efforts of a number of intellectuals from Sarajevo by giving them the possibility of working in cultural institutions. Several encounters between the Slovenian culture and that of the refugees had already taken place through television programmes, art exhibitions, etc.

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HAARLEM

An open and tolerant welcome

Haarlem has always been a melting pot of different races, with a long tradition of hospitality.

Living conditions are now becoming increasingly difficult for more and more people and the risk of exclusion is growing. The 8,000 or so immigrants and foreigners living in Haarlem are undeniably amongst the least privileged categories of the population and therefore the most vulnerable to marginalisation.

The unemployment rate among the immigrant population is three times higher than in the autochthonous population, they have a lower-than-average level of schooling and they often live in uncomfortable, precarious accommodation.

For resident foreigners (refugees or asylum seekers), the city has launched the "WELCOME NEWCOMERS" programme, providing assistance in three main areas:

- learning the Dutch language
- employment
- integration into the majority population.

Immigrants receive assistance as soon as they arrive: a "supervisor" explains to newcomers what services the City offers and how they can take an active part in the programme.

The ultimate objective of this programme is to enable immigrants to play an active role in society and to participate fully in the life of the community: Mrs VAN VIEGEN said that the City had already achieved some very positive results and that other Dutch cities were following its example.

She summarised the lessons to be learned from the experience and the main principles that should be borne in mind:

- relations between the host city and the newcomer receiving assistance had to be active, almost contractual in nature, and to include reciprocal rights and duties;

- active and spontaneous participation by immigrants in local life had to be encouraged through incentives rather than by imposing regulations and restrictions in an authoritarian manner;
- programmes like the one set up in Haarlem were a worthwhile investment, designed as they were to foster the full integration of newcomers into the local community. Cities which embarked on such programmes should receive more assistance from the different European social funds;
- speedy integration was the best way to prevent problems;
- successful integration programmes contributed to the development of society as a whole, and could help to contain the expansion of extreme right-wing movements.

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BOLOGNA: Cosmopolitan integration

By 31 December 1994 there were more than 6,800 aliens residing in Bologna, mostly from Morocco, the Philippines, China, Tunisia and former Yugoslavia.

Most of the refugees from former Yugoslavia are of Rom origin.

In spite of the efforts made by the city on the one hand and the associations on the other, the lack of sufficient material and financial resources is making integrating the immigrants into the social mainstream increasingly difficult, and the first signs of intolerance and racism are beginning to show in the majority population.

To create the proper conditions for integration, additional resources must be mobilised by the economic institutions and by private enterprise.

Having thus sketched the situation of immigrants in her city and the material obstacles to their integration, Mrs DEL MUGNAIO described the principles and programmes adopted by Bologna in its strategy to become a multi-cultural city:

- favouring the acknowledgement of citizen status for immigrants, which meant they must have the right to participate in public life at the local level and play an active part in the decision-making process (with the power to state their opinion and to make suggestions).

In December 1993 the municipal council had approved a text recommending that aliens be allowed to participate in local elections².

² Several times during the Hearing, speakers stressed the urgent need for those members of the Council of Europe who had not yet done so to ratify the European Convention on the Participation of Foreigners in Public Life at local level, with a view to its implementation and enforcement. Thus far the Convention has been signed by Denmark, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom and ratified by Italy, Norway and Sweden.

- Implementing a "global" policy against exclusion: this policy had to concern all underprivileged groups, in order to avoid antagonism and intolerance, and at the same time, in view of the interactivity between economic and social problems, it should cover various different fields (employment, housing, medical care, schooling, etc).
- guaranteeing equal access to all public services, inter alia this meant respecting cultural and linguistic differences.

The Bologna City Council had set specific programmes in motion in this field, for example by introducing cultural and linguistic intermediaries in the public services (health care, social services, education).

- Promoting communication and mutual knowledge, to throw up a veritable "screen against racism".

In conjunction with several NGOs and voluntary groups the City Council had produced a bilingual (Arabic/Italian) magazine and a television programme on North-South relations in the world.

- Paying particular attention to children, women and families. Innovative projects set up by the city included:
 - * educating children: foreign children attended the same classes as Italian children and received extra linguistic support. The municipality had also implemented a series of initiatives in favour of the reception, settling and integration of minors of foreign nationality, including training and refresher courses for teachers and educators, cultural intermediaries to facilitate communication between parents and educators, the opening of places where people, particularly mothers, of different ethnic origins could meet and talk, and the teaching of foreign cultures and customs.
 - * Services and opportunities for foreign women and their children: specific welcome and support facilities would be set up in 1995.
 - * Development of family policies:
 - a) by helping to reunite families: in the initial phase Bologna was taking part with other Italian and European cities in the MED URBS project with a view to setting up an information service between Morocco and Italy to help Moroccan women who wanted to join their husbands in Italy.
 - b) Through assistance to families: the municipality had granted them certain tax rebates and intended to set up new public services (education, health, leisure). "Family centres" had also been set up all over the city to provide Italian and foreign families with places where they could meet and help one another.

**The activities of the CLRAE network of towns
on
"provision for Gypsies in municipalities"**

The Gypsy question, and particularly the problem of violence and discrimination against Gypsies all over Europe is an important aspect of the Council of Europe's Campaign and Plan of Action to combat intolerance.

For a number of years now the Council of Europe has been very active in favour of Gypsy populations, both through texts adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly³ and through the texts⁴ and activities of the CLRAE, for example the creation of this network of towns and the organisation in July 1994 of a Hearing on "the contribution of Gypsies to the construction of a tolerant Europe". The conclusions of this Hearing and the activities of the Network, inter alia, are the subject of a report presented by our colleague Mr Slafkovsky and of a draft resolution and recommendation.

A working group has also been set up by the Congress on the question of "provision for Gypsies in municipalities", with instructions, inter alia, to develop the activities of the Network and to extend it to other towns and cities.

Below we present some of the main measures taken by the cities in the Network, since local efforts to combat discrimination against Gypsies clearly have their place in a project for an exemplary democratic town.

The Network was set up in response to Resolution 249 on "Gypsies in Europe: the role and responsibility of local and regional authorities". As stated in the draft resolution that accompanies the Slafkovsky report, this Network, which should be adopting a constitutive charter in the near future, is "... a testing ground for good practice and sound examples in relations between local and regional authorities and Gypsy communities to be developed through dialogue and pooling experience. It is a particularly suitable means of helping prevent conflicts and finding solutions to urgent problems."

The CLRAE sent a questionnaire to the cities in the Network (Amsterdam, Bologna, Budapest, Dublin, Liptovsky Mikulas, Pardubice, Ploiesti and Strasbourg) to assess their experience, their current situation and their main preoccupations.

So far answers have been received from Dublin, Liptovsky Mikulas, Pardubice, Ploiesti and Strasbourg, and from Marseilles and Co. Kilkenny (Ireland).

They reveal, first of all, that the number of Roma/Gypsies varies considerably, from 30 in Kilkenny to 20,000 in Alsace. Two difficulties have come to light: for one thing, it is not always possible to obtain official figures as not all towns carry out a census of Roma/Gypsies; for another, some towns give the number of individuals, others the number of caravans or the number of families.

With regard to nationality, the majority of Roma/Gypsies are nationals of the countries in which they reside. They are mostly sedentary (except in Marseilles) and as a rule they do not own the houses or the land where they live. Most Roma/Gypsies are in unskilled work and are frequently

³ Such as Resolution 1203 (1993) on Gypsies in Europe.

⁴ Such as Resolution 125 (1981) on "the role and responsibility of local and regional authorities in regard to the cultural and social problems of populations of nomadic origin" and Resolution 249 (1993) on "Gypsies in Europe: the role and responsibility of local and regional authorities".

involved in trading (chiefly street vending). The general trend is to send children to school, though it varies considerably.

Where there is Roma/Gypsy representation, it is at all tiers of government. Their major concerns are housing, unemployment, relations between Roma/Gypsies and the majority population. It would appear that Rom/Gypsy representatives are as a rule appointed by state authorities rather than elected by Roma/Gypsies.

Generally speaking, towns express the same concerns as representatives. These are reflected in their activities. In all towns a specific or (in the case of Strasbourg) a non-specific authority is in contact with Rom/Gypsy families and organisations. Thanks to these links it is easier to identify the concerns and needs of Roma/Gypsies, notably employment, housing, schooling and social integration.

From six replies, it appears that in two instances there has been an improvement in relations between Roma/Gypsies and the majority population (Marseilles and Pardubice). In Liptovsky Mikulas the Gypsies tend to keep to themselves, while in Kilkenny the situation is progressive and in Dublin it is considered quite satisfactory. In Ploiesti, on the other hand, Roma/Gypsies have grown poorer since 1989.

As far as comparison with other minorities is concerned, it would appear that the specific problems of Roma/Gypsies are linked to their travelling life style (Marseilles). Most towns have contacts with other towns which deal with Roma/Gypsies. These towns clearly acknowledge the importance of co-operation (networks of towns) as a working method (Dublin and Ploiesti are particularly keen to exchange experiences with other towns). Activities they would like to see as part of the CLRAE Network relate to the concerns expressed above.

Lastly, most of the towns (Liptovsky Mikulas, Marseilles, Ploiesti and Strasbourg) are familiar with CLRAE Resolution 249 (1993).

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In conclusion, it seems convenient to mention the project for a Multilingual City which was launched in Sheffield, on the occasion of a Conference organised in 1994, with the participation of some elected local authorities as well as many NGO's.

The main objective of the meeting was to study the feasibility of a project aiming at preparing every youngster living in Sheffield to speak English and another language fluently. In fact, nearly 50 different languages are spoken in Sheffield schools, including, notably, Urdu/Punjabi, Bengali, Creole/Patois, Somali, Arabic, Polish, Cantonese, Pushto and Spanish.

In their final recommendations, the participants proposed different strategies, aiming, inter alia, at the development in the voluntary sector, the curriculum and course development, funding, media.

The Conference marked the beginning of the Project. Action committees and teams are now set up as well as action groups which organise surveys and research on existing provisions and proposals for the future.

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The point of view of the NGOs

Mr Cortes Tellez, of the National Campaign Committee in Finland, noted that racism and intolerance varied considerably from one country to another: while they were comparatively rare in countries that were traditionally open and tolerant or where there were not yet many aliens and refugees, there were other countries where political groups that preached racism and intolerance were acting behind the scenes or were actually represented in parliamentary assemblies.

To wage an effective battle against intolerance it was necessary to mobilise every sector of society, including schools, firms and the public administration, and to eliminate all internecine competition between the different anti-racist movements.

In conclusion, the Council of Europe Campaign should favour co-operation between anti-racist groups, NGOs, the media and the public authorities.

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Mr Menebhi of the Migrant Forum, said that one of the Forum's main objectives was to combat racism and intolerance and to promote active solidarity between immigrants and the majority population, and participation in public life by resident aliens.

In March 1994 the Migrant Forum launched a project for a "European Manifesto against racism", which had already been signed by NGOs in a number of European cities. Two more projects were to be launched in the near future: the first was an annual "Conference on Action against Racism in Europe", for the purpose of exchanging ideas within an informal network of local, regional, national and European institutions, community organisations and immigrant associations throughout Europe. The second project was a European observatory to monitor signs of racism in Europe.

Local and regional authorities had a vital role to play in the fight against racism and intolerance, as enshrined in Resolution 236 on a new policy for multicultural integration in Europe and the Frankfurt Declaration, and in Resolution 243 on citizenship and extreme poverty: the Charleroi Declaration. With a view to the implementation of these texts, the Migrant Forum proposed drawing up a European Municipal Charter against discrimination and for equality, to be ratified by towns, cities and regions and by immigrant associations and NGOs.

The proposals put forward by the Migrant Forum through the CLRAE included:

- educating migrants in a "European" citizenship dissociated from nationality;
- allowing immigrant associations to set up councils with observer status at municipal council meetings;
- in addition to twinnings with towns in immigrants' countries of origin, developing twinning arrangements with deprived districts, universities, schools and welfare services, etc.;
- developing policies of religious tolerance to protect immigrants' places of worship and allow them to open new ones;

- building more social housing and giving immigrants access to it.

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Mr Gheorghe of the Roma Center for social intervention and studies (Bucharest) began with a reminder of the numerous, often very violent clashes that had occurred, particularly since January 1990, between the Roma and the indigenous population, and complained that because of malfunctions in the justice system, several of these aggressions had to all intents and purposes gone unpunished.

A violence prevention centre had been set up in the police force and this had helped to avoid the spread of violence on several occasions.

It was essential, however, that a firm policy on racism and intolerance should go hand-in-hand with measures designed to prevent and punish violence, as recommended at the Seminar on "Gypsies in the CSCE region" organised by the CSCE in close collaboration with the Council of Europe (from 20 to 23 September 1994).

Amongst other things the Roma Centre for social intervention and studies promoted schooling for Rom children and the social and economic integration of Roma/Gypsies, working in close liaison with other NGOs and with local authorities.

Increasing numbers of Roma from central and eastern Europe were seeking refuge in western Europe. Mr Gheorghe denounced the increasingly restrictive immigration policies these countries were adopting.

A number of Gypsy associations had addressed an appeal to the different international organisations to make sure that the rights of Gypsies were fully respected in their member countries. With regard to the Council of Europe, Mr Gheorghe mentioned several activities of the CLRAE in this field, as well as Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1203, which called, inter alia, for special protection for Gypsies as a European minority and for the appointment of a European mediator for Gypsies.

The Gypsy associations called on the Council of Europe to bear in mind track the situation of Gypsies in its member states and to monitor the proper application of Gypsy rights, particularly in central and eastern Europe, as part of the commitments entered into by states on joining the Organisation.

- B. Towards a democratic European town based on participation by all, including the least privileged, without any discrimination whatsoever, in the life of the city

BUDAPEST: Participation and underprivileged minorities

Mr DEMSZKY said that because of the end of the cold war and the increasingly stringent immigration policies adopted by the countries of western Europe, since 1990 the city of Budapest had been faced with an increasing influx of immigrants made up mainly of Hungarian minorities from neighbouring countries (Ukraine, former Yugoslavia, Slovakia).

The number of foreign nationals, on the other hand (particularly Chinese), although high, was tending to steady out. Budapest had always based its policy towards foreigners on the principle of respect for cultural pluralism.

Mr Demszky went on to present the policy practised by the city of Budapest to encourage participation by minorities in public life.

In 1993 the national parliament had enacted a bill on the protection of the political and cultural rights of national and ethnic minorities, providing, inter alia, for "councils for minorities" to be set up at the local level. The first elections for these councils were held in December 1994, and it was not yet possible to determine what results had been achieved.

Mr Demszky gave a detailed account of the new measures and the main problems that had been encountered. Suffice it to say here that the councils for minorities are legally entitled to submit proposals to the local authorities and to oppose any measures they feel constitute a threat to their rights, and that the local authorities are required to seek their opinion on questions of concern to minorities in the fields of education, culture and the media.

In the second part of his contribution, Mr Demszky focused on the question of Gypsies, who made up the largest minority in Hungary, including 5% of the population of Budapest (some 100 000 people).

The Gypsies lived in particularly difficult circumstances: theirs was the minority with the highest illiteracy and unemployment rates. In the northeast of the country the unemployment rate among Gypsies was 100%. Generally speaking Gypsies were the poorest of the poor.

This already difficult situation could only be aggravated by the increasingly racist attitudes of the majority population, which was itself reeling under the effects of an increasingly alarming economic and social crisis.

The municipality supported numerous initiatives in various fields (health, education, etc) in favour of Gypsies, and an ad hoc institution, the "Gypsy Center", had been set up in 1988, inter alia provide legal assistance, organise education programmes and to provide up-to-date information on the changing situation of Gypsies in the country.

In conclusion, Mr Demszky mentioned a particularly ambitious project: a cultural centre to foster contacts between the Gypsy culture and the majority culture. This would help to bridge the gap between the Gypsy minority and the rest of the population, and to gain acceptance for gypsies, their culture and their role in society.

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CHARLEROI: Combating exclusion through citizenship

Charleroi is a city of 207 000 inhabitants; the already high unemployment rate there is steadily increasing, and living conditions are deteriorating for an ever-larger proportion of the population.

In the face of these difficulties the municipal authorities have decided to implement an all-out strategy to combat exclusion and poverty.

From the end of 1989, based on a common plan of action, a city project was developed by the local authorities, voluntary associations and the people and groups directly concerned.

A campaign was organised to inform as many citizens as possible about the city project. After two years' work an "urban Charter" was presented to the population, and regulations on participation by citizens in public life were adopted by the municipal council, providing, inter alia, for the possibility of holding referendums on questions of general interest.

In the city's strategy to combat poverty and exclusion, the activity which has achieved the most significant results is the project "ETRE GAGNANT AVEC LES PERDANTS" (turning losers into winners), which has been selected as a model action under the "Poverty 3" programme of the European Community.

Mr VAN CAUWENBERGHE described some of the numerous initiatives taken in the context of this project, such as:

- a system of agreements between the Public Welfare Centre (CPAS) and Council Housing companies which had enabled some 200 very poor people to gain access to decent housing;
- a solidarity fund for providing security of tenure by granting interest-free loans to people on low incomes who were required to pay rent deposits they could not afford;
- the regional insertion and employment Mission, to set up a sandwich course training system leading to a job, after checking on companies' actual labour requirements and defining with them the qualification profiles they were seeking;
- a contractual approach to integration whereby a social and/or vocational project was worked out and negotiated with the beneficiary, who undertook to respect his or her commitments, thereby becoming active rather than passive. The results were very encouraging;
- a neighbourhood policy to encourage social development in underprivileged neighbourhoods, including:
 - activities to mobilise inhabitants and encourage participation;
 - "maisons de quartier", or neighbourhood centres, not only for meetings or entertainment, but also as places where the neighbourhood could forge its identity and a feeling of belonging;
- to co-ordinate neighbourhood policy, the post of "neighbourhood alderman", a kind of minister for urban affairs at local level, had been created.

Mr Van Cauwenberghe concluded by saying that experience had shown Charleroi that social exclusion was characterised by a breakdown of bonds linking individuals and the community. No reintegration was possible, therefore, without the direct participation of the excluded persons themselves and of all the social groups concerned. Programmes to combat social exclusion had to be the result of joint action, of a real partnership between local authorities, social partners, associations and the persons and groups directly concerned. Victims of exclusion had to be treated as full citizens

and given a say in defining not only their needs, but also the arrangements set up to help them. By effectively exercising this right to a say in matters, victims of exclusion would be playing an increasingly active part in public life and it would be all the easier for them to consider themselves as fully-fledged citizens.

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**The activities of the CLRAE network of cities
on
"Citizenship and Extreme Poverty"**

The CHARLEROI DECLARATION was adopted on 7 February 1991 at the end of an international conference organised by the CLRAE in conjunction with the city of Charleroi (Belgium) on the theme "European Municipalities and Democracy: the exclusion of poverty through citizenship".

On 16 March 1993, the CLRAE adopted Resolution 243 on "Citizenship and Extreme Poverty: the Charleroi Declaration". The Resolution approved the Declaration's approach and went on to propose a project on "European pilot towns promoting integrated, harmonious development aimed at preventing poverty through citizenship", and to invite interested towns and cities to form a European network on the theme "citizenship and extreme poverty".

A number of European cities have taken up the CLRAE's invitation and formed a group, with the support of the Conference (now the Congress), the Secretariat and NGOs having consultative status with the Council of Europe. The following cities have joined Charleroi in this initiative: Belfort, Bordeaux, Budapest, Cracow and Nottingham (Anderlecht and Munich too but in the initial phase only).

At their first meeting (Bordeaux, 25 June 1993) the cities decided to concentrate initially on the implementation of the Charleroi Declaration. Their attention focused particularly on the part of the Declaration concerned with the development and implementation of a new municipal policy to combat extreme poverty and precariousness by associating disadvantaged sectors of the population with community policies (participation and structures of participation, freedom of speech and expression, a genuine community life).

At present this Network of cities meets in the context of the working group of the Congress on combatting racism and intolerance. This group is also responsible for following up to CLRAE Resolution 244 (1993) on the right to housing and its implementation by local and regional authorities.

The activities of the Network are referred to in the separate draft recommendation. Among the contributions of the different cities in the Network, we shall briefly mention those of Bordeaux, Cracow and Nottingham, which have all adopted very different approaches, but which, like Charleroi, all clearly place the problems of the poorest, least privileged of our fellow citizens at the heart of city life and policies.

In Bordeaux: participation to build a veritable platform of local partnership

For some years now, the city of Bordeaux has been striving, step by step, in the field, to encourage participation by its poorest citizens in community life. It attaches the greatest importance, however, to developing a broad debate between the inhabitants and their elected officials, and in particular to building up a local platform expressing the clear determination of the municipality to federate the different local initiatives.

The following are examples of the numerous initiatives and experiments conducted in Bordeaux in recent years:

- the "Martin Videau" family rehousing estate: the Municipal Social Action Centre (CCAS) fitted out eight dwellings in a former school in 1987 to provide emergency housing for families experiencing major difficulties.

The estate provides a safe environment where families can take fresh heart and make new plans for achieving social and occupational integration. It also helps to establish relations based on mutual trust and respect: every two months the tenants, social workers, the owner-manager (CCAS) and local councillors hold a meeting to discuss a variety of problems: communal life, maintenance of shared areas, neighbourly relations, schooling and leisure activities for children, etc.

- Measures in favour of RMI recipients (RMI = Revenu minimum d'insertion, a form of minimum subsistence allowance):
 - since 1988 various governmental social measures to alleviate unemployment have enabled the Municipal Council to provide work for recipients of the "RMI" or for the long-term unemployed. About 100 such persons, mostly over the age of 50, have been made responsible for ensuring the safety of local primary and nursery school children. The work has given those involved the feeling of being useful in society and recognised in their neighbourhood; thanks to their responsibility for the children, their self-confidence and their dignity as citizens has been restored;
 - an information sheet for all "RMI" claimants on the use of the "carte d'assuré social" or National Insurance Card (how and where to get treatment, etc) has been drawn up by a group of "RMI" beneficiaries who are currently in the process of reintegration.
- Support for "go-between" associations helping the poorest sections of the population (in the form of subsidies, provision of premises, etc):

these "go-betweens", whether individuals or associations, are in close contact with the poorest families, who trust them to speak on their behalf. For instance, the "Maison Quart Monde" (Fourth World Centre), which the Council has made available to the ATD Fourth World Movement, offers a framework where extremely poor families can receive group training in voicing their opinions and fully exercising their civic rights.

- 17 October:

Every 17 October for the past 4 years, increasing numbers of citizens from all walks of life, local councillors, municipal officials, representatives of humanitarian associations, etc have taken part in a campaign on behalf of the very poor: "World day for coming-over extreme poverty". On this date all the participants strive, symbolically, to focus on the under-privileged, listen to their problems and join with them in expressing their determination to overcome extreme poverty. The municipality's full support for this campaign, usually attended by the Mayor and a large number of local councillors, helps to create a climate of opinion which is gradually shifting the public's attention to the poorest sections of the population, considering them no longer as recipients of assistance but as partners capable of expressing their aspirations and plans.

In Cracow: a strategy to promote participation in community life, education in participation and the adoption of a comprehensive social policy

The city's strategy for combatting poverty and precariousness hinges mainly on the principle of participative solidarity. Its activities therefore focus on developing structures of participation, promoting education in participation, encouraging personal initiatives on the part of the poorest members of society and creating a genuine community life.

A significant example of this strategy, based on co-operation between municipality, associations and inhabitants, was the organisation of a special meeting of the Municipal Council on 4 June 1993, on different matters of general interest, which was attended by more than 100 people (representatives of state bodies, municipal services, the Church and the University, social organisations, mutual aid groups and politicians). It led to the adoption of 5 resolutions, concerning the prevention of social ills in schools (drugs, alcohol, smoking, demoralisation), proper enforcement of the ban on the sale of alcohol to people under 18 years of age, concern over the destructive influence of the media on children and young people, the development of psychological assistance in schools, and the dissemination of information on social ills in the city (publication of reports on the subject).

At the meeting of the Network on 9 December 1994 it was established that the main problem in Poland was that of housing. Consequently, Cracow undertook to prepare an ad hoc social housing project, as the government has decentralised responsibility for social housing and the financing thereof out to the municipalities, thereby placing Polish cities in a serious predicament.

In Nottingham: setting up structures for community participation with a view to a collective rehabilitation project for the city

The strategy of the Nottingham City Council to combat poverty (which doubled between 1979 and 1988/89) hinges on the idea that underprivileged people must be given an opportunity to act, but also on the idea that the battle against poverty requires a multitude of actions carried out by various agencies co-operating at both city and neighbourhood level.

It is therefore essential to combine the skills, the energy, the experience and the determination of inhabitants, community organisations and voluntary associations, and to make sure that the benefits of these joint efforts are enjoyed by those in the greatest need.

The key aims of the city authorities include:

- maximisation of income levels through welfare rights advice, especially for those on benefits or low wages;
- economic development targeted on areas of poverty and disadvantage, with improvements to inner cities, social regeneration, better training, child care provision and transport to help bring down the barriers to employment;
- community development to help people to make their voices heard and to participate in decisionmaking;
- improving health amongst disadvantaged people;
- providing decent, affordable and safe housing;

- improving community safety;
- better access to services and initiatives for disadvantaged people.

The project currently underway in the city concerns two priority areas, one with a large proportion of coloured people and the other with a majority of white inhabitants.

The inhabitants of these areas, both faced with serious problems of poverty and unemployment, expressed the desire to have a greater say in defining and running new projects and initiatives for rehabilitating the city.

In the first priority area it was proposed to set up a neighbourhood Partnership Council made up of municipal councillors, representatives of associations and local residents, and to obtain funding for other projects from the European Community.

In the other priority area, the municipal council would seek funding from European Union regional Funds, inter alia to encourage training and job creation. Meanwhile, community participation in structures involving representatives of residents, public authorities and various organisations were being developed to define new projects and initiatives.

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The issue of "Enabling deprived minorities to participate in community life" was further discussed during a public session, with media coverage, which took place in the City Council of Budapest on 10 April 1995, in the context of the last joint meeting of the Working Group on the Congress' Contribution to the Council of Europe's Campaign against Intolerance and the Network of Cities on "Citizenship and Extreme Poverty". In his opening statement, the Mayor of Budapest, Mr Demszky, underlined the importance of the role of minority local governments in order to encourage a new social dynamic and increasing participation of all minorities to public life.

Following Mr Demszky's opening speech, Mr Meyers, Coordinator of the Network of Cities on "Citizenship and Extreme Poverty" as well as the representatives of the three towns of the Network, gave their statements. These representatives were: Mr Scott, Nottingham City Councillor; Mr Dosimont, Administrator in the Centre for Social Action in Charleroi and Ms Fayet, Municipal Councillor in Bordeaux. These interventions will be fully presented, in an Appendix of the Acts of the Hearing which took place on 20 February 1995.

We will limit ourselves to underline some aspects complementing our presentation of the Network activities:

Mr Scott brought to mind that the City of Nottingham is concentrating on different regeneration projects for both foreigners and the majority of the population and based on the participation of different sectors of society.

The City obtained funding from the Community's Urban Programme for a project in favour of deprived minorities which will be developed in partnership with the local population.

Mr Dosimont underlined that the action taken in Charleroi, in the context, notably, of the programme "Turning losers into winners", allowed us to obtain a rich experience in the fight against exclusion and extreme poverty. In particular, it has to be noted that exclusion cannot be reduced to a problem of distributive justice as it is a question of respecting Human Rights.

Ms Fayet explained that it indispensable that the City becomes a place of permanent cooperation: in Bordeaux, different projects are being studied, aiming, notably, at realising a direct confrontation with the NGOs (through the creation of "ad hoc" commissions) as well as with people, families and underprivileged groups (through the creation of neighbourhood councils).

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The point of view of the NGOs

Mr Brand, Secretary General of the **International Movement ATD Fourth World** presented a contribution on "combatting poverty and exclusion, reconsidering human activity".

The teachings and experience of the founder of the International Movement ATD Fourth World, Father Joseph Wresinski, remained a shining example for any activity to promote the

participation of the least privileged members of society in public life, and in so doing to defend the right of every human being to be considered as a fully-fledged citizen.

While there was no denying that those who lived in extreme poverty were excluded from society and therefore unable to exercise their political and civil rights, there was also an urgent need, in the face of increasing unemployment and social exclusion, to reconsider the very foundations of our society, and in particular the meaning and purpose of human activity.

One of Father Joseph's main suggestions was to make better use of time spent out of work, instead of considering unemployment as a relegation to isolation and uselessness. This could be done, for example, by turning unemployment into a time for action and creation, to be used for training, for learning to use new technologies and for broadening one's general culture to improve one's chances in life. Father Joseph suggested two ways of achieving this: on the one hand, what he called "knowledge-sharing" (for example, by opening universities to groups of unskilled, unemployed people, or by banning cultural privileges by introducing a "knowledge tax" alongside the traditional financial taxes). The other idea was to strike a better balance between time spent inside and outside the employment market.

Local and regional authorities could play a significant part in promoting this new "philosophy" of work.

In particular, Mr Brand pointed out that in several states people receiving subsistence benefits were required to take part in reintegration schemes: this was where local authorities could propose genuine "integration trails", by encouraging socially useful activities, activities which were not necessarily economically productive, but which were nonetheless valuable since they catered for concrete needs increasingly felt in our society. Examples, said Mr Brand, were visiting people in prison or giving moral support to patients in hospitals.

Other initiatives worth mentioning were the "street libraries" and the activity of "book mediator", an experimental activity launched by the Ministry of Culture and the ATD Fourth World Movement to promote reading in the least privileged social groups.

* * *

Mr Mario Franco, of the **Council of European National Youth Committees (CENYC)**, launched an all-out appeal for a massive commitment to combat all forms of economic, social, political and cultural exclusion.

In particular:

- more justice and more employment were needed to combat economic exclusion;
- combating social exclusion meant building more housing, organising social relations and mobilising to support victims of exclusion, migrants and refugees;
- to combat political exclusion efforts were needed to develop participation, democracy and human rights;
- and to combat cultural exclusion our societies should undertake to allow different cultures to flourish. The development of education should also be encouraged, so that everybody had access to culture and to the new technologies.

C. Towards a tolerant and peaceful democratic European town with no racist, xenophobic and fundamentalist violence and discrimination

In NOTTINGHAM and BERLIN: A complex and co-ordinated effort not only to punish, but also to prevent racist acts and discriminating and insulting behaviour

In Nottingham ...

According to the 1991 census, 16.5% of the households in Nottingham identified themselves as non-white. The period 1991-93 saw an increase in racial offences (violence, discrimination, insults, etc).

The strategy set up by the city council to combat racial violence covered different fields and involved a number of organisations operating at local, regional and national level. Mr TAYLOR explained that this multi-agency project included several initiatives in different sectors of public administration:

- considerable responsibility in the battle against racism lay with the police. It was particularly important to improve victims' confidence in the police so that racial violence did not go unreported and unpunished;
- efforts to prevent racism and support victims in council housing;
- young people received an open-minded, multi-cultural education, based on mutual respect and understanding. Efforts were made to promote the personal and social development of young people, with a view to helping them to understand and oppose racism.

Mr Taylor went on to talk about the consortium set up in 1993 by the cities of Nottingham and Leicester and their respective counties and the NGOs Leicester Racial Harassment Project and Nottingham and District Racial Equality Council. The consortium intended to expand to include other cities and regions of Europe, and had already produced a draft manual of good practice on racial harassment and organised a successful conference for professionals in the matter.

The action of local authorities in the battle against racism should hinge on three basic strategies:

- prevention, for example:
 - * adopting and publicising firm policies against racial harassment,
 - * supporting ethnic minority residents;
- support to victims of racial attacks;
- identifying and prosecuting perpetrators.

Mr Taylor hoped that the Council of Europe and the European Union would work hand in hand, especially insofar as the European Union was able to encourage its member states to adopt suitable legislation to discourage racial insecurity.

In Berlin ...

Mrs JOHN said that since the fall of the Berlin Wall there had been increasing immigration to Berlin, especially from Eastern Europe.

The economic, political and social problems engendered by reunification had not only made living conditions harder for immigrants, but had also kindled a certain amount of racism and intolerance. Increasing numbers of citizens were taking an interest in the city's ethnic minorities, and more and more associations were involved in programmes to integrate aliens and promote multi-cultural relations.

Aliens made up 12% of the population of Berlin (about 407,000 people): the Turkish minority was the largest, followed by those from former Yugoslavia and Poland.

While racial violence and discriminating and insulting behaviour had increased considerably all over Germany in recent years, in comparison with other German cities Berlin remained one of the least affected by this problem. Mrs John suggested various explanations for this:

- the long tradition of peaceful coexistence between West Berliners and foreigners;
- a city policy based on esteem for foreigners and encouraging their social integration;
- the large number of organisations which assisted foreigners, took care of their specific problems and encouraged multi-cultural relations;
- the preventive measures taken by the police, and effective protection of asylum-seekers.

From 1992, however, there had been a marked increase in acts of racism in Berlin, and a number of measures had been taken by the administration in different areas, including:

- special training to help the police in their dealings with immigrants;

- proposals to:
 - * simplify the procedure for obtaining German citizenship;
 - * allow dual nationality;
 - * allow both European citizens and non-European nationals who were long-standing residents in Germany for a long time to vote in municipal elections.
- "Schooling against violence", a specific programme in schools, including discussions on the subject in the classroom and field visits to relevant historical sites;
- Youth policy: "A Future for Youth", a programme organised by the Senate in Berlin to prevent racism and intolerance. Initiatives organised in various areas of public life included:
 - * social services:

jobs for long-term unemployed young people;
financing a cultural centre;
continuing and extending the street workers programme;
developing different cultural activities.
 - * Education and sport:
training for teachers in how to prevent violence;
organising an awareness campaign in sporting circles.
 - * Public order:
setting up a committee for the prevention of violence, to improve relations between the police and young people;
organisation of anti-violence campaigns by a mobile police task force
- The city project for "non-violent intercultural understanding", set up by the Foreign Commissioner in Berlin to issue advice to victims of racism, to support activities organised by schools to combat intolerance, to encourage contact between police and minority organisations, and to encourage the peaceful settlement of disputes in this field.

Generally speaking, the city endeavoured to encourage integration, open-mindedness and tolerance. Considerable information was disseminated to improve people's knowledge of other cultures, religions and lifestyles. An information campaign, a children's book award and a photography competition had been organised to promote mutual respect and tolerance. Mrs John concluded a contribution full of concrete examples and practical suggestions with a reminder that radio and television in Berlin broadcast news and information programmes in foreign languages.

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The meeting in Berlin (June 1993) on "Combating racism and xenophobia - Practical action at the local level", organised in the context of the Council of Europe's "Intercommunity relations" project.

The aim of this meeting was to draw attention to key areas of activity and key issues, and to highlight selected examples of the kinds of practical activity that can be undertaken. It has been agreed that the principal focus should be on the three types of agencies which have the capacity to react directly to racist and xenophobic violence and harassment. These are : the police, and other criminal justice agencies; local government, and associated agencies; NGOs concerned with tackling racism and xenophobia.

In their final Recommendations, the participants underlined, inter alia, that in each member State, one minister should be responsible for the co-ordination of the Policy for community relations; it is necessary to identify social indicators in order to make more adequate policies and to guide the private voluntary action; public authorities and institutions should effectively co-operate with non-governmental associations.

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The point of view of the NGOs

The Cities of Asylum Charter

A brief word about the International Parliament of Writers and the activities it intends to develop in co-operation with the CLRAE. Full details of the activities planned as a part of this joint activity may be found in the report by Mr Martinez Lopez and in the draft resolution on a "Cities of Asylum Charter".

Mr Christian Salmon, Secretary General of the International Parliament of Writers (IPW) explained that after an initial appeal signed by over 300 writers from all over the world, 60 writers gathered in Strasbourg for the *Carrefour des littératures européennes* in November 1993 reaffirmed the need for an international structure capable of developing genuine solidarity between writers, who were increasingly threatened or persecuted, and of becoming a forum for reflection and cultural exchange.

Salman Rushdie was elected president of the International Parliament of Writers and drafted its charter, entitled "A Declaration of Independence". Here is a passage from that declaration: "... Our Parliament of Writers exists to fight for oppressed writers and against all those who persecute them and their work, and to renew continually the declaration of independence without which writing is impossible; and not only in writing, but dreaming; and not only dreaming, but thought; and not only thought, but liberty itself."

One of the primary objectives of the IPW was to set up a network of cities of asylum for persecuted intellectuals: the city concerned signed an agreement with the IPW undertaking to pay a subscription to the International Parliament of Writers, to put one or more apartments at the disposal of persecuted writers for a period of one year, to guarantee each writer access to municipal public services and to facilitate the process of obtaining visas and residence permits. In exchange, the IPW undertook to pay a monthly residence grant to each writer given asylum by the city, to help the guest writer to integrate and to pursue his or her work, to encourage the translation and dissemination of the writer's work and to organise exchanges and debates between writers in the city of asylum.

The first city of asylum was Strasbourg, closely followed by Berlin, Amsterdam and Helsinki and now by Almeria.

The International Parliament of Writers now had the support of the Council of Europe, and of our own Congress, to extend the network to other cities and draft a Cities of Asylum Charter. The draft resolution that would be submitted to the Congress was the first fruit of this co-operation.

* * *

The point of view of the **European Co-ordination Bureau of International Youth Organisations (ECB)** was presented by Mrs Buitenweg.

Youth organisations played an essential part in social life because they encouraged active participation by young people. In youth organisations young people learned to work with and listen to others to achieve common objectives, which prepared them to become responsible, active citizens. The activities of the NGOs could therefore be considered vital to genuine democracy.

There were numerous youth associations working against racism and towards the building of a more tolerant society: their objective was not only to foster multicultural exchanges, but also and above all to carry out multicultural projects in which each participant could make his or her contribution to the end result.

Mrs Buitenweg voiced a firm and relevant opinion on the question of freedom of speech: first of all it should not be considered as an absolute and unlimited right to express any opinion whatsoever, especially in the case of politicians, who had a responsibility to promote democratic values: governments and NGOs had an essential role to play in the face of certain politicians who abused their freedom of speech to propagate racism and intolerance.

The media also had a share of responsibility: in order to combat blatant or concealed intolerance in radio and television programmes, it might be necessary, as the European broadcasting union had done, to set up a code of good practice, or even a code of ethics.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

What conclusions can be drawn from the approaches, measures and programmes implemented or proposed by towns and associations? Is it now possible to give the broad outlines of an exemplary democratic European town where there is no xenophobic, racist, anti-Semitic violence or intolerance? What we are talking of here is a "symbolic town", a convivial, civilised, tolerant and pacific area, designed to spread outwards from the towns to the regions and then to the states so as to finally embrace the whole of our unique planet. This represents the ideal. Complacency about the reality of the present situation will only exacerbate it.

This entirely exemplary town does not of course exist and is only an ideal which should inspire our actions and guide our steps. In reality, however, there are well-known towns which, in some way or another, are living examples capable of inspiring other towns - some of them have been presented to us. Models pave the way for other possibilities for it is only by continuous comparisons and approximation that we can hope to make progress in this field.

Racist acts and violence reveal the murky depths of society. Society produces conflicts and as a result bad feelings and hatred flow through our towns, regions and countries like a poisonous underground river. These feelings are virulent and may become violent words and actions which sometimes act as catalysts. When they take on a more public form they can become extremely dangerous for our democracies and for our freedoms.

This is why it is so important to take firm public action as soon as evil rears its ugly head. It is equally important to set up public mechanisms to counter and prevent this evil and for all local and national politicians to speak out and condemn such acts.

Being products of evil racist acts fear the truth. However, in order to win the battle against this cancer, it is necessary not only to combat its outward manifestations but also to tackle the underlying causes.

When people behave in a racist manner, it means that they have not been properly educated, to live in the world we share with a wide variety of human beings. We say that the world is beautiful because it is full of variety and yet we often witness acts of intolerance instigated purely by racial hatred, hatred of others, hatred of man himself.

Should we therefore consider providing a sort of universal education in relationships with the world, relationships with our neighbours ? When dealing with adults sanctions must unfortunately take the place of education. However, when dealing with young people all is not lost, even in cases where families, school systems and society have failed to fulfil their duty.

That is why everything that has any connection whatsoever with education and youth policies is extremely important for the future of our democracies and of our freedoms. Education and youth policies must be for all and not just for some.

The problem is, however, a complex one for the emergence of racism and its manifestations are reminiscent of the performance of an actor on a stage where the backdrop has not yet been sketched in. So let us first try to describe the present situation without being too dogmatic and without trying to be exhaustive.

The fact that all European countries are confronted with the problem of growing racism may signify that we are facing a crisis which is at one and the same time economic, social and political.

The economic crisis is characterised by a long-term flagging of economic activity in Western Europe and by the reorganization of industrial structures as a result of technical changes and the globalisation of the economy, whereby the centre of economic activity has shifted towards south-east Asia and the Far East: the electronic revolution and the delocalization of production is accelerating the phenomenon of industrial and economic impoverishment.

The social crisis is becoming increasingly obvious in the tendency for phenomena, which were until now more evident in third world countries, to become widespread. In Europe too, we now have housing problems which no longer concern only individual adults but whole families, senior citizens, young people in particular and even children. Street children are the new phenomenon of the last few years, not only in Eastern European countries but also in our "rich", "developed" cities, and a significant deterioration in quality of life for some of our people has taken place. Unemployment is now long-term and spreading insidiously. The insecurity of living conditions is gradually affecting parts of society which had so far remained intact. As a result large sectors of the population are being socially and politically excluded and the future holds few if any prospects for increasing numbers of young people.

The political crisis in all European countries entails the questioning of traditional equilibria, a turning away from mainstream political parties, a weakening of representative democracies and the emergence of extremist movements.

The process of economic development set in motion at the end of the Second World War among Western European countries now seems to have run out of steam. New economic policy needs to be developed which allows strong economic growth where all citizens of all classes have opportunities to fulfil their potential.

It is striking that the predictions made before the internal market between the 12 (now 15) member states was completed have not proved correct. The completion of the market should have created several million additional jobs. This has not happened. It is true that in the meantime the situation has changed considerably since 1989 with the falling of the iron curtain. But why has this not stimulated a new political ambition, one capable of mobilising society and the economy ?

Europe: a civic democracy project

Our reasoning is based on the premise that a new political ambition would inevitably revitalise people's determination, energies and productive imagination. The Maastricht Treaty was a response to the new challenges. Nevertheless, some observers have no hesitation in pronouncing it stillborn. This was inevitable as its essentially "budgetary" structure (the main criterion for convergence) merely demonstrates how limited a political ambition can be if based purely on economics.

At all events, it cannot be said to provide an adequate response to our present problems. This may explain the shift of the Commission of the 12+3 towards an economic programme such as the "White Paper on Growth, competitiveness and employment - The challenges and ways forward into the 21st century", published in 1993.

A rough-and-ready evaluation of the European experience since 1949 might read as follows:

- none of the various collective ventures (undertaken first by the Council of Europe and subsequently by the EEC) have succeeded in making Europe the driving force which releases the creative energies of its different peoples: just as the national life of member states has not acquired a "European" dimension, neither has Europe acquired a "national" dimension. Notwithstanding the four fundamental freedoms underlying the Treaty of Rome, all the member states have remained inward-looking (as might indeed have been expected) and the only real factor for mobility has been the use of science in technology and the finance / business.

- Europe also failed to recognise that the events of 1989 were of monumental significance and represented a unique opportunity to re-launch the construction of Europe on new foundations. Consequently the Treaty of Maastricht may well soon appear not only to mark the passing away of the old world but also to be the obstacle to the birth of the new world.

As a result the globalisation of production has become the sole criterion used by various decision-makers to explain (and justify ?) events. This is a sort of new economic ideology or rather an updated version of the well-known "invisible hand" theory.

What can be done under these circumstances ?

I believe that the Council of Europe, of which the Congress is now an important body, has a duty to show the way to recovery. The following are some of the PRINCIPLES which appear to me to be fundamental:

A. The Congress must continue to emphasise the importance of mutual respect and friendship as essential elements of Europe's specific nature. These elements have a role to play within each country of Europe and between the countries.

1. The Council of Europe was created to safeguard and promote Human Rights and fundamental freedoms, the primacy of law and democracy. These rights are not just for the privileged few. They apply to all including members of ethnic minority communities, refugees, and migrant workers.

Nowadays, in Europe and throughout the world, the protection of human rights and democracy involves above all the creation of "societies of inclusion", designed to counter the attempt to prove that human beings can be useless or superfluous. While developing a pride in individual nationalities we must encourage the development of pride in being European, and, foremost, members of the human race. Development of a shared culture, rooted in the European ideal will create the will to tackle the evils of unemployment, poverty and ignorance. This unity of purpose will unite us against racism in all its forms.

The covenant which forms the basis of all political communities needs to be revitalised.

Public institutions and authorities, be it at local, regional, state or European level, must realise that it is extremely important and urgent to supplement representative democracy by the direct civic action undertaken by citizens involved in associations, unpaid work and voluntary organizations, and by involving them in the conception, implementation and assessment of public policies. This renewal of civil society will enhance social solidarity.

Solidarity is an antidote to injustice and violence or quite simply to the inevitable deterioration of social relationships where there has previously been no solidarity. Relationships between people will continue to be undermined by the interplay of individual actions and reactions until they are altered by a sincere gesture of friendship and an exchange of promises which will bind us and help us to face the uncertainties of the future.

It is necessary to revitalise democracy which is at present threatened by a double segregation: a territorial segregation and the renewed segregation between ethnic groups, communities and social classes.

Citizens' spontaneous and pluralist commitment to and organisation of common objectives and their territorial links is perhaps the greatest technical novelty of the end of this century and the greatest hope for democracy in the coming century.

2. Europe, and each of its constituent bodies, must clearly acknowledge that our continent is naturally made up of an extraordinary plurality of nationalities and therefore that the conception and implementation of a truly common political project must inevitably bring about a new form of citizenship (and consequently of civic commitment) in which nationality will gradually lose its political importance.

In order to facilitate this development, it will be necessary to promote the creation of cultural associations of citizens from other countries, other regions, other backgrounds in each country, each region and each town. More and more citizens of various origins are already working together throughout Europe, in voluntary organisations and various associations, to achieve common objectives. A multi-lingual policy is now an essential priority without which Europe risks becoming an elitist project. Resources must also be made available to ensure that poorer members of the community are not excluded from such activities.

The result of this development is the democratisation of institutions. Whereas the European institutions must come closer to each country, the countries themselves must become more European and open up to other countries, to Europe and, in the long term, to the world. The Council of Europe and the Congress in particular must once and for all apply the lessons learned from the continuous enlargement of the Organisation and adapt their working methods to the new situation. This is the price of a new approach to the economy and, above all, to human activity. If not, our Organisation and our Congress are doomed to stagnation and decline and will become irrelevant to the issues faced by our communities.

It is only by applying the principles of subsidiarity and proximity in an imaginative and innovatory manner that we can defend local self-government as proclaimed in the Charter/Convention of the Council of Europe.

B. A truly democratic Europe can never become a fortress egoistically sufficing unto itself.

Indeed we should now be well aware of the relationship between national and international conflicts. A country or a nation divided among themselves, a people who do not acknowledge human rights, respect one another and the law and whose political regime is based on chaos and arbitrary power, constitutes a real danger for all other countries. Not far from us, on our very own continent, we have such a negative example in the conflict which has flared up in former Yugoslavia.

We are not safe from such danger - no one is - but if there is peace, justice and liberty within and between all European countries, then the path between Europe and the rest of the world will be one of open solidarity.

1. We would be totally mistaken to believe that what is geographically or culturally distant does not concern us: that may have been true in the past but no longer is today. Our interdependence has become quite clear but has not yet been put into practice because it demands constant efforts which in turn require adequate backing.

We need to establish new links with each other at European level and beyond. It would be a tragedy if the work which has been carried out in the past in creating our European structures led to further barriers to cooperation with the rest of the world and resulted in an increase in xenophobia and intolerance. It might be even more appropriate to say that Europe is a transit zone, a crossroads between East and West, North and South and that the most apt metaphor is a bridge with arches. Under each of the arches are the areas, the countries or continents with which Europe has signed treaties of co-operation, mutual agreements, in all fields of life. From this point of view, Europe is simply a network of co-operation, whose intensity decreases in relation to the distance from the European area but whose impact is constantly increasing.

What the rest of the world expects Europe to provide is the ideal method for achieving the peaceful co-existence of a number of different countries under one arch, whereby both unity and diversity are maintained and celebrated. Each country, in its relations with others, is in itself a bridge or the arch of a bridge. There is nothing to stop the bridge from being extended as far as one wishes and as far as circumstances permit.

Europe should be seen by the rest of the world as stable and secure and, in comparison with the third world, is affluent. We should use our experiences and skills to support less wealthy countries. It would be in the spirit of the present discussion to further develop means whereby European citizens with skills could provide direct support in a wide variety of ways to developing

countries. If we succeed this could be our "best selling product" and, by increasing understanding of different cultures and environments, our greatest gift to the next millennium.

2. One necessary consequence of this approach will be the opening of our towns, regions and countries to the rest of the world.

Human rights borders cannot be impervious : they are crossed by refugees, writers whose lives are in jeopardy, parents or children being reunited with their families, and quite simply by those involved in the normal relationships of good neighbours (visits, business, studies, friendships etc.). As long as immigration is inevitable - and it will be as long as the general conditions remain as they are now i.e. bad - we have a duty as citizens (and as members of a civilised society) to treat everyone, native or otherwise, with respect regardless of race or culture.

It is also possible to imagine a policy of twinning and of joint actions and projects between towns and regions in various countries and on various continents. One suggestion might be that each European municipality should be twinned firstly with at least one municipality in each European country and then with at least one town on each continent. Moreover, it is now time to move on from twinings based on folklore to the rationalised twinings of the future and to mark this transition we suggest using the term "partnership" because such relationships are based on a contract which will last as long as it is respected. Why not use the wealth each European town now possesses in terms of multicultural populations to build the bridges required both within and outside Europe, if our continent is to continue to exist less as a historical and geographical entity than as a civic democracy project. We should also use the artistic resources within our towns to promote positive images and combat racism and xenophobia both within our towns and with our partners.

Other ideas, observations and comments could be put forward but if there is a general agreement with what has been said then this could be sufficient to lead to

the heart of democracies : towns and regions

In all the fields mentioned, if only superficially, towns have competencies and therefore a role to play. This is why the Congress must call on them to participate in the project "an exemplary democratic town".

The time has come for such a concrete project by means of which towns can show the way and at the same time reach out to regions, states and to Europe. If the future of democracy lies at the heart of the civic democracy project, i.e. of Europe, then it is in the towns of Europe that the first steps will be taken for democracy begins at the grass-roots of society.

We should review how we can provide opportunities for participation by all citizens who wish to be involved.

The Council of Europe and the Congress have now gathered enough experience with regard to texts, principles and practices. By way of texts we need only mention the European Convention on Human Rights, the European Social Charter, the European Charter of Local Self-Government and the Resolutions and Recommendations adopted by the Congress which I have mentioned several times in my report.

By way of concrete examples, I would mention the recent compilations of contributions such as the one on the Hearing of 20 February 1995 on "Local Democracy, Citizenship and Tolerance" and on the Berlin meeting (June 1993) on "Tackling racism and xenophobia: practical action at the local

level", organised as a follow-up to the project "Community relations". I would also mention in particular the work of the Networks of Cities on provision for Gypsies, education, citizenship and extreme poverty.

We are recommending the production of a "good practice" guide which would also be an illustration of good democratic practice. This would stimulate ideas and positive actions in tackling the evils with which we are concerned. We believe that in the coming year we should create an annual merit award. If agreed by Congress criteria will be developed within the coming months and nominations for the award invited. This would be an excellent mechanism for giving publicity and credit to public authorities, regional and local, which have developed significant initiatives in the area of combatting racism, xenophobia, anti-semitism and intolerance.

It is our duty as elected leaders of our communities to combat racism in all its forms not only in terms of culture but also by addressing the economic bases upon which poverty and social exclusion thrive. Local politicians in concert with politicians at national, regional and European level must provide the necessary leadership in tackling these social and economic evils we have identified and in taking the first steps outlined in this report.