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Is Yaounde Outdated?

On Great Britain's joining the European Common Market it was agreed to offer twenty Commonwealth countries in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific a closer association with the enlarged European Common Market. Termed as the "associables", they were given three alternative choices: association on the mode of the Yaounde Convention, association in the form of the Arusha Model or agreement on a trade settlement. The Commonwealth countries were to think over the matter by August, 1973, regarding the form they found worth striving for and their decision was to be on an individual basis. Final negotiations between the EEC and each individual country were to be held thereafter. The institutions in Brussels aimed at preparing for a new Yaounde Convention in 1974 so that a continuity in the association policy could be preserved in the subsequent years after expiry of the current Yaounde Agreement in 1975. It was obviously expected that many Commonwealth countries would strive for Yaounde status.

Matters have taken a different course than what was expected in Europe. The Commonwealth countries have not reacted positively, have shown a cautious attitude and have not followed the example of Mauritius which applied months ago for admission to the Yaounde Convention. In unequivocal terms they have declined the Common Market's offer and questioned the system of association itself. In the subsequent debates on association, in which other countries outside the Common-

wealth and "now-associables" from Africa (as a result of co-operation with the Economic Commission for Africa) such as Ethiopia, Liberia and Sudan also participated, Nigeria acted as their spokesman and understood well how to play a leading role in these discussions. On arguments that were both political and economic, it not only rejected an association arrangement in flat terms but also urged upon the others to follow suit. Kenya did not! However, before discussions among the "associables" could enter a more serious stage, M Jean-Francois Deniau surprised them with a new draft which seems to possess nothing in common with the previous alternative proposal and which is far away from the Yaounde solution.

The new deliberations pay regard to those misgivings which were expressed by the Nigerian representative regarding the political character of the association. The result has been a proposal of EEC guarantees to the "associables" against losses through export reductions caused by price charges. Whether the associating members undertake to clear their debt — in case the prices rise — is certainly a different question. It is significant that the problem of mutual preferences would diminish in intensity after the Deniau Memorandum; "partners" of the EEC could grant similar tariff preferences to any other country, especially the USA. A suggestion was extended both to the associated and to the "associables" to introduce zero-tariffs on imports from the EEC and USA, and to

impose fiscal tariffs for financing their national budgets. Brussels has pondered on the way it could face obstacles from GATT and take the sting out of the American criticism of its association policy. Sufficient consideration in Brussels has also been accorded to the discussions on the EEC's system of association and Africa with reference to the fact of inadequate regional development. Even this problem — perhaps the most important development problem within the African states — has found a positive echo in the Deniau Memorandum and been treated as a responsibility of the EEC to render help in this field. Is Yaounde an outdated form? President Senghor says, no! Was this "No" crucial for Pompidou's and Messmer's decision to bring Jean-Francois Deniau back to the Quai d'Orsay?

Somebody could become suspicious about the "revirement"! It was the French Head of State who insisted on the priority of EEC commitments to the Yaounde partners in the context of a world-wide European policy vis-à-vis the development countries. That happened during the Paris summit in 1972. Nevertheless there had been some changes as to the relations between "mother" France and the old states of the French "communauté". The Europeans, the associates and the associables will know in due time whether M Pompidou has become more sympathetic to M Deniau's views on a revised policy of association. Perhaps it may be disappointing to President Senghor! *Günther Jantzen*