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SPEECH BY THE RT. HON. SIR CHRISTOPHER SOAMES
VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES,
ON RECEIVING THE ROBERT SCHUMAN PRIZE IN BONN, GERMANY.

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MONDAY, 8 MARCH 1976

ROBERT SCHUMAN PRIZE ORATION

THE EUROPEAN UNION: VISION AND POWER

Mr. Rector,

The University of Bonn has done me great honour by conferring upon me the illustrious Robert Schuman Prize. It is a prize that commemorates a very great European statesman - a statesman of whom it can truly be said that as much as any individual could be he was the father of the European idea.

But no-one knew better than Robert Schuman that all achievement in politics is essentially a cooperative effort. In receiving this prize with gratitude and a sense of humility I think of all those with whom I have worked for twenty five years and more on the European scene, and in particular all those with whom I am now working in helping to fashion the attitudes and policies of our Community towards the greater world outside. There is no part of my life's work that I would rather see recognised than the small efforts which providence has allowed me to contribute to the promotion of the European idea.

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I would like this evening to talk with you about a question which I have found myself confronted with at every turn in that experience - the question what sort of power our Community is and should seek in the future to be.

Of course I recognise that the language of power is only one of many languages for the discussion of politics and international relations. But at the same time it affords a way of speaking about European affairs that is realistic and at the same time revealing. Europe lives, and must live in a world of power.

But what sort of power must Europe be?

Let us look at the question from a philosophical standpoint. The essence of power may be said to be the ability to have your own way. In other words, power requires two elements. In the first place, the ability to decide what we want. And in the second place a range of instruments of sufficient dimension to put those policies into effect.

How able are we to decide what we want? Let me put it another way - has Europe yet become a permanent and enduring fact? I wonder what Robert Schuman and the other founders of the Community would think of our achievements in this respect.

They would, I believe, acknowledge that much has been done. They would salute the achievement of a more or less unified industrial market and the creation of the Common Agricultural Policy, with all that these developments have meant for the growth of trade with the Community. They would salute the achievement of the Customs Union and of the Common Commercial Policy. And they would acknowledge the ingenuity and flexibility we have shown in weaving new forms of Community cooperation and, for example, in dealing with the effects on our internal situation of the breakdown of the post-War international monetary order. They would, I believe, welcome the

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gradual emergence of a Community presence and personality on the world scene, and in particular its attitude towards the countries of the Third World.

But, having made these acknowledgements, I believe that the founders of the Community would then go on to pose some hard questions. They would remark, as Mr. Tindemans has remarked, that there is ample evidence of the desire of the peoples of Europe to make further progress together in unity. What, they would ask, are you doing about this in Brussels? What are you doing about it in the national capitals?

In these matters we are, I believe, approaching a period of fundamental choice. Is the European Community to remain at the level of a customs union with a set of limited instruments for internal economic cooperation - a common agricultural policy and a social policy and a regional policy of sorts - and with its external relations essentially organised around the common commercial policy, together with a more or less closely coordinated system of political cooperation? Or are we to proceed beyond this to a fuller conception of European Union - by which I mean a Union which provides both the transfer of resources accompanied by the strict economic disciplines which are necessary for deeper integration, and the capacity actively to influence the world scene?

I do not doubt the permanence or the significance of what we have already achieved. In a number of important spheres Europe is already endowed with a formidable range of instruments for putting its policies into effect. But how real is our social, our political, our moral unity? How enduring is our substance?

Let us try to be clear about why this matters.

In a secular age the peoples of Europe yet continue to need the inspiration of a positive vision. At the same time the form of society we have created is one that can only be sustained by organisation. Vision and power must go together.

For both of these reasons - both for the sake of the vision and for the power - the states of Europe have undertaken together to seek out and develop the European dimension of their existence. In this they are seeking a way that does not detract from their national identity but which makes it possible for them to survive and flourish in the second half of the twentieth century.

The reality of our continent continues to be the revived existence and identity of our nation states. They are still in very large part the natural focus of the aspirations of our peoples and of the political organisation of our Continent.

But without the vision of European unity what future would we have? The European idea continues to provide the essential impulse to that progressive interweaving of material interests which is the best guarantee of the permanent removal of Europe's ancient psychological barriers and of her ancestral hostilities and suspicions. Unless this vision thrives the national principle - which is still so powerful among us all, sometimes in new forms - could still turn inwards and feed upon its own inversion and morbidity. And without the sense of hope and the economic progress which the European idea provides, the balance of the social contract upon which the internal

life of each of our societies depend would inevitably be disturbed.

More positively, our hopes of future progress are also at stake in our commitment to European unity. The fact is that there are nowadays some things - some very necessary things - that can only be done if we do them together.

Unless we advance together in unity we cannot successfully pursue our essential interests in the world outside or fulfil the international responsibilities which flow from our history, our experience and our economic strength. And unless we can achieve a wider and more profound economic and monetary integration we cannot hope to realise the full measure of prosperity and social progress that the European vision holds out to us.

All of this is as true now as it was when the Community was founded. In answer to the hard question of the founders of the Community we could, of course, say that it was easier at the beginning. This was indeed the case. As the French say - nous avons mangé le pain blanc. The Europe of a quarter of a century ago was devastated by war and fearful of the future. There was a willingness on the part both of the governments and of the peoples to make sacrifices and to respond to the adventure and hope of a new idea. Never having been put to the test, it was also easy to assume the validity of a rather mechanical theory of European integration - as if the harmonisation of interests would necessarily lead to a harmony of views.

But none of these perfectly valid observations about the past can remove the challenge of continuing the building of Europe under the signs of the present and the future. It is true that our earlier ideas of integration have turned out to be too simple. If we are to make further progress we must develop a more subtle and more organic analysis on the basis of our experience. It is true that the fears that attended our first steps have largely disappeared. But the facts that give rise to those fears still remain in existence - only we must take a more measured view of them. It is true that the social realities of Europe today are infinitely more complex - less malleable therefore - than they were when we began. But by the same token, they are richer, and the means available to us are larger.

As in the past, so in the future, the development of common European institutions is the key to our progress together. Above all we need a strong and confident European political authority capable of expressing the European will and able to make it effective. Here lies the importance of the European Council of the heads of government of the Member States.

But, amid the ebb and flow of the tides of politics and the shifts of fortune which determine the rise and fall of national governments, there is no substitute for the existence of an accepted and established framework of legal, institutional and powerful structures whose essential function it is to seek only to define the European interest. This was so in the Community of the Six. It is so in the Community of the Nine. And it will be even more so in a further enlarged Community. The further development of cooperation between the Member States is of course essential to the future of the European Union. But cooperation by itself is not enough. The history of Europe is littered with the wreckage of defunct coalitions. We have to maintain and strengthen that element of obligation - the

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pressure to reach a conclusion in the common interest - which marks the difference between a coalition and a Community.

In this nothing will help so much as the new balance in our affairs that will flow from the holding of direct elections to the European Parliament. Of course, no one should suppose that a directly elected Parliament will overnight provide a new political authority for the European Union. Its importance lies, rather, in the renewed legitimacy it will bring to the obligation to develop a common European policy. Together with the Commission it will take on the essential function of the constant promotion of the European interest which is neither the highest common factor nor the lowest common denominator of the various national interests.

For Europe will turn out to be a hollow Titan if we are unwilling to make some sacrifices of national interests - interests that often appear to be more immediate but which cannot outweigh the ultimate advantages of pursuing the common interest. We cannot afford the schizophrenia which wills the European end but which shies away from supplying the means, or which wants Europe to succeed but wants it only to succeed in one particular national way. Our European commitment must of course be nourished by the visible signs of its capacity to satisfy national interests. But in turn it must also be fed by its willingness to ask at every point and in relation to every problem, where lies the European interest and what can we do to promote it?

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If the first prerequisite of power is the capacity to define interests and policies, the second is the possession of the means of pursuing them and the will to use them. It is here that we find the answer to the question what sort of power Europe is and must be.

At its present stage of development, the European Community is essentially a "civilian" power, representing a new form of international political life.

The instruments of power have traditionally been graded into a hierarchy defined by an assessment of their relative potency. Military power is conventionally put at the top end of the scale, so that, for example, the concept of a Super-Power is defined in terms of the possession of a certain assured nuclear fire-power. Economic and commercial power and influence conventionally occupy the middle range of the scale. And at the bottom there is the influence that flows from moral example and from what the French call the rayonnement of culture and the spirit.

But this is of course a purely traditional account of power - an account which is premised upon the assumption that military power can still be brought to bear directly and that war is still, to paraphrase Clausewitz, a possible and rational extension of policy by other means.

Clearly, the emergence of the nuclear balance of terror has by no means nullified the importance of military instruments - not least in those areas where the Super-Powers do not face one another

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directly. We have always to be prepared to meet force applied in new forms or by proxy. And the preservation of deterrence in the central balance between East and West still remains a supremely necessary safeguard both against the use of military power and against the threat that it might be used.

But with the important -nay vital - proviso that these conditions are met, then surely Churchill was right when he argued in 1954 that we may "look to the universality of potential destruction with hope and even with confidence". Outside Western Europe this has proved to be the case over the past three decades - with certain exceptions which have happily been limited in their effects. In the new international situation created by the nuclear balance - and by the nuclear shield afforded us by the United States - it has been possible for the European Community to emerge as a significant force in world affairs although an essentially "civilian" power whose strength in no way derives from its military capabilities. Our power resides not in the arts of war, but in the arts of peace.

So long as the nuclear balance of potential horrific destruction subsists - so long, that is, as America's military partnership with Europe continues to be seen by the United States as being in the American interest, which I might add, in turn presupposes a generous contribution from European countries to our own defence - so long as all this endures, then we can look to our "civilian" power to exert great influence.

Indeed we might go so far as to say that so long as deterrence secures the essential framework of world security it will be by the exercise of the arts of peace and not by the arts of war that the pattern of the future will be decided. Consider the increasing preponderance of economic questions on the agenda of world politics today. These questions will be decided by the relative productive power of our economies, by their capacity to sustain a rapid and steady growth of international trade and investment, and by the degree of regard and respect accorded to our attitudes and actions towards the developing world and to our social traditions and the values which they express. Only those who have no confidence in the capacity of their social and political systems to pursue effectively the arts of peace will turn instead to the use or the threat of military power.

Of course, as the Belgian Prime Minister, Mr Tindemans, said in his recent Report, the emerging European Union must in due course see to it that it makes a distinctive contribution to the assurance of its own security. This must be within the framework of the Atlantic Alliance, which already provides the foundation of the security of each and all of us. But for the present and for the near future, the chief instruments of which the European Community disposes in its external relations lie in the sphere of economics and in the sphere of the spirit - that is, in those fields of action which have acquired a new and special importance in the international relations of the world today.

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In these areas the Community's interests and concerns are more than merely regional or local. They are world-wide, and there is no question but that Europe bulks large in all matters connected with them. This is more particularly so since the Community's enlargement three years ago, which marked not only a quantitative but also a

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qualitative change in Europe's external relations.

The Community of the Nine now has a gross national product which does not fall far short of that of the United States and which considerably exceeds that of the Soviet Union, or that of China or Japan. Its population is larger than that of either the United States or of the Soviet Union, and its production of many key manufactures is second to none. It is also one of the world's chief food-growing areas. Our Member States together transact some 40 per cent of the free world's trade, fully half of which is with countries outside the Community's borders, and they hold some 30 per cent of the world's currency reserves. They are the source of nearly half of official development assistance to the Third World, and they provide a large proportion of the private investment and new technology by which the developing countries set such store. To many nations, both developing and developed, both within the free world economic systems and among the state-trading countries, the Community ranks among their most important markets for raw materials, for food and for industrial goods.

When these economic characteristics are viewed as power factors - that is, as factors that affect the Community's role and influence in the world - they present indeed a picture of worldwide significance. They present also a picture both of formidable strength and of formidable vulnerability.

On the assets side, the Community's policies governing access to its markets and the provision of finance and development aid and the transfer of technology have a significant impact upon the economic prospects of our industrialised partners. And they have a decisive effect upon the economic outlook in many developing countries throughout the world and especially upon those who are historically or geographically closest to us.

On the debit side, as an economy that largely lives by industry and trade, the Community is vulnerable to the market access and monetary policies of all its trading and financial partners, especially of the United States and Japan. And it is notably vulnerable to interference with its imports of energy and raw materials.

So the Community's power is wrapped up in a web of international inter-dependencies. There is a striking paradox here. Our power is in large part a product of that specialisation of economic functions out of which the web of inter-dependence is woven. And yet at the same time it is a power that is strongly qualified by the very interdependence that makes it possible. The resolution of this paradox lies in our acceptance, together with our partners, of an ever-increasing measure of common multilateral discipline. These constraints are the condition of the further economic progress of all of us. They are also constraints that bind us all. Yet at the same time in the determination of their specific character, there is ample scope for the exercise of those forms of power and influence that are the Community's most valuable and in some ways unique asset.

Meanwhile, the essential fact that underlies the relationship between the European Community and its principal partners in the industrialised world and among the developing countries is that it is an essentially interdependent relationship. What damages any one of us must damage the others. And, with respect to the United States in particular our economies, our political structure, our way of life

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and ultimately our ability to pursue our own destiny as free societies are all ultimately and intimately interwoven.

What is true for the economic sphere is true also for the realm of the spirit. Here too our Europe bulks large, and our economic interdependence is paralleled by the growth of an ever more densely woven web of contacts and communications across the old barriers of geography, race, creed and culture.

Within the Community our societies are passing through a period of ferment and turmoil. But the ferment has been one of change and striving, not one of decay and decline. Our Europe retains her old enchantments, but she has put the nightmares of the past behind her. Both at home and in her relations with the world outside - especially in her relations with the former colonial peoples - she has learned the wisdom of Meister Eckhart's saying, that "only the hand that erases can write the true thing".

The dynamism of Western Europe's recovery since the war has been the admiration of those who wish us well and the puzzlement of those who do not. The solidity of the democratic order and the cohesion we have created within the Community is a pole of attraction for the constructive forces in many lands. The progress of our experiments in unity is studied with a zeal for emulation as far afield as South East Asia and Latin America. And our quest for a synthesis that reconciles tradition with innovation is a mirror which many ancient peoples hold up to glimpse their own soul as they undergo a similar ferment of change.

But let us not forget that there is undoubtedly also a sense in which Europe's own psychological growth is bound up with her relations with the peoples of the world outside Europe - a sense in which the emergence and formation of our own personality is bound up with the development of theirs. The effects of this on both sides belong to that class of social phenomena that is both profound and intangible. In the interdependence in the realm of the spirit which flows from it are to be found the foundations of that influence without arrogance that is perhaps the most striking feature of Europe's present position in the world. And at this deep level we find the moral and psychological foundation of Europe's place as a "civilian" power with a world role.

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That role will not and cannot be the role of any one of our nations writ large.

Each of our countries has its own tradition in foreign policy - a tradition which is the compound expression of its national history and culture and of a continuously reviewed assessment of the enduring national interest amid the flux of world events. The foreign policy of the European Union will also gradually take shape in its own tradition. But although this tradition will be moulded by the same considerations which have shaped our national policies, it will inevitably reflect a synthesis of all the historical elements and abiding interests that go to make up our Community. Indeed, it will be more even than a synthesis: it will be something quite new and different, reflecting the emergence of a quite new and different

factor - the European factor - in world affairs.

It will be a policy which projects the essential character and interests of European society, committed to pluralism, democracy, and the social-market economy. It will therefore join us in close ties with like-minded countries all over the world, and notably with the United States. It will also be a policy which reflects Europe's historic concern with the developing world, and the various elements of which that concern is made up - humanitarianism, zeal to spread more widely the food of the human spirit, the desire to do business with a sense of responsibility. It will reflect the historical ties of kinship and the mutual interests which bind Great Britain to the Commonwealth, and the cultural bonds which join France and Italy to the other countries of the Mediterranean border-land and to Africa as well as those which join Denmark with the other Scandinavian countries and the German Federal Republic with its compatriots and neighbours to the East.

All of these historic elements will find their place in Europe's external relations. But they will not do so in the forms they have taken in the past, nor can they continue to be defined exclusively by one or other national connection. Further, Europe will be challenged to fresh creativity as new subjects take their place on the agenda of international relations, as new pre-occupations emerge and new instruments of international policy are forged.

Could we find a greater or more worth-while challenge? Especially at this time, when all our societies are in such desperate need of a fresh and morally satisfying sense of purpose. But it is a challenge which we can only meet by conscious and constant effort. Our attitudes will need to undergo a sea-change. We will need, in short, to put Europe first, and to give the European interest the highest priority.

I have the feeling that if our Governments were prepared to lead, our peoples will still gladly follow - despite all the disillusion they may feel at the recent slow progress of the European idea.

In all this we will find no better inspiration than that of Robert Schuman. He knew full well that politics is the art of the possible. But he also knew that the task of the statesman is to make possible that which is necessary. And we will not find a sounder principle of action than the advice of Bismark that in politics we must be guided not by what we think we can do, but by what we know we must do.