

SPEECH DELIVERED

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TO THE

NATIONAL PRESS CLUB

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LADIES & GENTLEMEN,

I WILL NOT ATTEMPT TO HIDE THE EMOTION I FEEL AS FIRST PRESIDENT OF A DIRECTLY ELECTED EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT IN BEING TO DAY BEFORE THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB, THE JOURNALISTS FORUM WHICH TO ME SEEMS TO EMBODY THE MOST VIGOROUS AND INDEPENDENT EXPRESSION OF FREEDOM IN THIS, THE CAPITAL OF A NATION WHICH OVER THE PAST TWO CENTURIES HAS NOT CEASED TO DEFEND AND EMBODY DEMOCRACY;

INDEED, FOR TWO CENTURIES, THE TIES BETWEEN EUROPE AND THE UNITED STATES, WHICH ON BOTH SIDES OF THE ATLANTIC SHARE THE SAME VALUES OF CIVILISATION, HAVE BEEN CHARACTERIZED BY A COMMON, DETERMINED WILL TO PRESERVE THEIR IDEAL OF FREEDOM AND OUR TWO CONTINENTS HAVE UNITED TO DEFEND THIS FREEDOM WHENEVER IT WAS THREATENED.

BY CREATING FOR THEMSELVES A PARLIAMENT ELECTED BY UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE, NINE EUROPEAN COUNTRIES HAVE REALISED THEIR WILL TO GIVE THE COMMUNITY NOT ONLY ECONOMIC LIFE BUT ALSO POLITICAL REALITY THUS CONTRIBUTING TO THE REINFORCEMENT OF DEMOCRACY IN EUROPE THROUGH THE EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS.

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IF THIS FIRST ELECTION OF A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT OCCURRED AT A TIME WHEN EUROPE HAD THE GREATEST DIFFICULTIES IN PROGRESSING, THIS WAS CERTAINLY NOT A COINCIDENCE. IN ANY EVENT, IT REPRESENTS A GUARANTEE FOR PEOPLE'S SECURITY THROUGHOUT THE WORLD THAT THE CITIZENS OF EUROPE CAN UNITE AND MAKE THEMSELVES HEARD AT THE VERY TIME WHEN "DETENTE" AND PEACE SEEM TO BE THREATENED.

WHAT PART CAN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT PLAY IN THIS DIRECTION ? WHAT VOICE HAS IT GIVEN EUROPE IN TO DAY'S WORLD ? THESE ARE THE QUESTIONS I WILL ATTEMPT TO ANSWER.

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THE EXISTENCE OF AN ELECTED EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT CONSITUTES A CORNERSTONE OF THE BUILDING OF EUROPE, BUT AT THE SAME TIME REVEALS HOW DIFFICULT IT IS TO PROGRESS TOWARDS GREATER UNITY.

IN JUNE LAST YEAR, FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER, NINE MEMBER STATES CALLED UPON THEIR ELECTORS TO VOTE BY UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE FOR THE RENEWAL OF A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT WHICH UP TILL THEN HAD CONSISTED OF DELEGATIONS FROM THE VARIOUS NATIONAL PARLIAMENTS.

THE NEW EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT DIFFERS THEREFORE FROM THE PREVIOUS ONE, NOT ONLY IN THE NUMBER OF ITS MEMBERS WHICH ROSE FROM 198 TO 410, BUT ALSO IN ITS LEGITIMACY, GIVEN THAT ITS MEMBERS ARE DIRECTLY ELECTED BY THE CITIZENS OF EUROPE.

THIS IS THE FIRST MULTINATIONAL PARLIAMENT IN THE WORLD, AND THE FACT THAT 260 MILLION EUROPEANS CAN BE REPRESENTED IN A DEMOCRATIC BODY WHERE EACH CAN DISCUSS COMMON PROBLEMS WITH HIS NEIGHBOUR, WHERE EACH CAN LEARN TO KNOW HIS NEIGHBOUR, CREATES VERY POWERFUL TIES BETWEEN THE PEOPLES OF THE COMMUNITY.

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT IS VERY SIMILAR TO THAT OF A NATIONAL PARLIAMENT; IT INCLUDES SPECIALIZED COMMITTEES BUT ALSO GROUPS WHERE THE REPRESENTATIVES ARE UNITED NOT BY NATIONALITY BY POLITICAL AFFINITY. THESE ARE THE GROUPS IN WHICH THE EUROPEANS TRY TO PUSH ASIDE THEIR NATIONAL DIFFERENCES AND ADOPT COMMON POSITIONS ON ALL THE SUBJECTS DEBATED IN THE PARLIAMENT.

THIS NEWLY ELECTED PARLIAMENT IS STILL VERY YOUNG AND SOME OF ITS OPERATING DIFFICULTIES REFLECT THE PROBLEMS POSED BY THE CONSTRUCTION OF EUROPE AND THE EFFORT THIS REQUIRES ON THE PART OF EUROPEANS.

AS A MULTINATIONAL PARLIAMENT, THIS BODY IS FIRST OF ALL SUBJECTED TO THE CONSTRAINT OF WORKING IN SEVERAL LANGUAGES WHICH WEIGHS HEAVILY ON ITS OPERATION AND ADMINISTRATION.

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AS A DEMOCRATIC PARLIAMENT, IT UNITES WOMEN AND MEN WHOSE IDEAS CAN DIFFER IF NOT DIVERGE, EVEN ON THE VERY CONCEPT OF EUROPEAN CONSTRUCTION. IT INCLUDES SPOKESMEN FOR TURBULENT MINORITIES WHO HAVE FOUND A FORUM FOR THE FREE EXPRESSION OF THEIR DESIRE TO CHANGE SOCIETY. WHEN IT COMES TO THE FILIBUSTER IT CAN EVEN COMPETE EFFICIENTLY WITH SOME OF YOUR OWN INSTITUTIONS AND THIS CAN CREATE VERY REAL PROBLEMS WHEN THE PROCEDURES ARE NOT ADAPTED TO SUCH PRACTICES.

OTHER DIFFICULTIES ARISE FROM THE DIVERSE WORKING LOCATIONS OF THE PARLIAMENT.

WITHIN AN UNCHANGED INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK, THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT HAS NEVERTHELESS BECOME A NEW POLITICAL POWER.

OBVIOUSLY, THE UNIVERSAL ELECTION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT HAS NOT BROADENED ITS TERMS OF REFERENCE DEFINED IN THE TREATIES.

IN THE COMMUNITY, THE PARLIAMENT HAS BASICALLY TWO TYPES OF POWERS:

- FIRSTLY, IT DELIVERS OPINIONS ON ALL DRAFT REGULATIONS AND DIRECTIVES WHICH THE COMMISSION, PERMANENT EXECUTIVE BODY OF THE COMMUNITY, SUBMITS TO THE COUNCIL, REPRESENTING THE VARIOUS GOVERNMENTS. THESE DRAFTS CONCERN ALL ASPECTS OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL LIFE OF THE MEMBER STATES.

- BUT MOST IMPORTANT, IT HAS THE POWER TO VOTE THE COMMUNITY BUDGET WHICH FINANCES ALL COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES.

VERY SOON, THE NEWLY ELECTED PARLIAMENT PROVED THAT IT INTENDED TO BE A POLITICAL POWER BY TACKLING SOME OF THE MOST DIFFICULT PROBLEMS FACING THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY. THIS IT DID AT THE VERY FIRST BUDGET DEBATE WHICH TOOK PLACE LAST FALL WHEN THE 1980 BUDGET WAS SUBMITTED.

YOU ALL KNOW THAT THE MAIN COMMON POLICY ESTABLISHED BY THE E.C. IS THE AGRICULTURAL POLICY WHICH IN ITSELF ABSORBS ALMOST 70 PERCENT OF THE COMMUNITY'S BUDGET. THE NEW PARLIAMENT CONSIDERS THAT SOME OF THE TERMS OF THE COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY SHOULD BE REVISED TO PUT AN END TO THE PRODUCTION OF SURPLUSES IN CERTAIN SPECIFIC SECTORS, PARTICULARLY DAIRY PRODUCTS. IT MAINTAINED ITS POSITION ON THIS POINT TO THE VERY END SINCE, WHEN COMPLETE AGREEMENT COULD NOT BE ACHIEVED WITH THE COUNCIL, IT REJECTED THE PROPOSED BUDGET FOR 1980.

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THIS REJECTION HAD NOT CREATED AN INSTITUTIONAL CRISIS. THE PARLIAMENT WAS PERFECTLY WITHIN ITS RIGHTS TO REJECT THE BUDGET. HOWEVER, THIS EPISODE DOES ILLUSTRATE HOW FAR THE PARLIAMENT IS PREPARED TO GO, WITHIN ITS RIGHTS, IN ORDER TO MAKE ITSELF HEARD.

DIRECTLY ELECTED BY THE CITIZENS OF EUROPE, THE NEW PARLIAMENT CAN CONVEY WITH GREATER FORCE THE VOICE OF EUROPE AND ITS OPINION ON ALL THE MAJOR POLITICAL PROBLEMS.

OBVIOUSLY, OUR EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT DOES NOT HAVE THE POWERS OF YOUR CONGRESS, NOR THOSE OF YOUR SENATE PARTICULARLY ON MATTERS OF FOREIGN POLICY. NONETHELESS, THE VOICE OF ITS MEMBERS HAS, SINCE THEIR ELECTION, GAINED GREATER POWER AND WILL CONTINUE TO DO SO AS A DEMOCRATIC COUNTER-POINT TO THE POLITICAL COOPERATION DEVELOPED BY THE GOVERNMENTS.

AT A TIME WHEN THE FUTURE OF EUROPE IS ONCE AGAIN TIED UP WITH THE EVOLUTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL SITUATION, IT WOULD BE UNTHINKABLE FOR THE PARLIAMENT NOT TO PLACE ITS POLITICAL PREOCCUPATIONS IN THE VERY CENTER OF THE DISCUSSIONS. LIKE ITS PARTNERS, EUROPE IS FACED WITH FORMIDABLE CHALLENGES, NOT ONLY IN MATTERS OF ECONOMICS, BUT ALSO TO SIMPLY MAINTAIN PEACE, AND EUROPE ITSELF CANNOT COPE WITH THESE CHALLENGES WITHOUT GREATER UNITY AND WITHOUT A GREATER CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH ITS MAJOR PARTNERS.

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SUCH IS THE CASE WITH THE UNITED STATES, EUROPE'S MAJOR ECONOMIC AND COMMERCIAL PARTNER, BUT ALSO ONE OF THE VERY FEW COUNTRIES WHICH IS DEEPLY COMMITTED TO DEMOCRACY AND FREEDOM. THAT IS WHY THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ATTACHES SUCH GREAT IMPORTANCE TO THE RELATIONS BETWEEN EUROPE AND THE UNITED STATES. LONG BEFORE DIRECT ELECTIONS, IT HAD ITSELF ORGANIZED CONTACTS WITH YOUR CONGRESS. THIS IS WHY I CONSIDERED IT ESSENTIAL THAT I SHOULD PERSONALLY HEAD THE FIRST DELEGATION VISITING THE UNITED STATES SINCE THE ELECTIONS.

IT IS QUITE OBVIOUS THAT EUROPE AND THE UNITED STATES CANNOT ACT WITHOUT EACH ONE TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE SITUATION AND INTERESTS OF THE OTHER. THIS IS PARTICULARLY TRUE AT A TIME WHEN OUR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND OUR ENERGY SUPPLIES ARE THREATENED. CONFRONTED WITH TODAY'S CRISIS, IT WOULD BE DANGEROUS TO GIVE IN TO THE ALWAYS SWEET TEMPTATION OF PROTECTIONISM. AS PARTNERS WE MUST BOTH HAVE AN OVERALL VIEW OF EACH OTHERS INTERESTS; FOR EXAMPLE, WE CANNOT IGNORE THE FACT THAT THE AMERICANS ARE CONCERNED BY EUROPE'S STEEL EXPORTS, BUT BY THE SAME TOKEN, YOU CANNOT FORGET EUROPE'S CONCERN OVER AMERICAN EXPORTS OF SYNTHETIC FIBRE TEXTILES.

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ON A MORE GENERAL LEVEL, YOU CANNOT IGNORE EUROPE'S INCREASING CONCERN OVER THE FUNDAMENTAL ECONOMIC DISTORTION CREATED BETWEEN OUR TWO CONTINENTS, BY THE FACT THAT THE UNITED STATES CAN SOFTEN THE IMPACT OF THE NEW OIL CRISIS BY CERTAIN MONETARY MEANS. THIS OPTION IS NOT OPEN TO US IN EUROPE.

ON THE SUBJECT OF ENERGY, THE NEED TO TAKE ACCOUNT OF OUR INTERDEPENDENCE IS OBVIOUS. EUROPE'S EFFORTS TO LIMIT ITS CONSUMPTION AND REDUCE ITS OIL IMPORTS WILL BE ALL THE MORE SERIOUS AND EFFECTIVE IF ALL THE INDUSTRIALIZED COUNTRIES, INCLUDING AND IN PARTICULAR THE UNITED STATES, SHARE THE SAME EFFORTS.

AT THE SAME TIME, THE PARLIAMENT CONSIDERS THAT THE MULTILATERAL TRADE NEGOTIATIONS CONCLUDED LAST YEAR IN GENEVA CONSTITUTED A SIGNIFICANT STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION WHICH WE HOPE WILL BE CONFIRMED IN THE FUTURE.

FINALLY, IT IS ON THE QUESTION OF PEACE THAT OUR DESTINIES ARE INEXORABLY INTERTWINED. THE MEMBERS OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT SHARE THIS PREOCCUPATION AND HAVE SHOWN IT BY REACTING IMMEDIATELY TO THE DRAMATIC EVENTS WHICH OCCURRED IN IRAN AND AFGHANISTAN. IN BOTH CASES, THE PARLIAMENT EXPRESSED ITS POSITION IN THE STRONGEST AND MOST UNAMBIGUOUS TERMS.

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AT ITS LAST SESSION, TWO WEEKS AGO, A RESOLUTION WAS OVERWHELMINGLY ADOPTED CALLING ON THE COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES TO REVIEW ALL THE COMMERCIAL, CREDIT AND FINANCIAL RELATIONS BETWEEN THE COMMUNITY AND THE U.S.S.R.

IT ALSO CALLED ON THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ORGANISATION OF THE OLYMPIC GAMES TO RECONSIDER WHETHER THE GAMES SHOULD TAKE PLACE IN MOSCOW IF THE SOVIET OCCUPATION OF AFGHANISTAN CONTINUES.

I WOULD LIKE TO EMPHASIZE THAT THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT FEELS IT HAS A PARTICULAR MISSION TO SPEAK OUT FOR THE DEFENSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS.

THE PARLIAMENT REPRESENTS THE PEOPLE OF NINE COUNTRIES WHICH ARE AMONGST THE OLDEST DEMOCRACIES IN THE WORLD AND IN WHICH HUMAN RIGHTS ARE JEALOUSLY GUARDED. THAT IS WHY, SINCE THE MONTH OF JULY, THE PARLIAMENT HAS TAKEN UP THE PLIGHT OF CAMBODIANS THREATENED BY GENOCIDE; OF CZECHS TRIED AND IMPRISONED WITHOUT DUE PROCESS; AND LAST BUT NOT LEAST, IT IS WHY THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT HAS TAKEN UP THE PLIGHT OF THE AMERICAN HOSTAGES HELD PRISONER IN TEHRAN.

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AT THIS MOMENT, PEACE APPEARS TO BE MORE FRAGILE THAN AT ANY TIME FOR A GENERATION. THE NEW EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT REFLECTS THE ATTACHMENT TO LIBERTY OF 260 MILLION EUROPEANS. FOR THAT VERY REASON IT CAN MAKE A UNIQUE CONTRIBUTION TO SAFEGUARDING A CIVILIZATION WHICH ON BOTH SIDES OF THE ATLANTIC IS OUR MOST TREASURED POSSESSION.