

ADDRESS BY VICE-PRESIDENT SCARASCIA MUGNOZZA
AT THE OPENING OF THE TWELFTH
CONGRESS OF THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF JOURNALISTS

(Luxembourg, 13 to 18 May)

Your Highness,
Mr Chairman,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour and pleasure for me to be present at the opening of your World Congress. I would like to thank you on behalf of the Commission of the European Communities for inviting us here, proving once again that journalists have not only a feeling for what is topical, but also a sense of history, as it was in this town that the famous European Robert Schuman was born in 1886 and the first European "authority" was founded almost 22 years ago on 10 August 1952. I refer to the European Coal and Steel Community which was set up with the aim of replacing the age-old rivalry between the nations of western Europe by a merger of their fundamental interests, and laying the initial foundations of a larger and more comprehensive community.

Twenty two years! Of course, the process of uniting Europe has been slower than the pioneers thought it would be. And it is true that the construction of Europe has not yet crossed the threshold of legitimacy beyond which tension between the members would not endanger its very existence. Some people are assailed by doubt and discouragement when they read newspaper accounts of long Council of Ministers meetings at which Governments clash, or witness repeated crises

provoked by this or that great problem, or realize that the national States acting in isolation cannot put an end to monetary disorder, the progress of inflation and the threats to our energy supplies. However, if we hark back in thought to the Fifties, taking care that the hesitations or errors do not blind us to what has been achieved, how can we fail to learn from what has been done or to find new reasons to hope, imagine and act?

II

In the space of one generation Europe has laid the foundations of an economic community whose in-built capacity to develop into a political community has been formally recognized by the Heads of State or Government. In spite of difficulties of every kind, the grouping of the founder countries has experienced unprecedented economic and social development and has at the same time proved itself to be the most effective instrument for the development of world trade, both with industrialized countries and with developing and State-trading countries.

In 1973 three other countries joined the six founder members, and though one of them still has doubts regarding its future in the Community or on the details of its integration therein, I myself am convinced that its crisis of conscience -- or of confidence -- will be overcome in the next few months.

Finally, and what is most important, relations between the Member States and the peoples, in particular between France and Germany, have developed within a framework of cooperation unknown in previous centuries. In a country such as our host country today, where two European cultures meet and intermingle is this not an invaluable achievement of which the men of my generation are particularly aware?

This is why, without giving way to the illusions of blind optimism, or closing our eyes to the mistakes and setbacks or the difficulties to be overcome, I deliberately refuse to succumb to pessimism. Someone wrote that "the great mistake of pessimists is that they are never certain of anything, except the worst and always cast doubt on the good". Let us not be one of their number. Let us instead remember that the Community is obliged continually to surpass itself, to advance and draw new energy from the openmindedness of the great majority of the people of Europe, including the younger generations in spite of what is often said about them.

For its part the European Commission showed its determination several weeks ago by sending a public and solemn declaration on the state of the Community to the Heads of State or Government and through them to the citizens of our nine countries. It has shown clearly that it does not intend to let itself be carried away by the wave of disenchantment and bitterness which accompanies the formidable accumulation of new problems. It believes that in order to grasp the true nature and dimension of these problems, and to define the necessary technical and political solutions, we must remain clear-sighted as possible. Only on this condition can we learn the lesson of recent events, consolidate what has been achieved and cope with the future in the best - or least unfavourable conditions possible.

In order to do this, the Commission and the other Community institutions require the support of public opinion and what I would call the "constructive vigilance" of the Press.

III

Relations between public opinion and the Community are extremely complex.

The opinion surveys which we carried out recently show that, leaving aside Denmark and the United Kingdom, the majority of citizens, including young people between 15 and 20 years old,

are favourably disposed towards the Common Market, the European Community and the unification of Europe. However, this does not mean to say that it is a fundamental and daily preoccupation for each of them. Interest in European affairs is widespread rather than profound, and even the favourable attitude itself is determined more by a kind of general sympathy for the European venture than by any understanding of the concrete means of carrying it out.

The technicalities of the discussions, and perhaps also the language of the actors discourage the less committed, who are often also the less well-educated or well-informed.

This will come as no surprise to those who, like yourselves, are professionally involved with information. Even at national level what problems once they are a little complex and beyond the difficulties of daily life and the national frontiers provoke profound, continuous and active interest among silent majorities? The great difference is that the socio-political and socio-economic life of each country is based on a whole range of institutions, images, concepts and sentiments and derives its substance therefrom. For the Community as such everything must be created: not only its legitimacy, but also the instruments for achieving this. It has neither anthem, flag, passport, press, radio or television, and although it has a Parliament which sits in this city, the powers of initiative and control of this Parliament are still inadequate and its Members are not yet elected by direct universal suffrage.

In each of our countries daily consent to membership of a national group, even while criticizing the political system or the government, is based on long tradition. Without questioning the independence of newspapers or the professional honesty of journalists it can be said that the national press, whatever the tendencies of its individual elements and in particular the national dailies, plays a role in adapting the public to social norms and upholding existing structures. By this I mean that the press quite naturally reports and comments

from the point of view of its national audience on internal and external events, including those already taking place within the framework of Europe.

Now, precisely in the case of the European Community, that is to say of something which is both a reality and a plan, a multinational grouping which has been partially institutionalized but not yet democratized, the problem is to arouse public interest, to make the public aware of what is happening, to explain the circumstances - that is to say the objectives, the means, the stages and the difficulties. The setting and the details of the information supplied are equally important here. The consumption of news, if I may express it in that way, is not enough in itself; it is necessary to whet the appetite of the reader, the listener, the television viewer; and, in a democratic system, the consumer of news must even be induced to take part, at least passively, and if possible actively, in discussions on the problems in question. It is this task which requires what I have called "constructive vigilance".

Far be it from me to seek favourable treatment or particular leniency for the Community and its institutions: the duty of the press to criticize is not in question; on the contrary, all the European institutions, including that to which I have the honour to belong have a great need for your critical vigilance. But what I am trying to say is that such critical vigilance must be aimed at creating public interest in the subject of your criticism. Paraphrasing what Beaumarchais said, if your colleagues of "Le Figaro" will permit me, paraphrasing what Beaumarchais said, for whom "without freedom to blame there is no such thing as flattering praise", I would readily add that, unless there is an awareness of what the Community is doing, could do or should do, there is only a superficial relation of isolated events, with no overall political significance.

It has been said of the journalist, and not without malice, that, unlike the historian, he lives on "what will be

less interesting tomorrow than today" (Alain). The respect which we have for your profession leads me to think that its members should endeavour, to render interesting this very day everything that conditions the future of the whole of mankind. And we are immodest enough to think that the construction of a united Europe is one of these important elements of contemporary history.

As far as we are concerned, we have endeavoured, and are still endeavouring, to lend our ear to public opinion, so that we can gain a better idea of the matters on which its attention is focussed and adapt our information policy accordingly. That policy, itself resolutely decentralized, has never been designed, nor will it ever be - for that would be absurd - to replace or rival the press. Our objective is to help journalists to do their job, and the press, in whatever form it may present itself, to fulfil its irreplaceable function of informing the public, that is to say that awareness of existing which, for human societies, is the beginning of existence.

IV

Twenty years ago already, at about the time when the first European Community was setting up its headquarters in Luxembourg, the British historian, Arnold Toynbee, foresaw two possible future courses for Europe:

- either, he wrote, it will retire from active existence, like so many other civilizations, and will try to live on its past and in its museums,
- or it will endeavour to secure a dominant moral position by transforming itself into a model community.

Like the Swiss philosopher, Denis de Rougemont, I think there is a third possibility which is just as far removed from the resigned retreat into the past as it is from the will to dominate - even if only morally - or to set a model example. This third possible course would consist in the search for a specifically European answer to the challenge offered by the crisis of civilization, which is now apparent on a worldwide scale, a crisis from which none of our European countries can extricate itself in isolation and to which none of the Super-powers alone can find or implement a solution.

This awareness of the need for a European answer to the great problems of our time, whether they involve the reorganization of the monetary system, energy supplies, the development of the least favoured countries or research into all other types of growth, this awareness sometimes appears to be greater outside the Community than within it. And it is especially from the developing countries, from both Latin America and Africa, as well as from those regions in the Middle East which have suffered so badly, that an urgent appeal is addressed to us. Let us hear it before it is too late!

To all you journalists from all over the world assembled here, let me say that the European Community is trying to find an original solution to the problems which have arisen in the last quarter of a century. It is doing so without any arrogance towards anyone, but with pertinacity. It will continue on this path, but it cannot do so unless there is constant and stronger contact with public opinion both inside and outside the Community.

Whether or not you work in one of our nine Member States, the Community willingly and trustingly accepts your critical and constructive vigilance. It thanks you in advance for continuing to exercise this vigilance rigorously, both in order to provide the news which forms the warp and woof of our daily lives and to help to disengage, from the happenings of everyday existence, the deep meaning of our great adventure.