Address by M. Jean Rey, President of the Commission of the European Communities, at the signing of the preferential agreement between the Community and Spain.

Your Excellencies,

Gentlemen,

The Commission sees the conclusion of this agreement as the happy outcome of long, patient efforts pursued by both sides, and we are glad that we have been able to make an effective contribution.

A number of years ago I had the honour to preside over the initial talks between the Spanish Delegation and the Commission, negotiating on behalf of the Community. No one was unaware of the difficulties of the undertaking, firstly because of the substance of the problems, and secondly because of the psychological climate, which was not always unclouded.

But from the very first day the Spanish Delegation made it clear that it attached more importance to the progressive, smooth development of our negotiations than to haste, a wise viewpoint which coincided largely with our own. Our efforts have now been crowned with success, and I should like to pay tribute to those who worked for it on the Commission side, my colleague Edoardo Martino and Director-General Sigrist. But our thanks go also to His Excellency M. Ullastres, Head of the Spanish Delegation and a friend to all of us. His contribution was essential, and his efforts have been rewarded not only as Head of the Spanish Delegation and of Spain's Mission to our Community but also as former Minister of Foreign Trade who did so much to liberalize his country's domestic and foreign trade.

This agreement is a beginning. It represents a big step forward towards an economic rapprochement between Spain and the Community, and it certainly should be possible to extend it in the future.

There are so many historical and cultural links between Spain and the present member countries of the Community, not to speak of those that will soon be joining it, that we cannot but rejoice at this opening. We see in it the beginning of an evolution which may well enable Spain one day, we hope, to play its full role in the construction of the European continent.

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