

Strasbourg, 18 January 1984

SPEECH

by the President of the Council
to the European Parliament
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Mr President,
Honourable members,

I should like first of all to thank you for your words of welcome and to express to Parliament my pleasure at being back in this fine chamber where I so often sat as a Commissioner - on the other side to be sure. I would also like to state how honoured I am to assume, in the name of France, the Presidency of the Council of Ministers of the Community and with it to open in that capacity, in accordance with a now firmly established tradition, a dialogue on the work programme for the first six months of 1984.

France is taking over the Presidency at a critical time for Europe. My European Affairs colleague and I are fully aware of the difficulty of the task and the extent of the responsibilities with which our country is faced.

Would anybody dream of denying that Europe is in crisis? This crisis is not new. It is of long standing: many of this

Parliament's members have often said so and the Commission sounded the alarm at a very early stage. But it was only brought home to public opinion after the Athens summit. Admittedly, that event was striking enough to make an impression: for the first time, and despite the efforts of the Greek Presidency - to which I wish to pay homage - and of all the Member States throughout the previous six months, the European Council broke up after two and a half days' discussions without even being able to announce a single decision.

Let us not minimize the importance of this crisis. It is of long standing, as I said, and derives from the failure of measures and practices decided on in other times to adapt to present conditions. And it is dangerous, because if it continues the consequences might be fatal for the Community.

However, let us not dramatize matters either: what appeared clearly in Athens was that all the Member States wanted Europe and needed the Community. There may have been insufficient political will, but the Ten reaffirmed their European commitment.

Nor should it be forgotten that there already existed at the end of the European Council broad areas of agreement. In fact - and this is important - the arguments were not about the future, about new policies; there is agreement that the European dimension should be used to face up to the present industrial revolution, to try and improve the economic and monetary order, and to define a social area. I shall come back

to this. It was on the long-standing and well-known problems that agreement could not be reached, on subjects which the Commission, the Council and Parliament have been discussing and rediscussing for months, for years even, the "rubble of the past" as President Mitterand said when leaving the Zappeion.

Should we then regard the present crisis as merely a slightly more serious form of the classic crises so often experienced in the Community's stormy history? The similarities which could easily be found to support such a notion would be misleading, because on this occasion it had been decided - in Stuttgart - to tackle all the main problems, and they are all interconnected. The Community found itself unable for the time being to find solutions in Athens to the problems raised, as if there were disillusion and doubts about the future of our common institutions and policies, if not of the European idea.

Let us recognize with realism and humility that Europe has fallen far short of the most ambitious of objectives. In the minds of its founders, Europe was not only to contribute to the required reconciliation of the European people, which it has done, but it was also to confer on the countries of which it is composed the economic strength and political influence deriving from its size, its past and its potential. But we are now compelled to accept that Europe does not today occupy either at the political or economic level the place which could and should belong to it on the international scene. Worse still, in the last few years, we have lost ground. Between 1973 and 1981 our industrial production increased by 8%, that of the United States by 16%, and Japan's by 26%. Expenditure

on research in the Ten is twice as high as in Japan (500 million dollars for micro-processors, for example, in the EEC, compared with 250 in Japan) and yet the European micro-processor industry represents only 10% of the world market and supplies only 40% of its own market. Between 1973 and 1983 employment fell by 3 million in the Community whereas it increased by 15 million in the United States. Later on I shall speak of the weakening of the voice of the Europeans in the face of the major political problems.

During this time, as the years went by in the Communities, we were bogged down in sometimes subsidiary and often Byzantine internal disputes. We devoted all our energies to them; we created the technocrats' Europe and these technocrats neutralized each other. We created the tradesmen's Europe and these tradesmen quarrelled amongst themselves. Where then, during this time, were the workers, the young, the people? The Common Market itself did not succeed in justifying its title, as so many obstacles to the free movement of goods, people and services remained or actually grew. The harmonization of laws and rules constantly came up against the difficulties which administrations, jealous of their prerogatives and prisoners of their habits, continued to connive at, whilst our enterprises had a legitimate need for a common legal and economic environment. The Community's external identity had difficulty in asserting itself in economics and trade and the Community turned to the free trade area; lacking the desired cohesion and solidarity, it was unable to defend its interests against its major trading partners in the world with the necessary vigour.

The disappointment of well informed people and the loss of interest of others can thus be understood, but it is also clear, as was agreed in Stuttgart, that the main problems of the past

should be tackled so that the future could be faced with resolution. And this is the point at which we have arrived.

Let us then be ambitious. But let us be realistic also. Let us beware of seductive constructions and rigid adherence to a system. Today, like yesterday, let us remember the successes represented both initially and to a certain extent now by the Coal and Steel Community, or the common agricultural policy. We must harness to our political will concrete objectives, based on converging or joint interests, as the President of the European Parliament rightly said in a recent interview with a Belgian newspaper.

We must nevertheless remain faithful to the Treaty, the qualities and countless resources of which have been proved by experience, and open up new paths. Settling present disputes and giving Europe its second wind must go hand in hand, as the one is required for the other and vice versa.

Here - I need hardly emphasize - is the task to which the French Presidency is going to devote itself, as did the one which preceded it, strengthened by the advice and experience of the Commission and its ability to come up with proposals and assured, I am convinced, of the support of the elected representatives of the peoples of Europe who sit in this Parliament.

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What I should like to call "the legacy of Athens" must be examined in the light of the foregoing.

Firstly, there was discussion of problems inherited from the past, including, of course, the common agricultural policy. This policy, let it never be forgotten, was defined in an earlier period; it has produced remarkable results and is an essential element in the future of European society. However, it must be adjusted to take account of the changes that have occurred since its adoption. Such is the case, for example, where the very success of the CAP has resulted in surpluses which internal and external markets are unable to absorb. Naturally, milk must be mentioned at this point. However, the measures adopted to bring production under control must attack the real causes of the surpluses and take account of social realities, whilst fully respecting the principles of the CAP and the provisions of the Treaty. Also, the unity of the market, again put at risk by the continuing existence of sizeable monetary compensatory amounts, must be restored and the Community preference, which has taken a battering from the incredible growth in imports of cereal substitutes, must be protected and strengthened. Finally, the potentially pre-eminent position of the Community in international trade in agricultural products needs to be established and then vigorously defended.

It is clear that via quantitative control of production and trade rationalization such adjustments must result in the avoidance of over-rapid increase in expenditure, so that it is brought down to a level compatible with the increase in

Community resources. Nevertheless, it will still be necessary, as the Commission wisely recommends, to provide for some increase in taxes linked to the production or import of agricultural products.

In recent years, the functions of the various structural funds have not been equally well defined; expenditure on some has increased very rapidly. General agreement has already been reached that we now need to define their scope and the rules for their operation so that they might more clearly serve the policies the Community has adopted; it should also be possible to improve the effectiveness of current resources. The review of the European Social Fund rightly accorded the necessary priority to youth employment. That of the Regional Fund has still to be completed; it will obviously have to take into account redevelopment needs in declining industrial regions and possibly agricultural areas too. As for the Guidance Section of the EAGGF, its activities will become even more linked than in the past to CAP projects.

As the structural funds are re-examined, the examination of the Commission's ambitious proposal on integrated Mediterranean programmes, which was begun some months ago, will be continued; these are intended to deal with the effects of enlargement on those Mediterranean countries which are at present members of the Community.

The Member States are working within the constraints of strict budget policies. No-one will therefore be

surprised at the importance our Governments and national Parliaments attach to the control of growth in the Community budget. For all that, there is no question of amending the provisions of the Treaties on this subject - and I am astonished that this has even been rumoured - or, therefore, of reducing in any way the powers conferred on each Community Institution. However, the problem is so important and could become so sensitive in the eyes of the public that it is vitally necessary for the two arms of the budget authority to act in perfect harmony, with the Commission's help. I am compelled to note with regret that this has not always been the case in the past, and I am thinking more especially of the conditions under which the last budget was adopted.

Gaining control of the budget does not, however, mean depriving future policies of funds. I should like to point out here and now that in 1982 the Community's lending operations (NCI, Euratom, EIB and ECSC) amounted to 5,3 thousand million ECU. It would not be right if financing on as large a scale as this - which often entails other, even larger, financing from non-Community sources - did not systematically support the projects decided by the Community; I am convinced that the European Parliament will agree with me on this point.

Nevertheless, we are aware that however great the budgetary discipline applied, the Community will very soon be without a sound financial basis on which to build its development. Europe needs to be able to define new Community responsibilities, so that the

and yet it already has difficulty in financing its current activities. Increased own resources must therefore rapidly be made available to the Community. Potential agreement exists as to this need, and it should be possible to make it more specific once the other important questions have been settled.

In all this we must obviously not lose sight of the harassing problem of what has been called "the correction of budgetary imbalances". In connection with this and other subjects, it was said in Athens that the matter should be dealt with under the Treaty and in accordance with its principles. But this would in no way imply recognition of the idea of "just returns".

Nonetheless, there is a problem and it must be dealt with, at least for a certain period. An agreement on guidelines appeared to be emerging, but the positions of the Member States are still far apart. The Presidency and the Commission will endeavour, as is their duty, to bring the positions together and find a compromise.

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I have already noted that in Athens, as in the preparatory work, discussion of future activities and new policies was brief. I find cause for confidence in noting the converging views in the statements of the Ten on the need for their

industries, their economic and commercial activities, their monetary equilibrium and even their social development to benefit from the scale offered by Europe.

The rapid summary I have given you of the gap between Europe and its two great industrial competitors is justification, if any were needed, for the importance which all Member Governments have decided to give to co-operation in industry and research.

The Presidency will pay particular attention to the development of all Community projects likely to strengthen the international competitiveness of European undertakings, thus concentrating on the promotion of research and innovation and making the most of those activities by the pooling of results, the exchange of researchers, and joint programmes. The Commission has made some important proposals which are being examined by the specialized Councils. Progress should be made on these as soon as possible to avoid this type of proposal being referred to the European Council. The Presidency would like to see a rapid solution on the Esprit programme; since the Research Council meetings in the autumn, only the financial question is outstanding. We shall also need to continue discussions on the energy research programmes and on basic technology. We should also consider new projects on telecommunications and biotechnology. Finally, discussions should continue on the stimulation of scientific and technical potential and on Community research structures and procedures.

In the industrial field, and more specifically in the advanced technology sectors, the Member States, like the Commission, acknowledge that European undertakings must be encouraged to co-operate or even to come together. Is it not a matter for concern that no large European group has been formed in these sectors since the Community was created? We must seek to create a propitious legal environment; I am thinking in particular of the statutes of co-operation of the European Groupings, the Directive on the system of taxation applicable to mergers and divisions of companies, etc.

The consolidation of the internal market is another important factor in encouraging European undertakings to work together. Such consolidation implies first of all removing barriers. The European Council in Copenhagen, a little over a year ago, outlined new perspectives. Some progress has been made since then. We must go further. We must take the guidelines adopted by the Council on European standardization and put them into practice; they assume special significance when we consider the forms of co-operation which could be instigated regarding new technology. We must also continue examining the texts on simplification of border controls. Lastly, we must achieve a greater opening up of public contracts to European undertakings, particularly in the field of new technology; here I am thinking for example, of the telecommunications sectors.

Consolidation of the internal market must be viewed against the background of action with regard to the outside world; it requires

affirmation of the Community's external identity. A Europe which is self-assured in its economic activity must speak with a strong voice on the international scene, defend its interests effectively, and live up to the expectations of its undertakings.

Thus, the Community must, in particular, reinforce its cohesion in the field of the common commercial policy. For this, it must have the suitable means for defending its policy and protecting its interests in conditions comparable to those of its principal partners. Discussions are continuing, on the basis of a Commission proposal, with a view to adopting a new common commercial policy instrument. The Presidency's aim will be to see that these discussions succeed.

The search for a genuine common market requires us as, has often been said in this chamber, to make great efforts to ensure the greatest possible degree of convergence in the economic and monetary field.

Of course, we must first of all co-ordinate the Member States' economic policies as closely as possible to ensure, in harmonious conditions, the steady, healthy recovery which we need for the essential industrial and technological changes to take place, while reducing unemployment. Progress must be made in the monetary field too. We shall be acting in four areas: reinforcement of the cohesion of the European countries in reaction to the movements of the dollar and of interest rates, increasing the ceiling for Community loans, development of the role of the private ECU, and closer relations with the monetary authorities of the surrounding countries. The Commission proposal on

financial integration must be subjected to close and constructive scrutiny, with the view that we all share of working towards increased convergence. Finally, a great many proposals have been put forward by the Commission or certain Member States which would enable the Community, in particular by creating a favourable environment for co-operation between European undertakings, to facilitate the funding of industry and innovation. In view of the importance of the recovery of productive investment, in particular in the technologies of the future, it is very much to be desired that these initiatives, or some of them, should lead rapidly to practical results.

The social dimension is vital. The Community cannot rely on economic and financial measures to pull it out of the crisis. In this field, as in others, it is best to tackle the problems which are compounded by the scale of unemployment and adjustments to the new technology, as a body rather than in piecemeal fashion. The Community must not take the place of the Member States or of both sides of industry, whose independence it respects. But it must lay down guidelines, adopt recommendations, refine the instruments already at its disposal to adapt them to the circumstances and the new requirements. The Presidency will pay particular attention to the progress of proposals and drafts under study - there are important ones on youth employment and the adjustment of working time. It will also pay attention to establishing among the Member States what opportunities there are for joint action regarding the social aspects of new technology, demography in Europe and the future of our social security systems. Lastly, it will take the necessary

initiatives to seek, with both sides of industry, methods of increasing social dialogue at the European level - thereby making a practical contribution to the creation of a genuine European social area. To these ends, it will of course keep up the contacts it has already established with the European Trade Union Confederation and will be able to consult the qualified representatives of economic and social circles.

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Apart from these major developments, some of which are ambitious, and alongside the activities dictated by the timetable (I am thinking here of the Agriculture Council's very difficult task of fixing the prices for the 1984-1985 marketing year), the Community will at the same time have to reinforce and consolidate the existing common policies.

The worsening of the crisis in the steel industry in the last few months, marked by a serious fall in steel prices, has accentuated internal and external tensions and has made restructuring even more difficult. Measures have just been adopted, based on a plan drawn up by the Commission, to alleviate the immediate difficulties. But - and this is vital - the political undertaking entered into by the Council last July to renew the quota system, for a specified period, remains to be put into practice. The importance of what is at stake is clear to all: if we do not ensure the survival of the present system of organization of the steel market, restructuring of the sector and the unity of the market will very shortly crumble.

In the field of energy, the relative stability of the oil market must not lead to any slackening of the efforts made to decrease the Community's energy dependence and to diversify its supplies; we must keep close track of our 1990 targets. The Council will also have to take a decision on matters currently before it (for example, demonstration projects and the coking coal system) and consider Community action likely to give real added value to national measures.

In the transport sector, the Presidency considers that progress should be made on the infrastructures dossier; the Council will also have to take a decision on matters relating to land transport Directive on the weights and dimensions of commercial road vehicles, maritime and air transport.

The work undertaken to improve environmental protection in the Community will be expedited. We shall try to reach agreement on the texts currently on the table: directives on impact studies and on air pollution and a new text on transfrontier shipments of waste. Furthermore, the Council has instructed the Commission to draw up a report for April 1984 on the question of the lead content of petrol. Lastly, we shall have to continue our joint examination of water pollution, and particularly the follow-up to the application of the 1976 Directive.

In order to respond to the growing and justified interest aroused among the public by consumer protection and information, the Greek Presidency deemed it necessary to organize a first Council of Ministers to deal with these questions. The French Presidency, convinced of the benefits of an active policy for consumers, will continue along these lines.

Almost two years ago, following a referendum, Greenland expressed the desire to withdraw from the Community. The Presidency will ensure that every effort is made to enable the discussions under way on the future status of Greenland to be concluded successfully as soon as possible so that this status may become effective on 1 January 1985, as desired by the Greenlanders.

After long and arduous discussions, it has finally been possible to adopt a common fisheries policy. The Presidency will endeavour to ensure its continued implementation. The major efforts will be directed at the adoption of the TACs and quotas for 1984 and the continuation of the negotiations for the conclusion of other agreements with third countries.

In the face of the difficulties currently experienced in international trade, the Community, true to its tradition of openness, will continue to resist taking the deceptively easy course of protectionism. It hopes that its partners will show the same determination in this respect.

In the present period, compliance with the provisions of GATT is essential for maintaining a free and open trading system. The Community intends to continue its efforts to ensure that the work programme decided upon at the Ministerial meeting in November 1982 is implemented. It also places great importance on full observance of the commitments entered into following the multilateral trade negotiations (Tokyo Round), failing which it would be illusory to attempt to embark upon a new phase of negotiations.

With its major trading partners, the Community will have to endeavour to show the greatest possible degree of cohesion in presenting its views and defending its interests. Our relations with the United States are not without problems. Certain difficulties have been overcome, thanks, in particular, to our firmness, our unity and the Commission's action. Disagreements still exist, and may prove considerable, particularly over agriculture. The informal talks held between the American Administration and the Commission have provided a better insight into the respective viewpoints and have enabled progress to be made on specific points. The adjustments to the common agricultural policy on which we are currently working (and here I am thinking particularly of substitute products and our export policies), as well as certain consequences of enlargement will shed new light on our relations with the United States in the field of agriculture. Extremely wide-ranging and difficult negotiations will therefore be needed, and will play a decisive part in the relaunching and enlargement of the Community.

Our relations with Japan are still dominated by a disturbing imbalance in our trade. The measures which were implemented by mutual agreement to try to remedy the imbalance, whether they involved voluntary restraint undertakings regarding certain sensitive products or measures to facilitate access for European undertakings to the Japanese market, have, it must be acknowledged, had only a limited effect, and the imbalance worsened last year. The Community will have to follow with the utmost vigilance trends in its trade with Japan.

1 January 1984 marked a new stage in the Community's relations with the EFTA countries, since on that date the last tariff dismantling provided for by the agreements linking the Community and each of those countries was carried out. Co-operation has developed to the satisfaction of both parties in an easily manageable and pragmatic institutional framework which the Community and the EFTA Ministerial Council agree should be strengthened. In this connection, the proposal made by Sweden to hold a Ministerial meeting between the EEC and EFTA in Spring 1984 is most welcome.

Finally, in the context of the relations which the Community wishes to develop with the Eastern European countries, the Presidency attributes particular importance to the request by Hungary to strengthen and give a more structured form to its trade relations with the Community. Following an initial series of talks, there are possibilities for making practical improvements to the trading arrangements with that country. The Community must seek a mutually satisfactory arrangement in a constructive spirit.

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I now come to a chapter which will clearly be at the centre of Community activities during this half-year, and would like to say a few words about enlargement.

Spain and Portugal unquestionably have a European destiny, as history shows us. Once they are members of the Community, these two States will help to consolidate its identity and will enable it to expand its role in world affairs.

Accession negotiations have been under way since October 1978 with Portugal and since February 1979 with Spain. The Community cannot and should not leave them in a state of expectancy and uncertainty any longer. This was generally acknowledged at the European Council meeting in Athens. It was agreed that they should be given a rapid answer, i.e. that the negotiations should be concluded at the earliest opportunity.

The Presidency is determined to contribute to the immediate progress of the negotiations, which means expediting the work while recalling that each of the dossiers will be dealt with on its own merits. In these circumstances an effort will have to be made on all sides: the Community will have to expedite the preparation of work, the Member States to place the Community in a position to receive the newcomers and, finally, the applicant countries themselves will have to understand certain difficulties facing the present members of the Community (here I would mention fisheries, the free movement of persons, certain agricultural and industrial problems, etc.).

The negotiations can succeed on two conditions only: that the Acts of Accession are balanced, i.e. that the just interests of the producers and workers on both sides are taken into account, and that the Community is in a position to welcome the new States, which implies that it will have resolved some delicate internal problems.

No-one should underestimate the importance of these questions on which the desired success of the negotiations largely depends.

It should also be recalled that the Community attaches great importance to its relations with the Mediterranean States, as evinced by the global policy adopted in 1972 and confirmed by the preferential agreements signed with ten of these countries. However, our partners in the Mediterranean are rightly concerned about the consequences of enlargement for their trade with the Community. This is why, at the same time as the accession negotiations are taking place, the Commission is conducting exploratory talks with the Mediterranean countries. We await with interest the Commission's report and the guidelines proposed for the Mediterranean policy of the enlarged Community. The work on our relations with the countries of the Southern Mediterranean must be co-ordinated with the accession negotiations.

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I should now like to broach another important area of Community activity, and one which, as you know, is dear to me, namely, development.

The major forthcoming event in this connection is the renegotiation of the Convention which links us to 63 African, Caribbean and Pacific States, to be joined, we hope, by Angola and Mozambique.

The Greek Presidency had the weighty task of adopting the Community negotiating brief and of beginning the negotiations. The French Presidency, in conjunction with the Commission, will have to make as much progress as possible with them

Convention is signed in time for it to be ratified by 1 March 1985, when Lomé II expires. This is a weighty responsibility, and we are fully aware of it.

As we have often had occasion to say - and the subject has been debated many times in this forum - the ACP-EEC Convention constitutes an exemplar; it symbolizes our solidarity with the Third World; it is based on principles nowhere else to be found; and it contains original features which have captured the attention of the world.

The Convention is thus a matter of priority for the Community, owing to the historic and traditional links which exist between many of us and those States, but also because it is concluded with some of the poorest and least-developed countries (LLDCs).

However, over a period of five years the situation has changed, both for the Member States of the Community and for our ACP partners. In order to respond to the needs of the ACP States and to their latest proposals, it will be our duty not only to preserve what has been achieved under the previous Conventions but also to seek to improve it, and in particular to increase the effectiveness of financial and technical co-operation, strengthen Stabex, and affirm more clearly the guiding principles, which include the need for food strategies.

Negotiations with our ACP partners have already begun - slowly, it is true. It is now time to embark on specific negotiations of the various aspects of the future Convention.

The Presidency hopes that the spirit of dialogue will prevail during the negotiations, particularly at the three ACP-EEC ministerial meetings, which are intended to give the essential political impetus to the process.

Even if the negotiations with the ACP States dominate the Community's activity in the field of development, the Presidency intends to continue promoting co-operation with other regions or countries where there are pressing needs. In this connection, relations must be strengthened with the countries of Central America and with the least advanced countries.

As regards Central America in particular, I need hardly remind you of the concern caused by the tense situation in that area and its possible implications at regional and even world level. Community action to help the Central American group would, we believe, help to bring about peace and stability in that region.

With regard to the North-South dialogue, I would point out that, since its inception, the Community has played an active and positive part in the various relevant fora (Conference on International Economic Co-operation, United Nations): it wishes to continue to encourage this dialogue. One particular area worthy of attention is that of raw materials, on which 3/5 of the developing countries' export resources depend. The Common Fund has to be effectively established in order to carry through the negotiation or renegotiation of agreements on specific products; I am thinking in particular of the meetings which will take place this year on sugar, cocoa and rubber.

In the financial sphere, the strengthening of financial co-operation, especially in the IDE context, is a matter of priority.

The Member States of the Community must be able to make a convincing contribution to the now urgent issue of determining the amount of the seventh replenishment.

I have touched on a number of major external issues, indicating the Community interest from an economic point of view and outlining possible courses of action. The same considerations could well be made from the political point of view.

When they think and act together, the ten Member States of the Community possess a strength of their own, and their economic weight is then comparable with that of the greatest. As the President of France said immediately after the Athens Summit, there has to be a "political resolve guiding our countries towards an objective, a goal, a political structure which will give historical significance to the whole venture". In the Bundestag, a year ago, he said: "How could a strong Europe fail to aspire, in all areas, to be one day independent and assume its responsibilities?"

However, so long as the present imbalance of forces on the continent of Europe continues to exist, the allies' mutual solidarity on security matters is fundamental. It is therefore important, for political and not only economic reasons, that we should have an on-going dialogue with United States' leaders on major world issues. Such a dialogue is necessary if we are to defend our interests and our own viewpoints, and to demonstrate that there is a European approach to the problems.

This special dialogue with the United States is in no way incompatible with the relations which we propose to maintain and develop to our mutual benefit with Eastern Europe, despite the often cool behaviour displayed towards the Community in certain quarters. We belong to a divided continent. Let us never forget

that we are only a part of Europe. We would wish Europe, torn apart as it has been by history, to unite again one day. The present divide which cuts us off from those who for centuries were our brothers in civilization in the East is a source of pain and grief to us. That is why we aspire to have the balance of forces re-established at the lowest possible level. That is why we have an intrinsic interest in continuation of the East/West dialogue in all areas. That is why the Ten will continue to develop co-operation between both halves of the continent and will reject as a matter of principle all sanctions and boycotts.

Our relationship with the democratic countries of Western Europe is expressed more easily, in freedom and democracy. I have already voiced our satisfaction at the state of our relations with the EFTA countries. I should mention the parallel development of our action with that of the Council of Europe, particularly in the field of human rights.

What else can be said about our political identity? For historical reasons we have woven close ties with several regions of the world: economic links, such as those already referred to, but also political and personal links. Our past has taught us to know these countries intimately and to respect them. If that is true of the Ten, how much truer it will be of a Europe with the heritage and experience acquired by Spain and Portugal in so many countries of such great importance in their respective continents and so close to us by virtue of language and culture. Already now there is nothing which happens in Latin America, Africa or the

Near or Middle East which does not affect us. How many debates within this Parliament have been devoted to the problems of those regions? And there is no political co-operation meeting at which the Ten's analysis and judgment is not awaited with interest, sometimes even with impatience.

Indeed I will not hesitate to be more demanding. For often during my travels in the Third World I have noticed that the leaders of the countries I visit find us too cautious; they would like to see Europe take a firmer stance on major international questions, stressing basic principles, proposing solutions. Let us try not to disappoint all these countries which, despite the crisis we too are undergoing, expect a great deal from a Europe which they know cannot be imperialistic and whose birth and development were the achievements of free peoples anxious to affirm their identity and their independence.

We have a responsibility to the rest of the world, beginning with the developing world. Over and above what we are able to do and the aid and co-operation front we must help in our own way, according to our own lights, to contribute in whatever region is undergoing a crisis or is in a state of war to the return of peace and to respect for independence and for the right to self-determination. In international relations we can play a stabilizing role; let us do so.

But let us not cherish any illusions. Europe's ability to influence the course of world events depends to a great extent on

its ability to sort out its own difficulties. The Greek Presidency last month in Athens felt that the European Council could not adopt a political position on serious problems concerning non-Community countries. It would have been presumptuous to dispense advice and utter exhortations when we had not managed to reach agreement on material matters concerning our Community. That is unfortunate: let us not forget the lesson of humility.

Nor let us delude ourselves about the effectiveness of our action. We were right, in the Stuttgart Solemn Declaration on European Union, to set ourselves the goal of defining common principles and objectives to increase opportunities for joint action. We must, whenever possible, seek to adopt common positions. But let us look at things as they really are: the ten Member States are not ready to adopt the same positions in every case. So, enough of words, enough of these vague texts which juggle opposing views.

Nevertheless, whenever we can, let us act. Let us use the diplomatic channels of the Community and its Member States. Let us speak out publically, knowing that sometimes our voice carries weight, particularly in international organizations. Let us make joint moves, hold talks with third States and groups of States who so wish and find it to their advantage.

Our message, the message of Europe, must be then a message of peace, a message of solidarity, a message to mankind.

A message of peace: we attach great importance to the negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union on their nuclear weapons and we hope that they can somehow be resumed as soon as possible. We place hope in the Conference on Disarmament in Europe, at the opening of which I spoke yesterday in Stockholm on behalf of the Ten, the Ten whose cohesion was a driving force of the Madrid conference, a factor in its success. A message of peace: we who through our understanding and our regional proximity have managed once and for all to put an end to the wars which have so often divided us, we shall encourage all initiatives for peace, reconciliation and regional security in all parts of the world: South-East Asia, the Andean countries, the Caribbean, black Africa; but we must also help the States and peoples of the Middle East to obtain recognition and affirmation of their rights; we must act to ensure that independence and peace is finally found in Southern Africa; perhaps we may help to build peaceful relations between the countries of Central America.

A message of solidarity also: solidarity with peoples who suffer and die or are humiliated, peoples who fight because their right to self-determination is refused them, because they are under foreign occupation or because their very existence is threatened; the Palestinian people, the Lebanese people, the Israeli people, the Namibian people, the Afghan people, the Cambodian people, the Polish people and so many more.

And finally a message to mankind: we are a Community of free peoples, with democratic institutions. Respect for human rights, individual freedoms and economic and social rights are protected by our constitutions, our laws, our press. We must never allow

these rights and these freedoms to be flouted elsewhere. Europe has good reason to be proud of this Parliament which has always condemned violations of the fundamental rights of human beings and nations and has always denounced attacks on human dignity and human life. We must continue to stand out against torture, arbitrary arrest and detention, disappearances and denials of the individual's freedom to leave his country and return to it.

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I will now address myself to you, Mr President, to your colleagues on the Bureau and to those whose arduous task it is to chair committees, particularly the Political Affairs Committee. During its Presidency, France intends to give full effect to the provisions of the Stuttgart Solemn Declaration on European Union, beginning with those relating to your Parliament. The President of the French Republic will come here to analyze the work of the European Council with you. I myself will be here to answer your questions once a month. On each of these occasions I should be happy to talk to the Presidency of the European Parliament on any topic relating to the Community. I should also like to have occasional meetings with your Political Affairs Committee to help keep it informed of negotiations in progress. Not only will I submit your Resolutions to my colleagues on the Council but I will also make a special point of drawing the attention of my external affairs colleagues to them in the course of political co-operation meetings on foreign policy motions; I have asked for the same procedure to be followed at the monthly meetings of the Political Directors. The provisions of the Solemn Declaration on

relations between the Council and the European Parliament must also be fully implemented. The Commission's proposals on this point will have to aim at improving the conciliation procedure provided for in the Joint Declaration of 4 March 1975. Progress can and must be made in this direction, while respecting the powers of each Institution. France will work towards this end during its Presidency.

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1984 must be the year of Europe. For the second time your Parliament will be directly elected by all the men and women of the Community.

The European Parliament must be Europe's conscience. The elections will therefore be an opportunity for an examination of conscience.

Let me express the hope that the coming campaign will offer an opportunity to transcend the narrow horizon of national interests and focus attention on the real problems facing Europe today. The President and Government of France are convinced that, if this is so, the public in our countries will provide us with a new impetus not only to make the necessary reforms but also to give our Community the historical dimension it should have.

There is no future for Europe unless its youth, its peoples, have hope. But there is no hope for our ancient nations unless they can express and achieve their ambitions with and through Europe.

C. Cheysson.