

# European Community

## News Release

### BACKGROUND NOTE

On the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the signing of the Treaties of Rome, Lorenzo Natali, Vice-president of the Commission of the European Communities, responsible for Mediterranean policy, Enlargement and Information, has issued the following statement.

### THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY - A HAVEN OF PEACE, DEMOCRACY AND LIBERTY

By Lorenzo Natali

The date of 25 March 1982, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the signing of the Treaties of Rome, is one which gives us food for thought. It should also be one which renews our hope, even in these difficult and turbulent times in which we live and work.

A quarter of a century is insignificant in the span of history, but it is still a substantial part of our own lives. Now that we can look back at matters far behind us and also contemplate the future, this is an ideal moment to consider some of the fundamental features of the European Community, this great community of nations.

First of all, peace. Peace was the grand ideal which inspired those who have been called the "fathers of Europe". It is of course true that Jean Monnet, Robert Schuman, Alcide de Gasperi, Konrad Adenauer and Paul-Henri Spaak were fully aware of Europe's pressing economic problems after the war. But these were only a launching pad which would be left behind as they elevated peace between peoples into a symbol, a daily habit and the highest and most noble contribution to economic revival. The word "Community" was itself an accurate reflection of our shared aspirations and our mutual solidarity.

Historically, the founding fathers also possessed consummate political skill in laying the foundations for work which would bring together different cultures and mentalities, bind up old wounds and get to the root of hatreds so that they could be recast into the unity of the peoples of the Community.

So the Community became an important instrument of peace, although it is also true that nobody would claim that it alone has brought peace to a Europe which, for so long, had been the theatre and cause of so many bloody conflicts that shook the world.

But neither can anybody ignore the immense, untiring effort that has been made to bring peoples together by opening up frontiers, creating a European frame of mind and maintaining continuous contact between men and things from different backgrounds. There can be no doubt that the structure so created was and still is a factor promoting the cause of peace.

Democracy is, alongside peace, another of the inspiring principles. The Community could not exist if it did not exclude the dictatorships which, even in recent times, had been the cause of slaughter and social and economic catastrophe. It owed part of its origin to the desire to restate the principles of pluralist democracy against the schemes which men and countries use to oppress each other.

Hence a basic condition for belonging to the Community was the possession of democratic constitutional structures and this was implicit in the call which the signatories of the Treaty made to the other peoples of Europe to join in their efforts.

The Community represented an enormous unified model for all those who wished to cast off the slough of dictatorship which unhappily still persisted elsewhere in Europe. This juxtaposition of the free democratic Community and other European countries still subject to dictatorships was immensely important. Of equal importance were the applications, first by Greece and then by Spain and Portugal, to become part of the Community, moves which suggested that they wished, once and for all, to affirm their renewed commitment to democracy.

And yet, and this is a paradox, when the Communities were founded their democratic legitimacy was suspect. Their institutions, the Council, the Commission and the Court of Justice, also included an Assembly not elected directly by the people whom it represented but only indirectly, through the national Parliaments. The direct elections to the European Parliament held in 1979 redeemed this "original sin".

It was indeed a historic moment when, for the first time, the citizens of the nine Member States, by casting their votes, became full citizens of Europe and in so doing chose the path of peace, democracy and freedom.

Freedom is the third fundamental characteristic of our Community. Freedom means the participation of all in public life, and hence the responsibility of all for preserving the conditions in which the common enterprise can flourish and prosper.

This Community freedom is also open to the freedom of others, to which it lends its support and its own desire that others should themselves be free.

I believe that these three values are the reason why the Community exists and can continue to offer to the world an example of how countries, ways of thought and economies which are different both in themselves and as a result of century-old traditions can live and work together.

If the Community collapsed or lost the will to go on advancing, peace, democracy and freedom would be the poorer.

That is why I think it is important that when we commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the signing of the Treaties of Rome we should do more than just hold formal celebrations; we should also look back to how and why the Community was founded and try to understand the most basic reasons for its existence. In doing so, we shall derive hope that our leaders will be wise enough to realize that there are no valid alternatives; that in the world of today, with all its troubles and confusion, to lose this historic opportunity of working together would not only be extremely serious but would also put us in a position where, alone, we would be unable to contend with the difficulties which threaten **us**.

This is the message of the past; the message of our past accomplishments, which are also our stepping stones to the future.