

OPENING REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE
EUROPEAN COMMISSION TO WELCOME THE
QUEEN AND THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH

Monday, 24 November 1980

Your Majesty, Your Royal Highness, we are deeply honoured by your visit to the European Commission today. This is your first visit since the United Kingdom joined the European Communities eight years ago. My colleagues and I welcome you most warmly.

Your Majesty, you come from a family which in its origins and many branches represents in itself a community of Europe. There is no part of the European Community of which you do not have personal knowledge, with which you are not connected, and in whose heritage you do not share. In welcoming you to this latter day Community which in so many ways is a gathering in of European peoples and civilization, I feel a strong sense of our common history and of our common prospects for the future.

The institutions of the Community were born of a political need to rebuild a Western Europe which had bled itself to devastation and penury in war, and was consequently diminished in world influence. At the heart of our constitution, which is the Treaty of Rome, is the notion of reconciliation and working together. The original Six of 1957 were joined by the United Kingdom, Ireland and Denmark in 1973, bringing about a wider confluence of traditions and a richer diversity. In

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six weeks time Greece will enter the Community and make its own distinctive contribution; and in a few years, as we hope, Spain and Portugal will join, thereby remaking in institutional form the ancient unity of Europe. It is a historic process in which we can all be proud to take part.

Because the Community is a living organism rather than some rigid construction or artefact, it faces the continuous sometimes painful problems of growth and change. There are many things that are right, and we should not forget them when we try to deal with those that are wrong. The Community has achieved a great deal in the brief twenty-three years of its life. In some areas its influence has grown quickly: for example coal and steel, agriculture, trade and competition policy. In others it has grown more slowly, but is now moving forward: this is true of regional and social policy, monetary and economic matters, energy and fisheries. We seek only to give to the Community those functions which yield better results because they are performed by the Community than they would if they were performed individually by Member States. Our aim throughout is to fashion a Community which gives to all Member States the benefits which they cannot achieve so well by themselves, and leave to the Member States the functions which they can do equally well or better on their own. We do not seek to do anything from Brussels just for the sake of doing it.

Seen from within the life of the Community sometimes looks like a perpetual negotiation, and occasionally a

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pretty rough negotiation. The less good moments are when the search for national advantage overrides the search for common good, and the better moments are when the common good is the primary aim. We are making the Community together; and for Britain as for the other Members its shape in the years to come will depend on what we put into it and the skill with which we do so.

Seen from the outside the Community often seems more cohesive and dynamic than it does from within. The other leading industrial countries - the United States and Japan - recognize us as their major partners: the Community is the largest exporter in the world, and accounts for just under half the world's trade. We have special relations under the Lomé Agreement with some sixty relatively poor countries in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific which are tied to Europe by history, interest and tradition. We have treaty and other ties with most of the other countries of the world, including the vast range which is the Commonwealth. We are in short a formidable power and Britain is part of that power.

Your Majesty, the main function of the Commission you are visiting today is to propose policies to the Member States, and then, so far as the Member States agree, to put them into effect. The Commission enjoys full political independence. It is appointed by Governments but is the servant of no Government. It is accountable to the directly elected Parliament, and has particular responsibility as guardian of the original Treaties.

I add that in relation to its powers and responsibilities

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the Commission is a tiny organization, just over 8,000 people, to serve the needs of some 260 million Europeans.

To give you some idea of what we do, I thought it would be useful today to consider four of our activities. For that reason I propose that in a few minutes we discuss first the character of our budgetary system, second fisheries where the working out of common policies is not yet complete, third the problems of the steel industry where we have recently assumed particular responsibilities, and last our policies towards the third world.

EMBARGO 12.00 - 24 November 1980

SPEECH BY HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II TO
THE COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

Monday 24 November 1980

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Mr President,

I am most grateful for your kind words of welcome. Prince Philip and I were delighted to accept your invitation to visit the Commission of the European Communities.

It would be difficult to exaggerate the importance of the Community's task of bringing together the peoples of Western Europe. The foundation of the Community will surely prove to be a turning point in the history of our continent. Thirty-five years of peace owe much to the vigour and foresight of those who conceived and finally realised the dream of creating a partnership on a scale and with a breadth of interest not known in Europe before. The result has been not only a deeper cooperation and understanding between old friends and allies, but also a lasting friendship between those who for so long had been adversaries.

Coming together in this way has given our countries a new weight in the world. Economically, the Community has made its mark in world production, trade and finance and as friend and helper of those countries which are still in the early stages of material development. Politically, the pooling of the traditions and experience in world affairs of nine separate nations has given an authority to their common policies and views which individually they could not have expected to wield. Both the Community and the world are the gainers from this.

Evidence of our success lies in the desire of other free nations in Europe to join our great enterprise. We shall welcome

them, confident in the knowledge that this will strengthen democracy and stability on our continent. Greece is to join on the 1st of January and we look forward to the successful conclusion of the negotiations with Portugal and Spain.

I am glad to pay tribute to the work of the outgoing Commission and it gives me particular pleasure to have come during your Presidency. The Commission has a unique and indispensable role in the functioning of the Community - a role which requires imagination, persistence, and a sensitive regard both for what has already been achieved and for what can be envisaged in the future. I am sure the new Commission, under its distinguished new President, will display the same qualities.

For these qualities will be needed more than ever in meeting the twin challenges of enlargement and the development of Community policies, as well as the other problems we face in the 1980s. Our success in the Community in finding solutions to these problems, together and in cooperation with our friends and partners overseas, will directly influence the lives and well being of all of us, our children and grandchildren.