

Statement by Hans-Dietrich Genscher to the European Parliament (19 November 1981)

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Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, I should like to thank you for giving me this opportunity to come and present the proposals of the Federal German Government on the development of the European Community towards European Union to this House. Of course, Madam President, it is not up to me to judge whether Parliament would be well advised not to get involved in this initiative right from the outset.

(Laughter and applause)

The Federal German Government has formulated its initiative in coordination with the Italian Government. The draft European Act has been submitted in the form of a joint German-Italian proposal to the governments of the other Member States, to the President of this House and to the President of the Commission of the European Communities.

We hope that this initiative will receive the active support of the European Parliament which, in the opinion of the Federal German Government, has a central role to play in progress towards European Union. I would therefore ask you to give it your support.

(Applause from various quarters)

The European Community is now in the most economically difficult situation since it was founded. The real national product is expected to fall this year by some 0,5%, inflation will rise to something like 11,5% and the number of people unemployed reached the 9 million level in July and is still rising. Of those 9 million unemployed, 4 million are less than 25 years of age. In 1980, the Community had a foreign trade deficit of almost 120 DM thousand million, and our deficit with our main industrial competitors, the USA and Japan, was 45 DM thousand million and 20 DM thousand million respectively. There can be no doubt whatsoever that our countries will only be able to survive this major economic challenge by standing together.

Madam President, the economic problems we are facing now strike at the very economic root of the European Community and of our democratic systems. But despite this, we must not concentrate our efforts exclusively on economic issues. We must set our sights on the great goal of the political unification of Europe, because it is from this goal that we shall derive the strength to act in a spirit of solidarity and to take decisions - including economic decisions - which amount to more than just make-do-and-mend, but which are genuinely forward-looking solutions - in other words, decisions which do not get stuck in the kind of national self-seeking of which we are all guilty, my own country included. We must find a dynamic way to take us out of and beyond the crisis.

Everything we have achieved so far in the construction of Europe has been rooted in the longing for a united Europe. Neither the European Coal and Steel Community nor the European Economic Community nor the European Atomic Energy Community were ever intended to be economic communities pure and simple; they have always been regarded as stages along the path towards a united Europe. The widespread hope that economic constraints would automatically bring about political unification proved to be illusory. The fact is that Europe cannot be a technocratic entity — what is needed is action on our part. The economic constraints are today greater than ever. As a result of difficult conflicts on agricultural prices and surpluses, fishing, net contributions to the budget and national subsidies, there is a danger of the European Community foregoing not only the commitment, but also the approval of its people.

It is therefore time for political reflection. The great aim of political unification, European Union, must once again become a central element in discussions within the European institutions and among the European public. That is the aim of the joint German-Italian initiative on European Union. What we are trying to do cannot take the place of the efforts needed to solve our current economic problems, but it must be a complementary, supplementary factor to add a definitive political dimension.

Our initiative is based on three main elements. Firstly, it is intended to give prominence to the general

political aim of European unification in the eyes of all of us. European activity takes place in five main areas: the European Economic Community in Brussels, European political cooperation, the European Council, the European Parliament and the European Court of Justice.

Once completed, European Union will become a special kind of entity not covered by the traditional concepts of the federal State or the confederation of States. The European Act we are now proposing therefore sets out to formulate the aim of European Union for this many-faceted process of the unification of European activities. It is intended that the Member States commit themselves to this goal in the form of a declaration of major political importance.

Secondly, the European Act is intended as a general framework for the five main institutional spheres of cooperation. Our aim here is to consolidate what has already been 'achieved, to formalize and ratify unwritten practices in the sphere of cooperation and to give an impetus for the further development of what already exists; last but not least, we want to improve the coherence of the institutions' mutual relations.

The Act therefore comprises proposals on such things as extending European political cooperation, and it also calls for the decision-making structures of the European Community and of European political cooperation to be consolidated under the aegis of the European Council. To ensure that Europe remains externally viable, it is essential that European political cooperation foreign policy and European Community external economic policy be integrated into a coherent and comprehensive European policy.

We attach special importance to greatly improving cooperation and the dialogue between the European Parliament, the European Community, European political cooperation and the European Council, as well as to strengthening Parliament's participation and watchdog functions. We have therefore taken up a number of Parliament's demands and have tried to go along with them to the extent to which that is possible without amending the Treaties. What is at issue here is the democratic legitimacy of the Community. A strong Parliament is a powerhouse for European unification and a centre of European consciousness.

(Applause from various quarters)

I should like to add on behalf of the Federal German Government that we are hoping for additional suggestions from the European Parliament in precisely this sphere, and we shall be pleased to take any such suggestions into account in the deliberations of the Council of Ministers. Another important aim is to improve the decision-making processes in Europe.

(Applause from various quarters)

In particular, we have advocated making the majority decisions provided for in the Treaties in the Councils of Ministers the rule once again and relegating the appeal to 'vital interests' to an exception to this rule.

Thirdly, the aim of everything I have discussed so far is to consolidate what has already been achieved in the process of European unification and to exploit to the full the inherent opportunities for further development. It is also intended to give some impetus towards including important new sectors in European cooperation. For instance, foreign policy cooperation should include questions of security policy. It is particularly important at this time for the voice of Europe to be heard more clearly.

We realize that we must proceed with caution in this particular area. But we believe the inclusion of the political and economic dimensions of European security in the nascent common foreign policy to be absolutely indispensable. What we mean by this is firstly, point analysis of global and regional factors endangering the security of the Community; secondly, the development of active global policies on the part of the Ten designed to counter such dangers and to help guarantee the economic security of the Community and our supplies of energy and raw materials; thirdly, improving the ability of the Ten to coordinate their response with others to crises in the world in line with our common interests; fourthly, finally and above all, the development of a constructive, pan-European policy on the part of the Ten which, despite the division of our continent into two power blocks, will lead — via dialogue and cooperation, confidence-building, arms

control and disarmament to an agreed level of stability on the basis of a balance of power — to a European peace for which it will be the job of that policy of ours to develop the political and economic dimensions.

As far as we are concerned, Europe does not stop at the Community frontiers; nor does it stop at the frontiers of the Member States of the Council of Europe. The fate of Europe is shared by all the peoples of Europe.

(Applause from various quarters)

Despite all the ideological differences, it is up to us to accept this Europe as our great mission of peace. The passionate belief of the young generation — and not only the young generation — in peace is a sign of a European identity which is growing despite the different political systems and despite the fact that this sentiment can be articulated more clearly in the European democracies than in the other countries on our continent. This form of European identity is on the increase everywhere.

The encroachment of the foreign policy of the Member States of the European Community into the field of security policy must always go hand-in-hand with close and trusting cooperation with the North American democracies, with which we are linked in the Atlantic Alliance and with which we share the same values and the same commitment to freedom.

(Applause)

Allow me to add at this juncture, ladies and gentlemen, that there is little point in Europeans complaining that too little attention is being paid to their interests if we are incapable of getting together to define what those interests are.

(Applause)

The speech given yesterday by President Reagan was an impressive commitment on the part of the American President to the shared values and security concerns of the Northern Atlantic Alliance. President Reagan expressly underlined the United States' desire for peace and willingness to negotiate, and put forward certain specific proposals on disarmament and cooperation which we wholeheartedly support.

As a result, we now have a chance to reach realistic agreements aimed at keeping the peace. We appeal to the Soviet Union to take these proposals seriously and to respond favourably to them.

(Applause)

The second sphere of activity we must tack on to European cooperation is the cultural sphere. By way of close and systematic cultural cooperation, we can make the people of our Member States aware of European culture and thus go a long way towards making people more aware of a specifically European identity and thus improving the cohesion of Europe. The idea of a European Foundation is one we should at long last bring to fruition.

The third sphere — harmonization and standardization of extensive areas of the Member States' jurisprudence — would strengthen our common concept of the law. This kind of cooperation within the Council of Ministers of Justice is of particular importance in view of the positively pro-Community effect of the establishment of a single European legal space.

The fourth sphere in which we are calling for the exploration of virgin territory is what I would call European cooperation on questions to do with internal security and in particular the fight against trans-frontier crime and terrorism.

Reasonable progress in this sphere of cooperation would at the same time bring us closer to the important goal of doing away with checks on cars and people at our border crossings.

(Applause)

The removal of frontier barriers along these lines would be the best possible way of bringing the idea of Europe home to the people of Europe in their everyday lives.

(Applause)

The German-Italian initiative also includes a draft declaration on questions of economic integration, setting out suggested common policy aims such as an efficient internal market, increasing economic convergence, closer coordination of economic policy, the further development of the European Monetary System and completion of the southerly enlargement of the Community. This is not intended to prejudice the negotiations in Brussels on the mandate, but merely to underline the overall links between all sectors of the European unification process.

Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, I hope that you will be sympathetic to the aims of the German-Italian initiative. In fact, I should imagine that the main criticism which is likely to be forthcoming from this House is that our draft European Act does not go far enough.

(Applause from certain quarters)

However, we should not underestimate the effects of this initiative. If our proposals were to be approved and implemented by the Member States, we should have taken a step forward on the road to European Union which could have a cumulative effect and develop a momentum of its own to make further progress possible.

We have deliberately confined our draft European Act to proposals which we believe are capable of producing a consensus among the Member States in the present circumstances. Rather than saying what we should like to see happen, we have tried to formulate what we believe to be feasible. We have learnt from past failed initiatives that unification can only be achieved as a result of a continuous, step-by-step approach and that any premature attempt to make a great leap forward is more likely to put us back to a point behind our original starting point.

Had we been prepared to set down what we should like to see happen, we would have set our sights higher. In fact, one of our original ideas was to propose a *pukka* treaty regarding European Union — in other words, a treaty which would make what we have achieved so far as regards European Union not only politically, but also legally, binding. However, in the present circumstances and over the short term, such an aim would be little short of unrealistic, and for that reason we decided to abandon the idea. Instead, what we are proposing in our draft European Act is that, five years after signature of the Act, the Member States should subject it to a general review in the light of the aim of a treaty on European Union.

At this critical moment in Europe's history, the main thing is to get the process of political unification moving once again.

We should now like to see the forthcoming European Council in London take note of this initiative and decide on what should become of the draft European Act. We also hope that this House will take a closer look at the draft document and propose ways of improving it. After all, we believe that the active support of the European Parliament is an important prerequisite for the success of this initiative.

Madam President, it is only by throwing their lot in with an efficient European Union that our democracies will succeed in meeting the major political and economic challenges of our time. However, the reverse is also true: the world needs an effective European Union. Europe's historical mission did not come to an end in 1945. The catastrophe of the Second World War gave birth to a new Europe, the first expression of which was the Council of Europe.

The importance of this oldest community of the democratic countries of Europe has remained unchanged up

to the present day: the Council of Europe has an important part to play as the most comprehensive forum for democratic Europe and as the guardian of our humanitarian values, the rule of law and human rights. We regard the Council of Europe as a bridge between the European democracies which were unwilling or unable to take part in the process of unification embarked on by the Member States of the European Community and the economically and politically organized Community of the Ten.

The political integration of the Europe of the Ten into a European Union should go hand in hand with a move to reactivate the Council of Europe. It is up to us to intensify cooperation in the form of a political exchange of views by way of mutual exchanges of information and consultations. Democratic Europe only stands to gain from this kind of cooperation.

It is only pooling their resources in an effective European Union that the Member States of the European Community can play the part the world expects of us and needs from us in taking the decisions on our own future. This Europe of the Ten stands for peace and the peaceful settlement of conflicts. We stand for all people's right to self-determination and all countries' right to independence. We stand for respect everywhere in the world for human, political, social and cultural rights. We stand for regional cooperation on an equal basis and we are ourselves a living example of such cooperation.

We stand for the development of a worldwide order based on partnership, in which countries will work together on an equal basis and in a spirit of solidarity in peace and security, conscious of their interdependence.

Only by standing together will this Europe have the strength needed to put these aims and values to good effect.

Prolonged applause