

After the address by Mr Georges Pompidou', from Europe (16 December 1969)


Caption: In his editorial of 16 December 1969, Emanuele Gazzo, Editor-in-Chief of Agence Europe, comments on the political impact of the televised address given by the French President, Georges Pompidou, on the future of European integration.

Source: Europe. Agence internationale d'information pour la presse. dir. de publ. RICCARDI, Lodovico ; Réd. Chef GAZZO, Emanuele. 16.12.1969, n° 472. Bruxelles. "Après l'allocution de M.Georges Pompidou", auteur:Gazzo, Emanuele , p. 1.

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After the address by Georges Pompidou

Georges Pompidou's words (in his televised address) merit a number of observations: they are the first public and official interpretation of the results of the Hague Conference given by one of this Conference's leading figures, namely the President of the French Republic.

It is clear that his interpretation cannot but reflect the ambiguity that has been the main characteristic of the Hague Summit. However, it should be noted from the outset that, despite this ambiguity, all observers are in agreement that The Hague allowed, and will allow, if not the 'new lease of life' that European integration requires so much, then at least the creation of a climate in which things are possible, which was not previously the case. This means, perhaps, that, despite the cynicism that probably lies in this observation, a certain amount of ambiguity remains, for the moment, necessary.

In this way, we find in Mr Pompidou's words the insistence with which the President of the Republic was determined to emphasise the interstate and intergovernmental nature of European integration, as he himself perceives it. Which is not to say that the others perceive it in the same way: Mr Pompidou implicitly recognised this when he said that it was this result that they were looking for in The Hague ... Looking for, but did not find ... Mr Pompidou spoke of association between Member States, of a union that is free from dreams and surrender, of close relations 'between responsible governments' ready to impose joint discipline on themselves.

He probably wanted to address certain objections and reservations that are to be heard within his own close circle, while at the same time recognising that there are certain realities which are changing. It is obvious that, without the determination of the Member States, European integration would perhaps never have taken off, and that, without an overwhelming demonstration of popular support obliging Member States to take things further, they will have difficulty getting beyond the stage of 'organised cooperation'. However, it is true that when people speak, as Mr Pompidou did, of governments' being ready to impose joint discipline on themselves, they are not far from admitting the existence of precisely the joint discipline which, by any other name, is Community law. This means, logically, that responsibility and the exercise of power is transferred from national to Community level.

The problem, admittedly, is no longer knowing if joint institutions are to going to be created: the problem is knowing how these joint institutions would operate so as to ensure the attainment of the objectives which all now agree are those of European integration. When people speak of joint resources and give as an example, as Mr Giscard d'Estaing did yesterday in the Community Council, the State of New York, which does not itself retain the proceeds of customs duties but confers use thereof to the federal budget, then that points the direct route which leads to a federal power.

For Heaven's sake, let us not speak about Community institutions, since that evokes the shameful idea of surrender! All right, let us not speak of them. But let us create them ...