

Speech by Jacques Delors to the Council of Europe (26 September 1989)

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Statement by Mr Jacques Delors, President of the Commission of the European Communities (26 September 1989)

Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, Madam Secretary General, forty years ago the Council of Europe was born. Its aim was

"to achieve greater unity between its members for the purpose of safeguarding and realising the ideals and principles which are their common heritage and facilitating their economic and social progress".

This was a slightly different ambition from that of the Hague Congress which, in 1947, had invited states to pool their sovereign rights.

Even at that early stage the issue, urged by Winston Churchill, was that we should solemnly promise never again to wage war among ourselves.

Europe was already asserting its determination to co-operate and promote the ideals of peace, democracy and freedom under the leadership of men of conviction such as Robert Schuman or your first President, Paul Henri Spaak.

This was the beginning of the ongoing debate between the advocates of straightforward intergovernmental co-operation and those who deemed it necessary to move beyond the solutions offered by traditional international law and championed a form of federation or confederation. That debate continues today.

Whatever may have been the difficulties over the years, we cannot forget that it was with the Council of Europe that it all began, that it was with the Council of Europe that hope was born, here in this forum described by Robert Schuman as "a laboratory where European co-operation is tested".

We should not therefore underestimate the revolutionary significance of the founding of your institution, when ten governments gave substance and voice to what until then had been an amorphous but noble hope for European union. Today, we are perhaps seeing a new beginning.

True, the Council was not subsequently transformed into "a European political authority with limited functions but real powers", as Andre Philip had proposed. People were mentally unprepared, and governments were still too concerned about their powers or wistful about their past. And so you opted for a pragmatic approach, knitting the nations of Europe closer together with your conventions and agreements on common action and rules.

Coming back for a moment to the Community, I have not forgotten the ardent support which your Assembly gave to the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community at a time when some people saw it as fracturing Europe. And then you had the sound idea of clarifying the form which relations between our two institutions — the Council of Europe and the newlyformed Community, through the Coal and Steel Community — should take.

Today, your Assembly represents a body of twenty-three nations. We are well aware of the values which unite us and which we would like to see progress first of all in our own countries and then in Europe as a whole. Your special guests from the USSR, Poland, Hungary and Yugoslavia cannot be unaware of this. As the first President of the Commission to address your Assembly, I would like solemnly to affirm that the only cause which is important to us is that of pluralist democracy and social progress.

Although the Community and Council share the same aim — European unity — our fields of activity and our methods differ, as no doubt too do our ambitions. This has to be said frankly. But the two institutions must complement each other, with the intergovernmental Council of Europe as the guardian and advocate of democratic values throughout Europe, and the Community, which has chosen an integrationist policy,

working for European union with all who unreservedly accept the full contract. I repeat: the full contract. This contract is set forth in the Treaty of Rome as supplemented by the Single Act. It is given life by the policy decisions taken every six months by the meeting of heads of state and of government and by the European Council, on the proposals of the Commission.

The Community initially represented a political ambition stimulated by economic necessity. Jean Monnet, one of the founding fathers, was quite clear that from the beginning Europe was a political concept. The aim was to bring the peoples together. That ambition remains unchanged. The Twelve said as much in the preamble to the Single Act, when they confirmed that their objective was to work together to make real progress towards European union. If I recall this point, it is because the Commission has a duty to the peoples to uphold the policy decisions and fulfil the promises that have been made.

It is true that in 1985 it was economic necessity which breathed new life into the Community, which for many years had been wallowing in self-doubt. Europe, weakened by the oil shocks and racked by the cancer of apparently insoluble unemployment and its relative economic backwardness discreetly abandoned the world stage. A certain nostalgia made it keener then to look back to its past than to prepare its future.

Ladies and gentlemen, this decline, for it was indeed a decline, had it taken root, would have been that of a Europe incapable of coping effectively with world-scale markets, of a Europe incapable of maintaining its industrial and commercial competitiveness and, consequently, of safeguarding its social welfare achievements and its capacity to act in the world. For, as regards international competition, the warning lights were flashing: market shares were falling and creativity was declining, if we are to judge from the number of prize-winning scientists, inventions and new patents. But we must be objective: an advanced welfare system, the result of many political, trade-union and working-class struggles and of the economic miracle of the 1950s and 1960s, was successfully preserved.

And so in order to combat this risk of decline, loss of competitiveness, mass unemployment and weak growth, in order to give everyone fresh room for economic and political manoeuvre, the objective of a single market without internal frontiers of 320 million consumers — the 1992 objective — was a necessity.

However, at the Commission's suggestion — and this is too often forgotten, even in the member countries — this objective was reinforced, at the time when I was proposing a single market, by common policies for harmonious development for all involving structural aid to underdeveloped or recession-hit regions, the first expression of solidarity; the social dimension, an equally important expression of solidarity; co-operation in research and development as well as on environment questions; and lastly, the intensification — twice since 1985 — of monetary co-operation: all these are evidence that our plan is not just political but forms a consistent whole.

Our wish is to build a community, not just a single market or a free trade area. This should be properly understood by all, including — let me repeat — the member countries of the Community.

At the same time, political co-operation between our member states was progressing. I am well aware that this is much more difficult than economic integration, because the traditions, diplomatic practices and historical experience of the twelve member countries of the Community are different.

I still remember, to mention but one example, the stinging refusal I received when I tried to get the Twelve to establish a common position after the initial disarmament talks between Mr Reagan and Mr Gorbachev; it seemed as if Europe was destined to remain forever a subject of history, shorn of the ambition to be an actor on the stage of history. But there has for some months now been progress in co-operation between the Twelve on many foreign policy questions, and I hope soon to see them make similar progress in matters of defence and security as the European pillar of the Atlantic Alliance.

The results of our revival are there for all to see. You are aware of them but I feel I must spell out the most important ones without subjecting you to a deluge of figures: we have a current annual growth rate of 3,5% compared with 1,5% six years ago; we anticipate that 5 million jobs will be created between 1988 and 1990

(from 1982 to 1984, we lost nearly two million); our investment is at its highest level for twenty-two years.

Thus, the Community is working, and if the favourable international situation were the sole explanation, some of our near European neighbours would not envy us our renewed dynamism. The European Community is now accepted, even when it is unjustly attacked as a major economic and political force, as a power which must henceforth be reckoned with.

When I speak of "unjust attacks", I am thinking of the accusations concerning "fortress Europe". Such a concept is not in our interest, and the figures are the best argument against these accusations, since the Community represents 20% of international trade, compared with only 15% for the United States and 9% for Japan.

However, ladies and gentlemen, were our ambition not political, no doubt we would have rested on the laurels of what I believe is lasting success and we would have contented ourselves with the formidable momentum engendered by the objective of 1992.

Indeed, what a great undertaking this is! The forced pace with which the directives needed to achieve the single market are being adopted, the reform of the Treaty of Rome, the introduction of common policies, to which I have referred, and the securing of the financial resources needed for our policy — all in less than three years — could have been enough for us. But not so.

As you know, post-1992 is already in preparation. And economic and monetary union which will be — which is already — the Community's latest ambition is at the crossroads of economic integration and political union. It poses such economic, institutional and political problems that it will constitute a great qualitative leap forward.

Judge for yourselves: the essential parallelism between the economic, social and monetary sectors, the irrevocable link in the final phase between currencies, the common management of some policies, especially monetary policy, and the resultant relinquishment of sovereignty all make economic and monetary union a most profoundly political economic goal and, at the same time, the first initial sign of a genuine shared destiny.

Such are the ways of the Community.

I admit that this is one of the plans of the Europe of the Twelve. We know that the Community does not have a monopoly over Europe, or over its heritage, culture and tradition. Moreover, no one here can lay claim to such a monopoly today. But the Twelve know what efforts they have made to unite. Six then nine, then ten, then twelve countries wanted to ally their destinies, at the expense of some sacrifices or of partially relinquishing sovereignty.

It should be recalled here that this was possible only as a result of a desire to remain present on the stage of history, whereas previously, at Yalta, without consulting the Europeans, certain people had decided to divide Europe. We never accepted this. That is why, and it may as well be said clearly today, the Community does not intend to allow itself to be deflected from its basic aim. It knows that political will alone has enabled it to overcome the inherent difficulties in any ambitious project. That will is its article of faith, and what holds it together and protects it.

I am often asked what form this union will take when it is achieved. Wisely, I think, we have not yet set any date for its completion. Indeed, we cannot expect today to establish the deadlines for what will be the political union of Europe. Nevertheless, the seeds of it are already there, as you will have gathered from what is going on at the moment, from the objective of economic and monetary union, and from the untiring search for a social consensus within the Community. The seeds of political union already exist.

I am equally convinced that a European model of society extends well beyond the Twelve and covers Europe in the broadest sense of the term. I believe this very deeply. In the absence of a political contract as

binding and as demanding as the Treaty of Rome, this model, which is distinct from those which may be observed elsewhere, rests, as you know, on common values, on a widely shared view of economic and social relationships and on the age-old philosophical tenet of a balance between man and society.

Frankly, in my earlier career when I was in France, I always drew inspiration from these models provided by other European countries which nevertheless have the same philosophical basis.

The historian Fernand Braudel revealed this Europe committed to a shared destiny by its Christian religion, rationalist thought, the development on its continent of science and technology and its taste for revolution and social justice.

Poised between alienating, sterile, collectivism on the one hand and exuberant and socially intolerable individualism on the other, democratic Europe has been able to keep its balance, in a living humanism which does not belong to it or to you alone. We find this search for the best possible solution to the human problems of twentieth century society in Stockholm, Madrid, Bonn, Oslo, Vienna or Paris.

That is why I am particularly keen to promote the social dimension of the enlarged market: this respect for the dialogue between the heads of companies and the trade unions representing the workers, recognition of the role workers play in the company, the improvement of working conditions with regard to hygiene, health and safety, all this is part of a pure European heritage. It is also reflected in a solemn declaration of social rights and also — it should be recalled — in specific activities which have already produced results in the fight against unemployment, in solidarity between the rich regions and the poor regions or in the improvement of working conditions.

That is why I am also mindful of the environment. Just as democratic Europe has managed to maintain a balance between man and nature, between pillage and aggression. As you know, we have taken a large number of environmental measures — most recently concerning CFCs. But I have proposed the establishment of a European agency for the environment, a purely technical body which would be responsible for gleaning information and helping politicians to take the courageous decisions that are called for and to take them with full knowledge of the facts, without demagogy and without weakness. But, you will say, the environment is a world problem requiring an international solution. I agree. In our proposal, we have emphasised that this Community agency could be open to all the European countries and, subsequently, to the world.

These, then — I note in passing — are two fields, social affairs and the environment, in which we could cooperate if, as I hope, we share the same values and the same view of the organisation of society.

All the European countries thus share a common future, yes, but on certain conditions. Allow me now to remind you of those conditions, for today, as in the past, we are going to have to go forward without giving up our identity, without giving up our objectives. To do this, I think that the integration of the Twelve and the path of co-operation which is open to all the countries of Europe must go hand in hand. I should like to make this idea the central theme of my statement.

You realise that only political integration answers our purpose and gives us the necessary imagination and force to work out a model which, I think, will be unique. As you know, our decisions are directly applicable. I reiterate this point for the benefit of your Assembly and its guests.

What happens if one country refuses to conform to the rules ? We have a Court of Justice which judges our weaknesses or our insufficiencies, and which punishes any violations of our common rules.

There is also a European Parliament, which has been elected by universal suffrage for ten years, which is now almost a co-framer of legislation, and which above all has in recent years distinguished itself as a powerful driving force in the building of Europe and as the most ardent supporter of the work done by the Commission.

There is also a Council of Ministers which takes decisions. Since the Treaty was amended, however, majority decisions are the rule and unanimity the exception. The spirit of the Single Act has been translated into fact.

Lastly, there is the Commission of the European Communities — a far-reaching institutional innovation which has four tasks: it alone can initiate legislation; together with the Court of Justice it supervises the implementation of treaties; it applies the decisions of the Council of Ministers ; and it represents the Community abroad.

As you see, we are a Community based on the rule of law, a law which guarantees that each partner can remain a discrete entity. This is true of both nations and individuals. At the same time, however, we are a Community which fixes the duties of each partner. Our law safeguards the ground rules of democracy and of personal autonomy: this is the concept which sets us apart from intergovernmental organisations. It must be stressed that it is also this novel feature which enables us to advance. Let no one ask us to give it up in exchange for goodness knows what romantic vision of a greater Europe. Let this be clearly stated. Nevertheless, there is plenty of room for co-operation.

First of all, between our two institutions, the Council of Europe and the Community. Moreover, this has taken a new turn since 1987. I exchanged letters with Mr Oreja, your former Secretary General, which defined the complementary nature of our institutions more clearly. The deliberations of the Committee of Ministers on 5 May 1989, which were chaired by Mr van den Broek, also clearly showed the will to give a new thrust and fresh political impetus to this co-operation. Since then, we have held regular consultations with the Chairman of the Committee of Ministers and the Secretary General, and that will continue in the future.

For its part, the Commission endeavours whenever possible to consider the Council of Europe as a framework for implementing our common aims. What better proof could I offer than the opening for signature, on 16 November next, of the protocol which will enable the Community to become a party to the Convention on the Elaboration of a European Pharmacopoeia. Another, perhaps more important, example: our wish to translate into similar principles the rules of the game which must govern the European audiovisual sector and the vital co-operation between European countries to promote our cultures and productions. This demonstrates a deliberate intention to refer to the conventions of the Council of Europe whenever co-operation must extend beyond the Twelve.

At the same time, we must step up our cooperation with the countries of the European Free Trade Association — both the President of EFTA and the President of your Assembly have referred to this matter. Indeed, the member countries of the European Free Trade Association are not only our main trading partners but, above all, they share our values and our conception of society.

Our co-operation with them is therefore insufficient but, at the same time, it would seem to be difficult for them simply to accede to the Community because some of these countries do not have the same aims as we have in matters of foreign policy and security. It was necessary to innovate to break the vicious circle resulting from the rather simplistic alternative of being members or non-members of the Community.

I therefore proposed to the member countries of EFTA, in the investiture speech of the new Commission before the Parliament on 17 January last, another course which involves strengthening their own structure.

I know that the member countries of EFTA welcomed this proposal and that the negotiations are making good progress. I also know that your Assembly last week urged them to move beyond the concept of a "mere free trade area". For the sake of clarity, I would say that the future of the relations between the Community and the European Free Trade Association will depend on the decisions taken by the association itself.

Either they succeed in strengthening their internal structure, in which case one could imagine — though this is simplification almost to the point of caricature — a Europe of several circles: the circle of the Twelve, if

they remain Twelve, on the path to European union, and a wider circle with countries which will enjoy with us the advantages of one great common economic space with equality of rights as well as equality of duties.

Or they fail to organise themselves better, or consider that they do not need to strengthen their structures, in which case we shall offer them the plans of a new house which they will enter bilaterally if they so desire.

In any event, the upshot of all this should be a major reinforcement of relations of all kinds between the countries of the Community and the countries of EFTA. However, the choice between these two modes of co-operation is entirely up to the EFTA countries: the Community will draw the necessary conclusions.

After speaking of the EFTA countries, far be it from me to forget the countries which I have often called, because they belong to no organisation, and with no pejorative connotation, the "orphans of Europe". I shall not mention them by name. However, I should like to say a word about Yugoslavia. I welcome the presence here of a Yugoslav delegation who are well aware of the discreet efforts I have personally made on behalf of their country over the last two years. I wholeheartedly wish them success in the indispensable reform, not only economic but also institutional, that is required.

Lastly, as you know, the Community is at the heart of a system of aid to Poland and Hungary entrusted to it by the summit of the seven major industrialised countries in July. That was recognition of our know-how in matters of co-operation and food aid and some have wished to see in it a political breakthrough by the Commission of the European Communities.

But for me, jealous as I am of the competence of the body over which I preside, that was not the main point. The main point was to institute positive exchange between the two Europes, at a time when some countries in that other Europe are seeking to escape without drama from totalitarianism, to evolve towards a freer regime, paying greater respect to human rights and pluralism. That is our duty: we in the Community consider it as such.

What has to be done is, at their request, to help those countries restructure their economies, restore broad financial and monetary equilibrium. But this plan of action has to satisfy quite precise criteria: the requirement of a firm commitment by those countries to carry out the substantial reforms which are needed and to accept a lasting relationship of partnership between them and us.

Whilst even now, at this very moment, experts from twenty Western countries are meeting in Brussels, under the aegis of the Commission, to determine the principles of such action, I should like none the less to issue a warning. An interview published this morning in the newspaper *Le Figaro* strengthens my concern: let us beware of empty promises, of raising too many hopes, lest we later cause too much disillusion. But let us not underestimate what has been accomplished and what will be done in the future for those two countries.

To avoid making this speech too long, I shall not here describe everything that has been done. I would point out that this work has already started, that it is continuing and that, as always, true to the spirit of Jean Monnet:

"The European Commission prefers to act rather than posture or content itself with words."

I should like here in the presence of the delegations of those two countries to express my hope that they will, in complete autonomy, achieve the changes which they consider desirable, and which they will decide for themselves. They know that they can count on the Community to establish the basis for co-operation of great promise between equal partners. I repeat: between equal partners. For that is how our democracies conceive of relations between sovereign states.

Ladies and gentlemen, you can see the changes in progress in Central and Eastern Europe and in the Soviet

Union, the concomitance of these changes with the speeding up of European integration since the Single Act. All that gives us reason to set ourselves the target of overcoming the division of the Old World. In a word: we must wipe out Yalta!

History will not wait: the prospects for gradual elimination of military imbalance and the threats bound up with that, the observance of rules of conduct and commitments entered into in the framework of the CSCE, the development of all kinds of co-operation — economic, technical, financial, cultural — the democratisation of political systems: all that serves to further change once considered impossible and which the most optimistic of the great Europeans would probably not have dared to imagine so quickly.

The presence of a delegation from the USSR is in this respect highly significant. They are here at your invitation. I welcome them also, at a time when we are at the beginning of a dialogue between the Community and the Soviet Union, a dialogue which I hope will bear fruit for peace, freedom and human rights.

The presence of these various delegations at the Council of Europe Assembly is an important milestone and, no doubt, a new beginning. It is right that the debate should open, without preconditions, between all these countries of Europe. Rest assured that the European Commission is already making its substantial contribution.

But let there be no mistake and no misunderstanding ! It must not be thought that the construction of a twelve-member European Community could be affected in any way whatsoever by this broadening dialogue.

In the face of these developments, I firmly believe the best response of the Community must be to step up its own drive towards integration : single market, social and human dimension, economic and monetary union, progress towards a common foreign policy along the path to political union. That is the surest way for each of the member states of the Community to find additional political capacity and additional determination to show greater openness towards others. That is the prerequisite for all those who wish to manage their interests democratically in the richness of cultural, social and political pluralism.

In this way the dynamism of Community integration can amplify the dynamism of economic and political reforms in the countries of the other Europe and be a driving force in the changes between East and West.

Our resolve to share our destinies and to exercise together a part of our sovereignties constitutes the cement of our Community. But even more, our fierce determination that our values of pluralism, freedom and solidarity shall live. Our spirit of openness and our concern for dialogue cannot dispense with reference to the contract which is the foundation of the Community adventure. Remember that we set as much store by that as by our resolve to make of Europe, of the whole of Europe, an area of peace, prosperity and freedom. And in this immense task, the Council of Europe has I am sure, a leading role to play. It can count on the commitment of the European Commission. *(Loud applause)*