

Statement by Georges Pompidou (The Hague, 1 December 1969)

Caption: On 1 December 1969, in The Hague, the French President, Georges Pompidou, suggests to his European colleagues that they continue with the completion, deepening and enlargement of the European Economic Community (EEC).

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When I suggested that the leaders of the Six should come together in The Hague — and I thank the Dutch Government for offering us their hospitality — it was because it seemed to me that the months ahead were particularly significant ones for the future of the Community.

We are reaching the end of the transition period. Customs duties are now a thing of the past between our countries. The single market in agriculture has been painstakingly developed. But there are many questions which we need to answer. For instance, are the price disturbances caused by parity changes jeopardizing the future of the common market in agriculture? Will the growing burden of farm surpluses force us to find a new production policy? Are the Six prepared to extend joint action to other fields? Do we or do we not intend to press ahead with the co-ordination of economic and monetary policies, technological co-operation, tax harmonization, and company law?

These are some of the questions we must answer in clear terms. And I do not forget the very important issue of the membership applications submitted by a number of countries, in particular Great Britain. Now is the time to raise this issue too and to discuss it without preconceived ideas but without giving anything away. Now is the time to decide amongst ourselves on preconditions for the opening of negotiations, and on procedures for these. And on their objectives too. In other words, are we prepared to open the door to Great Britain and the other applicants if this means that the Community will be weakened and begin to crumble away? Or do we intend to forge ahead to build a stronger Community, making membership subject to firm undertakings with regard to what has been achieved and what still remains to be done?

As you can see, there are many reasons why we should get down to discussing the real issue and choose between allowing the Community to wither away and giving it a fresh lease of life. Public opinion in our six countries expects a great deal from this meeting. I hope we will not disappoint our peoples and for this reason I feel that we must explain ourselves clearly. This is what I now propose to do on behalf of France.

As I have just said, and as you all know, there are three problems facing us at the present time:

- First we have the problem of “completion”, in other words the changeover to the definitive period and the adoption of the definitive financial arrangements;
- Then there is the problem of “strengthening”, sometimes called “development”, which concerns the prospects for Community growth;
- And lastly, we have the problem of “enlargement”, in other words the applications for membership.

An examination of these three problems depends in fact on our answer to one question and this question is — are we determined to continue building the European Community? What would be the point of this Conference if we did not succeed in reaching agreement in our own minds and between ourselves and creating an atmosphere of mutual trust? Without this any action would be doomed to failure and the Community to slow, inexorable disintegration. This is why I am answering this question with a clear, distinct, and unequivocal “Yes”. France does want to maintain the Community and to develop it. I am convinced that it is on the basis of the Treaty of Rome and all that has been done over the past ten years to implement and expand it that Europe has a chance to unite and thus to recover at all levels — including the political — the means of its development and of its influence which will enable it to make its voice heard in all areas of world politics.

But if we decide to continue building the Community this means that what has been done must be jealously guarded and that completion — including the financial regulation which is a typical Community instrument — must become a definitive reality within a specified period of time.

It means that we must get to work without delay to develop and deepen Community action, our special aim being the convergence of our economic and monetary policies. If we are to do this we must set ourselves a precise and realistic list of objectives spaced out in time. I will have some suggestions to make about this.

Lastly, it means that the membership applications from Great Britain and the other three countries must be discussed in a positive spirit without losing sight of Community interests or the interests of existing members. It means that the negotiations must be prepared between the Six to agree on a joint Community position and that the negotiations themselves must be conducted on behalf of the Community and in a Community spirit.

It is on these points then that our discussions should turn. Because time is short we will produce results only if we put aside timidity and procrastination and get down to action right away. At a time when, as we all know, the superpowers — the Soviet Union, but also the United States — view European problems as they affect their own interests, and cannot but view them thus, we owe it to our peoples to revive their hopes of seeing Europe in control of its own destiny. It was because of this and with this idea in mind that I suggested calling this Conference, whose outcome will condition not only the Community's future but also the future policy of each of the nations assembled here, and certainly that of France.