

Speech by Franco Maria Malfatti (Brussels, 22 January 1972)

Caption: On 22 January 1972, at the ceremony to mark the signature, in Brussels, of the Treaties of Accession of Denmark, Ireland, Norway and the United Kingdom to the European Communities, Franco Maria Malfatti, President of the European Commission, delivers a speech on the historical impact of the enlargement of the Communities.

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Speech made by Mr Franco Maria Malfatti, President of the Commission, at the signing of the Acts of Accession (Brussels, 22 January 1972)

More than forty years ago Winston Churchill compared the idea of European unity to a spark rising from a human hearth and flying upward. Among innumerable sparks, he said, that flash and fade away, there now and again gleams one that lights up not only the immediate scene but the whole world.

We representatives of the Community of Six are proud to have made today's historic meeting possible, having fanned the spark into a flame. It is now for the Community of Ten to transform it into the great flame of united Europe.

The signatures placed today under the Acts of Accession are the culmination of a political process pregnant with extraordinary and positive implications. The beginning was more than ten years ago, and today we are creating the dimensions and the conditions that are required if our Community is to develop and complete the political design which inspired the Treaties of Rome and Paris. We are consequently aware that the responsibilities resting on the Community's institutions, on the Governments and the peoples of the ten countries of the new Community must be measured by the immense hopes that are raised by the idea of European unity.

Like all great ideas in history, the idea of Europe has in the course of time been supported on different grounds and for different reasons.

In the immediate postwar period it stemmed mainly from the agonizing contemplation of two civil wars in Europe which have so cruelly scarred our recent history. Today, the idea of European unity draws its strength from the feeling that it is the answer to the worries of the present, the only effective way to banish the uncertainties of the future and to make realities of our hopes, that it offers a chance of playing a part in the building of a better world.

It is not only the headlong pace of scientific and technical progress, the evident need of wider continental dimensions for rapid and harmonious development in the economic and social fields, and the aim of a better quality of life that are thrusting us along the road to the unification of Europe. We are also being driven on by the need to rebuild from the bottom up, and on more solid and broader foundations, the splintered sovereignty of the peoples of Europe, preventing the decay of this noble continent, which has been the cradle of modern civilization.

Our edifice is not, and cannot be, built for trade alone. For the system we have so laboriously built up in our Community of Six and which we will continue to build up in the Community of Ten will be unable to provide satisfactory answers to the complex problems of our era or to guarantee fully the existence of the Community unless we operate with all our strength and with an unflinching will to achieve the economic integration and political unification of our countries.

The difficulties we will encounter are of course many and serious, but the difficulties we will encounter if we do not advance would be greater and more serious. United, we will be able to write a new chapter of history, to be a powerful factor working in the cause of liberty, of security, of progress and of peace in the world. Divided, we will be no more than spectators on the fringe of history.

We must, of course, be realistic, but not in order to restrain our imagination. We must, of course, be pragmatic, but not in order to curb our ardour; we must, of course, be prudent, but not in order to undermine our courage.

Our edifice is revolutionary and original. It is revolutionary when compared with earlier historic experiments, for the unifying process we have set in motion is a joint venture undertaken by all the Member States, linked within the Community by complete equality of rights and duties. It is original because it is characterized by an institutional structure for which no equivalent can be found in earlier models. This structure rests on a European Parliament consisting of representatives of the peoples of the Community –

and the strengthening of the democratic features and powers of this Parliament call for action by all the member countries of the new Community; it rests further on a Council consisting of the representatives of the Member States and endowed with a power of decision; on a Commission with real powers of its own, whose duty it is to propose and watch over Community rules and to share in shaping the acts of the Council; and, finally, a Court of justice which ensures that Community law is observed.

These, then, are the essential features of the edifice which we must defend and strengthen in a democratic framework, since it is they which confer on the budding Community its particular character.

The new Community is not, and does not seek to be, a new block, but a wide community of free and peaceful States and peoples each of which is bringing to the common edifice its own genius, its own glorious heritage. It is a Community of the democratic countries that are amongst the most highly developed in the world, and it is determined to make the process of unification irreversible in order to consolidate our friendships, in order to contribute decisively, on a footing of equality, to the development of the less favoured nations, and in order to develop, as a new element of equilibrium in a better international order, new cooperative relationships with all the peoples of the earth.

Never before has one generation had so many opportunities to contribute in concrete manner to the unity of Europe, the task to which so many eminent statesmen have in the past devoted their efforts and their thought.

This is the stirring challenge of our day, a challenge that we can, we must take up.