

## Address by François-Xavier Ortoli (Brussels, 20 September 1976)

**Caption:** Address given by the President of the Commission, François-Xavier Ortoli, on the occasion of the signing of the Act concerning the election of the representatives of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage on 20 September 1976.

**Source:** European elections May-June 1978, 20 September 1976 Signature of the act. Luxembourg: Directorate-General for Information, [s.d.].

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**Last updated:** 14/05/2014

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“Mr President, Gentlemen,

The agreement you are about to sign is, for me, doubly significant. In the first place, you will be making it clear that our Community is an active force. I do not think that any one of us would have dared to think, two years ago, that we could have reached this point so quickly. Of course, there is provision in the Treaties for the direct election of the European Parliament by universal suffrage, but it had been put off for so long; and today it is accomplished. For myself, after nearly four years as President of the Commission, what is being done today gives me good reason for hope and confidence in the Community.

But this is not all. In deciding that Parliament should be elected by universal suffrage, you also recognize that democracy is the very foundation of our Community, and that defending democracy is an essential part of what we are doing together. For it is surely the Community’s main characteristic, and perhaps its most important justification, that it is a Community of peoples united by an ideal of life in a democratic system.

And now we are going to let the people of Europe have their own say. It is a great step forward, after all we have heard about the technocracy or bureaucracy that sometimes appears to be typical of the Community. We shall now be able to ask our people to tell us, by the way they vote, what they want, what their aims and objectives are — to tell us what they think Europe should be. Obviously, all this is not going to happen overnight, but from today on it will none the less be a determining factor in making the Europe of the future.

No one can yet say how these elections will turn out. But the simple fact that the Community’s dynamism has been affirmed at a difficult time by means of a major decision concerning its very roots in democracy is, I feel, significant. Today is a great day; I would like to tell you how happy it makes me to be here with you on this occasion.”