

Declaration by the Commission of the European Communities (1 July 1968)

Caption: On 1 July 1968, as the Common Customs Tariff comes into force and, a year and a half ahead of schedule, customs duties on industrial and some agricultural products are abolished, the European Commission publishes a statement in which it describes the implications of the Customs Union for the Six.

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Declaration by the Commission of the European Communities (1 July 1968)

I. What is the significance of 1 July 1968?

1 July 1968 will certainly go down as a milestone in the history of Europe.

On that day the first and the major stage on the road to the economic unification of the European continent will be complete. The Customs Union which is one of the first aims of the Treaty of Rome will have been brought into being. Eighteen months ahead of the Treaty schedule, customs duties will have disappeared within the Common Market. Simultaneously, on the same date, the separate customs tariffs of our six countries will have given way to a single tariff, the external customs tariff of the Community. Finally, the first tariff reductions negotiated last year in Geneva in the major discussions known as the Kennedy Round will be implemented.

By beginning the unification of the European territory in this first form, the Six are taking a decisive step in the economic history of the continent.

But Europe is not only customs tariffs. Europe does not belong only to the manufacturers, the farmers or the technocrats. Nor is Europe only the Europe of 180 million Europeans living in the Community. Europe is not only the Europe of the Governments, of the Parliaments or of the administrations. It must also be the Europe of the peoples, of the workers, of youth, of man himself. All — or nearly all — still remains to be done.

II. The objectives

The Europeans face immense tasks.

(a) The Economic Union

The Customs Union being complete, work on the achievement of economic union must be continued. This means that the common economic policies designed to transform the customs territory into an economically organized continent must be built up or completed. We must put the finishing touches to the common agricultural policy, much of which is already in place, and finish work on policies for harmonization or unification in the commercial, fiscal, social, transport, and other fields, as provided for in the Treaties. We must gradually replace the old national policies with Community policies, changing the European area into an organized European society, with a general economic policy thought out and built up to the scale of the continent.

Three of these policies deserve special mention. In the first place, after having abolished the customs frontiers within the Community, the tax frontiers must also be gradually eliminated so that men and goods can move freely without formalities or controls at the frontiers. In addition, we must make progress in the field of monetary union, first by harmonizing the monetary policies of our six Member States, and then by creating between them a degree of monetary solidarity which will lead stage by stage to the coping-stone of the economic edifice — a common currency superseding the old national currencies. Lastly, Europe must be led to make decisive progress in the field of research and technology, so that it can stand on an equal footing with the other great world economic areas.

(b) Political union

A political Europe — the aim of Robert Schuman, Konrad Adenauer and De Gasperi — must be built up in the same way as our large countries, Germany, France, and Italy, were gradually unified by major political decisions. Europe must have institutions enabling it to become a politically organized continent, having not only its economic institutions — which are already well on the road to completion — but also political

institutions enabling it to act and become what the declaration of 9 May 1950 called the European Federation.

If this is to be done, Europe must not only have genuine federal institutions; it must also be unified and the other countries of Europe which are willing to accept the same rights and the same duties must gather around the nucleus formed by the Europe of the Six. At the same time political integration must facilitate a détente and co-operation between the East and the West, thus making an essential contribution to the establishment of a pacific order in Europe.

(c) Europe and the rest of the world

Europe bears major international responsibilities. The Europe of the Six, inferior to the United States in military, industrial and financial power, is already its equal in the field of trade. It is the world's leading importer of manufactures and agricultural produce. It is the leading importer of products from the countries of the third world. Today, in its present form, it already has major responsibilities to the developing countries — and these will be even more important tomorrow when Europe is a larger entity.

In addition, at a time when the organization of the world on the scale of the old sovereign nations is yielding place to organization at the level of continents, it is important that the errors of the past should not be repeated at this higher level, that the clash of nations should not give way to the clash of entire continents. Consequently, it is Europe's duty to organize co-operation and association with the other main groups in the world.

(d) Human problems

Lastly, the great social changes in a world dominated by technology and speed raise immense questions for our generation: the transformation of society, the organization of social life, the environment and the destiny of man, his liberty, his security, his health, his life itself.

None of all this, none of these fundamental political, economic, social and human problems can be solved by our old States imprisoned within their narrow frontiers. It is just as impossible to solve them without breaking through the old structures inherited from the past and without creating the European structures which are vital to the work of renewal as it is necessary to retain the old cultures, traditions, languages, originality, everything which gives the States their personalities and which constitutes the beauty, the diversity, the charm, and the immanent value of Europe, and in place of which nobody could possibly desire to set up colourless and impersonal machinery.

III. The means

What is the right approach to these tasks and how are they to be carried out? This is work on a grand scale which will keep a whole generation busy — but there has to be a beginning. Starting from what has already been done, starting from the 1 July deadline and without looking too far ahead, let us inquire what we can, what we must, do in the next five years.

(a) We must take a step forward in the field of political union. A single Treaty, enabling a new stage forward to be begun must take the place of the Treaty of Paris (1951) and the two Treaties of Rome (1957), which created our three European Communities. The Council of Ministers of the Community must be re-established in its normal functioning as a body which can take majority decisions. The out-of-date system of the right of veto, which paralyses action, must be done away with. The single Commission must be given the implementing powers enabling it not only to take the initiative in Community progress but genuinely to manage the Community, with the task of management growing as the new Community policies gradually enter into force.

At the same time, the authority entrusted to European Institutions must be steadily given a wider democratic basis — and this must be done more rapidly. The European Parliament must be given greater budgetary and legislative powers. The European peoples must participate increasingly, through direct elections and all other appropriate methods, in Community life at the European level.

(b) In coming years we must work through the stages in the construction of the economic union. Stimulated by the results already obtained, particularly in agriculture (here it has made an enormous effort) the European Commission intends to speed up and multiply its proposals to the Council of Ministers, so that the Community may make early and decisive progress in working out the economic, monetary, fiscal, social and other policies, which, in the five coming years, will need to have achieved most of their objectives.

(c) The efforts to enlarge the Community and unify the European continent must be resumed. The profound economic and social crisis in some of our countries, both within and without the Community, has shown how far the destinies of the European States have become intermingled. The moment has come to face the implications of this fact.

(d) The major economic, social and intellectual forces of Europe must be persuaded to take part more fully in the construction of the European continent.

It would be wrong to wait until the European people as a whole is officially consulted and takes part constitutionally and organically in the political life of the European continent. The major social groups in the Community must be called upon more urgently to help here and now.

This is why the Commission has decided to propose to the Economic and Social Committee that the Committee and the Commission should embark in the autumn on a far-reaching examination of the Community situation considered as a whole. For the same reason, the Commission also proposes to convene next winter three symposia in which the qualified representatives of the main organizations would take part. The first will bring together representatives of employers and workers, the second organizations of the farming community, the third qualified representatives of youth organizations. In each symposium the Commission will endeavour to organize both an overall examination of the European situation and a dialogue on detailed short- and medium-term action programmes. The Commission intends to devote special attention to the problems of keen interest to young people in the European universities — university teaching, training of young people, university exchanges, etc. — and to consider with the qualified representatives of the students what could be done to induce young people of today to look forward more confidently to their future and the part they will have to play in shaping it.

On completing this statement, which is at once an act of faith, an expression of hope and an action programme, the Commission calls on all Europeans not to ignore or underestimate the importance of what is now happening and to appreciate the value of what has been done so far.

Two great spiritual developments dominate this second half of the twentieth century: the reconciliation of the churches and the reconciliation of the peoples. The first is not a political matter, but the second is our affair. The reconciliation of peoples has been first and foremost the reconciliation of European nations, ravaged by the two World Wars of 1914-1918 and 1939-1945, both born in Europe of the clash of nationalisms: for the peoples of Europe these were genuine civil wars.

This time is now past. The moment has come to call the young and creative forces of Europe to union, action and hope.