

Address given by Jacques Delors (Bruges, 17 October 1989)

Caption: On 17 October 1989, in an address given to mark the opening of the 40th academic year of the College of Europe in Bruges, Jacques Delors, President of the European Commission, discusses the progress of economic integration of the Twelve and the new challenges to be faced.

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“Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour of addressing you at the invitation of the Rector of the College, Professor Lukaszewski, as the College of Europe celebrates its 40 years of existence. It can be said that here, in Bruges, faith in Europe was never lacking, even if, during all those years, European construction went through its hours of hope and progress, but also through long periods of despair and stagnation.

Your Rector affirmed it ten years ago in a concept of Europe which is both pluralistic and rigorous. He wrote:

“To mould European consciousness, to develop the feeling of belonging to Europe as a community of civilization and destiny is very much in line with the prestigious university tradition of the West.”

It is indeed a welcome coincidence that in this year 1989, your College chose to pay tribute to Denis de Rougemont, a man who deserves to be better known, who left us a major contribution through his writings and also his action.

With your permission, I would like to be more personal in remembering Denis de Rougemont; although I never had the good fortune of working with him, I would like to simply tell you what links me with him or, more modestly, the reasons for which I strive to use his intellectual and political contribution.

First of all, as a European militant, I carry on, like many others, the action he undertook, in his time and to the extent of his possibilities. He often and loudly advocated Federalism, which for him had many virtues. In Federalism he saw a method, an approach of reality and a style of social orientation. For my part, I have many opportunities of using Federalism as a method, but I include in it the subsidiarity principle. I see in it the inspiration needed to reconcile what appears to many as irreconcilable: the emergence of a united Europe and fidelity to our nation, to our motherland; the need for a European power, commensurate with the problems of our times, and the vital imperative of preserving our nations and our regions, as a place in which to nurture our roots; the decentralized organization of responsibilities, in order never to entrust to a bigger structure what can be better implemented by a smaller one. This is precisely what is meant by the subsidiarity principle.

As an advocate of personalism also, and as a disciple of Emmanuel Mounier whose influence will, I am sure, become once again very important as Europeans will notably become aware of the impasses resulting from wholesale individualism, just as they have been rejecting, for the last few years, collectivism and its lesser form, i.e. the State as tutor of every individual and every single thing.

I am therefore happy to pay this tribute to a man who, during his whole life, toiled in the fields of hope. It is in any case quite significant that, at the 1948 The Hague Congress, he was entrusted with the task of taking part in the drafting of and of reading the message to the Europeans:

“Europe’s vocation, he stated, can be clearly defined. It is to unite its peoples in accordance with their true genius, which is that of its diversity, and in the conditions of the 20th century, which are those of the Community, in order to open up for the world the way it is seeking, the way of organized freedoms ...

Europe’s supreme conquest is called the dignity of man and its true form is in freedom. This is the ultimate stake of our fight. We want the union of our continent to safeguard our acquired freedoms but also to extend the benefits of the latter to all men. Europe’s destiny and the peace of the world depend from this union.”

If he were still with us, I would have liked to debate with him two sensitive issues for our common future.

Denis de Rougemont believed in what I would call the “bottom up” approach, i.e. reconstruction starting

from the bottom, from small units established as if by nature on the basis of the solidarity of interests and the convergence of feelings. It is indeed indispensable, but insufficient. Others, and myself amongst them, must at the same time work from the “top down” (to continue with an English expression): to find the paths of integration through the top, since without the latter the small streams of neighbouring solidarities will never come together into one big river.

And then, Denis de Rougemont hated “puissance”. I quote him once again: “Puissance, and please listen carefully because this epitomizes all my thought, puissance is the power that one wants to exercise over somebody else, while freedom is the power that one may exercise over oneself”.

Without denying the philosophical and spiritual merits of such a statement, I would nevertheless like to stress my disagreement, speaking as a man of politics.

From that point of view, puissance is not fatally the contrary of freedom. No. The European Community, and the peoples and nations that it encompasses, will exist truly only if it has the means to defend its values and to apply them for the benefit of all, in short, to be generous. Let us be powerful enough to command respect and to promote our values of freedom and solidarity. In a world such as ours, there can be no other way.

I would associate puissance with the requirement of necessity that I raised so often to bring about the relaunch of European construction. And today, I would like to redeploy it in the service of our ideal. Indeed, I ask you, where would the pressure of necessity take us without a vision of what we want to accomplish? And, conversely, what would be the scope of an ideal without the will and the means to act? The time has come, it seems to me, to explicitly reconcile necessity and ideal.

In order to achieve this reconciliation, we may draw from our experiences and our historical heritage, but also from the strength of our Institutions. I would like to underline their importance, at a time when everybody is able to realize the limits of an action conducted on the basis of national means alone. The active worksites of European construction, whether they are its social dimension or the new frontier represented by Economic and Monetary Union, offer us the possibility of exercising sovereignty jointly, while at the same respecting our diversities and thus the principles of pluralism and subsidiarity.

And, Ladies and Gentlemen, if I insisted so much on the Institutions it is very simply because the matter is urgent. History does not wait. Given the major upheavals experienced by the world today, and more particularly by the other “Europes”, it is essential for the Community, made strong by renewed dynamism, to reinforce its cohesion and to set objectives commensurate with the challenges that History recently confronted us with.

I. Europe: ideal and necessity

History only has room for those who see far and wide. This is the reason why the “Founding Fathers” of Europe are still present today, through their inspiration and the heritage they left us.

To see wide is to take account of world developments, geopolitical as well as economic, as well as of the movement of ideas, the evolution of the essential values which guide our contemporaries. The Founding Fathers wanted to put an end to these European civil wars: “Never again war between us”. They also had the intuition that our Europe had ceased being the world’s economic and political centre. Their thesis came to be verified under our eyes, so much so that, during the 1970s, the dramatic alternative confronting us was: survival or decline. I often shocked my listeners when I unceasingly repeated it at the time. However, little by little, the necessity for reaction became clear and made possible the acceptance of the objective of the 1992 large market without frontiers; then in a kind of virtuous circle came the revision of the Treaty of Rome (the Single Act) and lastly what came to be called the Delors package, i.e. the indispensable financial reform to acquire the means of our ambitions. Thus was Europe awakened by the alarm bells of necessity.

To see far is to both draw from our historical heritage and to project ourselves forward. Prospective thinking

has its share in it, but so do the ethics of the individual and society, and the sense of human adventure. Nothing is done without passion, as was said by workers condemned to see their company disappear. Frankly speaking, this is what we lack the most today. I affirm, without claiming any transcendental vision, that the theory of nations as unfeeling monsters no longer has any relevance to the Community's life, if the latter truly wants to deserve its noble designation. Our unavoidable conflicts of interests must be transcended by this family spirit, this intimate feeling of shared values.

Amongst the latter, allow me to underline the mutual valorization of our personalities through the knowledge of others and mutual exchanges. The young generations are very much aware of and attracted by this new horizon of experience and encounters. They reject exclusive niches, they are challenged by new ways of looking at the world; they want to explore new ground.

The College of Bruges is, in its way, the living laboratory of this Europe that is being built.

Yes, it is high time, Dear Friends, to bring about the rebirth of the ideal of Europe.

Necessity, the inexorable driving force

But we had to go through necessity, since the Community of Twelve is courted by some and threatened by others, since, neglecting the mortar that already unites us, some propose a flight forward in the name of the greater Europe or offer us only market laws as the ultimate reference. We must remind them that our Community is not only the fruit of history and necessity, but also of willpower.

Let us linger for a while on necessity. Ever since the relaunch movement of 1984-1985, concrete results speak for themselves, the risks of decline are receding. In five years we went from insufficient economic growth, of some 1.5% per year, to a dynamic growth rate of 3.5%; from an annual net loss of 600,000 jobs to the creation of 1,300,000 jobs; from a quasi-inexistent complementary investment effort to a progression of from 6 to 7%. The actors of economic and social life realize this much better than political leaders, a great majority of which still underestimate the support that the gradual implementation of the large market and the common policies represented for the efforts undertaken at national level to adapt our economies to the new international realities. However, a single glance beyond our borders is enough to measure the road travelled: Europe exists again, it prompts interest everywhere: in America, in Asia, in Africa, both North and South.

A question of willpower. I know that this word was sometimes used abusively in an incantatory way. But it is political willpower which led six countries, then nine, then ten, and then twelve, to decide, fully realizing what they were undertaking, to unite their destiny. The contract that binds them is clear. It includes both rights and obligations.

And lastly History, of which the Twelve are not the masters, but in which they once again are becoming influential actors. No, they did not want, through the Yalta accords, for Europe not only to be cut in two but also to be turned into the obvious bone of contention of the Cold War. No, they were not and are not closing the door for other European countries, provided the latter accept the whole contract.

The reconciliation of ideal and necessity

Given the upheavals currently under way in Eastern Europe, the problematics change. It cannot be only a question of knowing when and how all European countries will be able to benefit from the stimulating effect and the advantages of a large market. Our times are too much dominated by a new mercantilism and young Europeans expect more from us. Will we avoid the issue? I am asking you.

Let us not be misled. Beyond triumphant nationalism and wholesale individualism, ethics are back in force. Progress in science makes it unavoidable. Up to what point, for example, will we accept genetic engineering? We need an ethical code for life, which means promoting our concept of the human person and the latter's integrity. Nature, pillaged or sometimes neglected, comes back to us like a boomerang in the form of worrying breakdowns and disruptions. We also need an ethical code to govern relations between

man and nature. When millions of young people knock without success at the door of adult society, notably to claim their place in professional life, when millions of retired people — who are still active — are pushed aside and denied any real participation in social life, the following question arises: what kind of society are we building? A society based on exclusion?

Let us remember that Europe has always been the continent of concern and hence questioning, seeking a humanism geared to its time, which is at the origin of ideas which are still shaping the world.

Yes, it is time to go back to our ideal, to be fully conscious of it, through each of our actions in the field of politics, economics, social and cultural affairs, let us continue to investigate what can enable each man, each woman to flourish, in full awareness not only of his or her rights, but also of their duties vis-à-vis others and society as a whole. Let us strive to constantly re-establish human collectivities in which the individual is able to live and develop, and to grow through exchanges and cooperation with others.

Of course, as soon as we will cross the threshold of humanism, there will be a debate amongst the Europeans. Certain concepts will come into conflict, but syntheses will emerge for the greater good of democracy and of Europe since the Community, and I repeat this, is a concept full of meaning.

“Where there is no big vision, the people perish” Jean Monnet used to say, endorsing Roosevelt’s dictum.

II. The Community, a concept full of meaning

We live, in that respect, a unique adventure. We build, obviously by making reference to principles inherited from historical experience, but in conditions so particular that the model as well will be unique, without historical precedents.

We owe much to the strength of our Institutions, since we are a Community of laws. We only succeed through the common and lucid exercise of sovereignty.

The strength of a Community of laws

Let us meditate for a while about the strength of our Institutions, starting with legitimacy without which — previous experiments of unity between States demonstrate this by default — it is possible neither to progress nor to last.

Within the Community, History’s progress is not disguised, treaty provisions are there, duly ratified by the national parliaments, the expression of national wills. The Court of Justice plays an irreplaceable role in settling differences of interpretation. The European Council, which has now been written into the Treaty, allows Heads of State and Government to assess progress and to note delays or gaps in the contract that binds and commits us. It may provide impulses and make corrections. And the European Commission — and this is new — makes it its duty to submit to the European Council assessments of actions taken and of prospects for further progress. The Commission takes seriously the communiqués released by the European Council and never fails to remind the Twelve of the commitments that were made. In this manner, the Community differentiates itself, more and more clearly, from these international fora from which emerge resolutions full of good intentions which, alas!, are seldom implemented.

Yes, as regards a current question, the Commission takes very seriously the often reiterated will of the European Council to eliminate internal frontiers — physical, technical and fiscal — and thus to offer to Europe’s citizens a large area for trade, encounters and partnership. The same holds true for the will, already expressed twice, to implement Economic and Monetary Union or to give more bite to the social dimension of the Community. This is also what is meant by legitimacy: to take seriously what the European Council says.

However, the strength of our Institutions is also measured by their effectiveness. In this respect, we can never stress sufficiently the genius of those who drafted the Treaty of Rome. What a requirement for

whoever refers to the spirit of that Treaty!

For the Commission first of all, in the duty it has to enforce the rules, to act as the guardian of the commitments given, to implement the Council's decisions, provided the latter supplies it with the necessary means. From that point of view, we are still far from the mark and more precisely from the goals set by the Single Act. But most importantly, the European Commission fully assumes its responsibilities through its right of initiative. And everybody recognizes its merit in proposing, in due time, the objectives, the ways and the means of the relaunch of European construction.

The European Commission intends to carry on with the same dynamism, provided it is able to reflect and to imagine the possible futures. Let us be clearly understood. The Commission must never become intoxicated by the extent of its powers. It rigorously applies the subsidiarity principle. It must also not ignore the conditions for a dynamic compromise between the Twelve, and it must strive therefore to better understand each people and each nation. It draws lessons from its efforts and never tires in its search for consensus. To summarize, it must have the courage to say no each time somebody wants to ignore the spirit or the letter of the Treaty. But also the courage to withdraw, when required, for the benefit of the cause of Europe.

This strength of the law, this democratic whole getting stronger, is in turn illustrated by the European Parliament. There is a debate, I know, on the democratic deficit and, let there be no doubt about it, the powers of the Strasbourg Assembly will soon be strengthened. In the meantime, however, how could we not mention the growing influence exercised by the European Parliament, in its present form, on the course of European construction? I am asking you: would it have been as easy to convene the intergovernmental conference which resulted in the Single Act if the European Parliament had not brought all its weight to bear, on the basis of the draft Treaty it adopted at the initiative of this great European, Altiero Spinelli?

This Community of laws is the envy of many people, which is why it has become a beacon. This institutional structure which enables each member country, whatever its size or strength, to have its say, to make its contribution to the construction of the common house, what a reference it provides for the Eastern European nations! These nations and many others all over the world admire the practical realizations of the plural democracy that we conduct, in common, in both movement and progress.

Seeing this, who would still dare ask us to dilute these institutions into a wider whole of intergovernmental inspiration? It would be like giving up something for nothing, it would be a tragic error for Europe and for the Community.

The success of this Community of laws has not, however, put an end to disputes on sovereignty. We thus need to have a frank explanation.

The joint exercise of sovereignty

A purely dogmatic approach would lead us nowhere. It would only exacerbate the difficult discussions that await us, and make more complicated the lifting of the last obstacles on the road to the 1992 objective.

The facts are there; they must lead each nation to reflect upon the concrete limits of its margins of manoeuvre and autonomy in the world we live in. Whether the question is the growing interdependence of economies, the globalization of the financial sphere (which current events are bringing home to us), or the existing or growing weight of the main actors on the world scene, all this translates into a dual requirement.

In the first place, nations must unite when they feel close to one another through geography, history, essential goals ... and also necessity.

In the second place, or rather at the same time, cooperation must increasingly develop at world level to deal notably with international trade, the monetary system, under-development, but also the environment or the fight against drugs.

The two ways are not in competition, but rather complement each other. Indeed, in order to exist at world level, in order to influence developments, it is not enough to display the signs of power; the assets of power are needed, i.e. the means of generosity, without which there can be no far-reaching policy.

Europe, however, does not yet weigh much even if, as I underlined earlier, our economic upturn impresses our partners and reassures the Europeans. The origin of our shortcomings is clear. It resides in the fiction — deliberately perpetuated — of full sovereignty, and consequently of the absolute effectiveness of national policies.

The answer, captured in a one-liner, is well known: to speak with one voice. It is in reality more than a formula, it is a way of being brought about by our Institutions and justified by the results achieved in those fields for which we accepted the common exercise of sovereignty. The contrary argument only confirms this analysis. Just think, while the Treaty provides for a common trade policy, about the latter's gaps. They can often be explained by the "go-it-alone" actions of certain countries or by a poor assessment of their own best interests. Or think also about our powerlessness to contribute decisively to the solution of the problems of indebtedness and under-development. While it is clear that an action undertaken truly in common would have the strength to move the mountains of egoisms and hegemonies.

May I remind you here of what Sir Geoffrey Howe declared on 19 July last:

"The sovereign nations of the European Community, sharing their sovereignty freely (...), are building for themselves a key role in the power politics of the coming century".

And very naturally we come back to our Institutions. Each of us remembers the debates about the Community decision-making process which paralysed the Community in the 1960s, and which resulted in the Luxembourg pseudo-compromise. Since the adoption of the Single Act, a dynamic process was established thanks to the extension of the voting procedure at qualified majority. Sometimes the Council votes, sometimes it considers it wiser not to force certain Member countries into the minority and thus it adopts, without a vote, such or such decision. Thanks to this institutional progress, the Community is taking giant steps towards the single market and is strengthening its rules and common policies. To a benefit of just a few? No, to the benefit of all, in a kind of positive sum game.

In other words and to simplify, for the combination "inequality — unanimity — immobilism" — we substituted another combination, that of success: "equality — majority — dynamism".

It will be necessary to draw all the lessons from this experience when the time comes to once again improve our institutional scheme.

In any case, this deadline cannot be too far removed. Indeed, Economic and Monetary Union, because of its very goals, is at the crossroads between economic and political integration. What is it, if not the political completion of the convergence of economies? It perfectly illustrates the common exercise of sovereignty since a single market for capital and financial services requires, in our world dominated by the financial sphere, a monetary policy coordinated enough and strong enough to enable us to derive the benefits of the large area thus created. Barring this, we run the risk of being confronted with the uncertainties derived from international speculation and the instability of dominant currencies.

Monetary Union is only acceptable and possible if parallel progress is made towards increased economic convergence, so as to ensure coherence between the various policies and their use in the service of the commonly defined goals. Consensus exists on economic expansion in stability, a qualitatively better and job-creating growth. These goals, under our democratic rules, can only be defined by political authorities mandated by our citizens. It is therefore important to combine the independence of the monetary power, which is the guarantor of the stability objective, the indispensable subsidiarity to allow each nation to conduct its policy in fields which remain its own, and lastly the control of the people's elected representatives, through the European Parliament, the governments and the national parliaments.

Let us proclaim it once again before some people try to lead us astray: Economic and Monetary Union has been decided. Two European Councils confirmed it. The report of the committee of experts, which I chaired, represents an essential basis for discussion, as stated by the European Council. What remains is the construction of the institutional scheme that will abide by the principles that I have just recalled, and be adapted to the Community's new tasks.

At the heart of the reflection and the debates about to be initiated on that point is the issue of subsidiarity. The principle is clear; what remains in this case is the definition of the implementing arrangements. The report already referred to about Economic and Monetary Union is precise about the subject. A monetary decision-making centre defines a common policy, for domestic as well as outside use, but its federal structure guarantees that each national central bank takes part in the collective decision and applies, at its level and with substantial margins of manoeuvre, the guidelines jointly adopted. The Council of Ministers works towards the convergence of the ends and means of economic policy, but each nation retains the necessary resources to finance the policies it decides in the areas of external or internal security, justice, education, health, social assistance schemes, land planning and more. It has available for these objectives about 95% of its public finance since the Community budget remains, in any case, limited to the financing of the common policies, ranging from agriculture to cooperation programmes in the area of research and technology, from aid for developing or distressed regions to other common policies that remain to be developed such as for example the environment and, maybe tomorrow, the infrastructure required for the efficient functioning of our market. All these interventions could not exceed 5% of total public expenditures in the Community.

What remains, after these explanations reduced to their essential aspects, of the complaints heard against the excessive centralization that would result from Economic and Monetary Union? Where is the idea of dirigism in this scheme? In fact, realistically applied subsidiarity fully overcomes these criticisms. If there is a debate, and there should in fact be one, it is certainly preferable for it to focus on what Economic and Monetary Union will contribute, in economic and social terms, to the benefits expected from the large market without frontiers. And mostly, at a time when certain political leaders seem to hesitate between the internal strengthening of the Community and its dilution into a vaster structure, Economic and Monetary Union turns out to be the only way to reinforce European construction and to ensure its political dynamism.

The full and unrestricted acceptance of pluralism

The acceptance of the subsidiarity principle implies the respect of pluralism and thus of diversities. This can be verified, in addition to the clarifications supplied concerning Economic and Monetary Union, through what is called the Community's social dimension.

We know it: our twelve countries have various traditions in the field of industrial relations. Gaps between living standards remain quite important, even though it is the stated objective of our common policies to reduce them gradually: there is thus no question of hastening an upwards movement nor, on the contrary, of bringing about social dumping. Lastly, governments' guidelines are different and, in some cases, opposed.

It is therefore quite difficult, in such conditions, to make the social dimension progress. But the difficulty is just as serious when the issue is regional development or land planning, or even environmental protection, which requires agreement on common standards.

In fact, the social dimension is present in all our deliberations and in all our actions. I can list the following: the return of competitiveness and the cooperation established regarding our macroeconomic policies to reduce unemployment and give each young European the professional opportunities he or she deserves; the common policies whose objectives are to ensure the development of the poorest regions or the reconversion of regions experiencing industrial mutations; the concentration of European action on two priorities of employment policy, i.e. the insertion of young people into active life and the fight against long-term unemployment; the priority given to the development of our rural regions threatened by the disappearance of farms, desertification and demographic imbalances.

What a fantastic progress it would be for our values of democracy and social justice if we managed to demonstrate our capacity to jointly succeed in building a more harmonious society, which would be more accessible to all.

In this context, three controversial topics also deserve to be clarified.

The charter of social rights, first of all. Its only objective is to solemnly repeat that the Community does not intend to subordinate fundamental workers' rights to economic efficiency alone. Who could oppose such an idea, which is common to our social traditions? Who could contest the political and pedagogical significance of such a message for the People's Europe, for the man in the street? When the time comes to translate these principles into the realities of laws or collective bargaining agreements, the subsidiarity principle will fully apply and enable the full respect of existing diversities. Anybody will be able to verify this by reading the Commission's social programme, to be implemented within the strict framework of the present Treaty.

The European company statute, to continue. This project illustrates, better than any other, the indispensable coherence between the economic and social aspects. Our companies need a legal framework, optional of course, which facilitates their cooperation and rapprochement, in order to be better able to meet the challenge of the large market and international competition. However, it is not possible to establish a European law in this area by forgetting totally one of the two actors of the company. I mean of course the wage earner and his place in the organizational process of work and production. Here as well, the Commission has abided by the principles of subsidiarity and diversity. Three models are offered, each with all the required flexibility, corresponding to the three major orientations — I was about to say, more precisely, to the three major inspirations — of the social policies implemented today in our twelve countries.

Lastly, the social dialogue that I relaunched, in 1985, at European level, and which is having difficulty prospering. It can be explained essentially by the diversity of positions defended by the parties: employers as well as trade unions. The problem confronting them is the same as the one I have just illustrated in the two previous examples. How to reconcile our diversities and the will to give a specific content to this social dialogue and to make of it an element of impetus towards European construction. Let us not expect miracles from the Commission's action. The latter proposes themes for the debate conducted between the social partners, it strives to stimulate joint reflection, but in no case does it want to infringe upon the autonomy of the social partners, which is a basic principle, a principle shared by our twelve countries.

Here as well, the Commission refuses to set off a train of insidious events which would lead the Member States where they have no desire to go. Allow me to repeat it: we are a Community of laws, we work in the respect of our rules and in full transparency. This is in any case the first condition for success.

It is important for everyone to recognize this in good faith. If, in order to find valid solutions, I draw on the principles of Federalism, it is precisely because the latter offers all the desired guarantees for the respect of pluralism as well as for the effectiveness of the institutional structure that is being built. Two essential rules must be recalled at this point: — the rule of autonomy which safeguards the distinct personality of each Member State and wards off any temptation towards unification by stealth. — the rule of participation which refuses the subordination of one unit to another, but which, on the contrary, favours cooperation and synergies, under clear and precise provisions, guaranteed by the Treaty.

From here a novel experience unfolded, which defies any analogy with other models, such as for example the creation of the United States of America. For my part, I have always rejected such a parallelism, since I know that we have to unite, between them, old nations which have their own traditions and their own personality. There is thus no plot against the nation, and nobody is requested to give up legitimate patriotism. For my part, I not only want to unite peoples, as wished by Jean Monnet, but also to associate nations. As the Community develops, and as our governments insist on the need to also build the People's Europe, is it really a sacrilege to wish for each European to have the feeling of belonging to a Community which, in a way, would be his or her second motherland? If this is rejected, then the European construction will collapse, the unfeeling monsters will once again prevail because our Community will have failed to inspire more feeling and win the people's hearts; unless it does this, any human adventure is doomed to

failure.

III. The Community, a reference for Europe as a whole

The Community, because of its success, is wooed from all sides. It cannot continue to turn a deaf ear to these appeals without denying its vocation of universality. However, here as well, what to do is inseparable from how to do it.

And yet, History does not wait

History will not wait for the Single Act to be applied in full before it knocks at our door.

African, Caribbean and Pacific countries worry that the Community might focus too much on the greater Europe, and therefore neglect the strengthening of cooperation within the future Lomé Conventions.

Our neighbours from Northern Africa are creating the Union of the Arab Maghreb in the image of European construction and firmly intend to remind us how much they need an active partnership with the Community. Purely demographic forecasts incite us anyway to thoroughly reflect upon coexistence conditions between the two banks of the Mediterranean.

Latin and Central America also turn to the Community, not only as a reference framework for relations between that continent's countries, but also to ask for the more active presence of a Europe whose blood they share.

In Asia and the Pacific, Europeans are in demand, albeit less so. However, by neglecting these countries as we tend to do, do we not waste economic opportunities and, even worse, do we not allow dangerous imbalances in terms of influence to become established?

Here as well, what can each European nation do separately? Wallow in the nostalgia of its faded grandeur? It could, but this is just another illustration of the encumbrances of misunderstood national sovereignty. While the European Community can, since it is a reference, since it calls for a presence, meet the expectations of other peoples. There is one condition, however: the Community must strengthen and give itself the means of its ambitions.

In parallel, it is a more assertive Community that may offer, as I have proposed, a global partnership with the United States, the only way to better grasp the upheavals shaking the world, to fight against the disorders of our international economy and request from the new great power, Japan, that it shares with North America and Europe the burden of world responsibilities.

The other historic challenge, the churning of Europe

Events are accelerating, new perspectives are opening up, the Community is challenged, in Europe itself.

Let us remember the membership applications of Turkey and Austria. Others will follow, let there be no doubt about it.

The countries belonging to the European Free Trade Association want to take full advantage of the benefits of the large market. This is why we are seeking with them, on the basis of the proposals I made on 18 January, the bases of another contract which would establish the European Economic Entente. A contract which would probably be less demanding than the one defined by our Treaties, but which would nevertheless allow us to strengthen our economic and political ties. We have so many common problems to resolve, starting with that of transport infrastructures, the lack of which is the source of multiple difficulties. This is why the time has come, I believe, to propose a major programme of railway and road networks which would make it possible to travel more easily, and without ecological risk, from Copenhagen to Athens, or from Hamburg to Rome, passing through Switzerland, Austria and Yugoslavia. This would seal our common

interests and our solidarities.

Lastly and mostly, Communist Europe is exploding under our very eyes. Gorbachev launches perestroika and glasnost. Poland and Hungary undertake political reforms aimed at more freedom and democracy. East Germany (the GDR) is shaken by the flight of tens of thousands of its citizens who take refuge in the Federal Republic of Germany. The contagion of freedom has now reached Leipzig and East Berlin.

In 1984 already, François Mitterrand, addressing the European Parliament, foreshadowed a radical new situation in Europe. "It is clear, he said, that the time when Europe's only destiny was to be shared and divided by others is receding. The two words of European independence have now a new resonance. This, I am sure, will be remembered by our century which is nearing its end."

Like many European leaders have already stressed, it is the European Community, a Community of laws, a democratic structure, a dynamic economy which acted as an example and a catalyst for these developments. It is not the West which is drifting towards the East, but rather the East that is attracted by the West.

Will the European Community be up to tomorrow's tasks? This is the question that must be asked already today, whether it concerns helping the economic modernisation of the Eastern countries, which is the essential condition for the success of their political reform, or whether it concerns also the need to address, in due time, the German question. In other words, the right of self-determination should apply to all.

If we refuse to consider these new challenges, then I am not afraid of saying it, not only will we fail our responsibilities, but the Community itself will be split or will see its impetus stopped by the weight of unresolved internal contradictions.

Faced with such events, I find that too many people are embittered, too many thoughts fatalistic, and too many wills shackled by resignedness. May I remind them, as regards the German question, of this fundamental statement made by H. D. Genscher:

"A people like the German people, in the heart of Europe, must never appear as an obstacle to the prosperity of the European peoples as a whole. On the contrary, it must behave in such a manner that its existence is viewed as a benefit for the whole, or even as a necessity. It is the surest guarantee of its existence."

How can we prepare ways towards a solution, if not by strengthening certain federalist traits of the Community which may offer, to all, the guarantee of their own existence, to paraphrase the formula of the German Foreign Minister. I am convinced that there is the only acceptable and satisfactory answer to the German question.

Europe's destiny

How could we discharge our international responsibilities, while at the same time facilitating the emergence of the greater Europe, if not by an accelerated deepening of Community construction? Only a strong Community, sure of itself, more homogeneous and more resolute, can truly be the master of its own destiny.

History is accelerating. We must accelerate as well.

In order to adapt our Institutions to this new deal, we cannot afford to dodge the issue of Economic and Monetary Union. The question is not to unrealistically shorten the time required to test a deeper cooperation and then to go through the successive stages. What we cannot afford to delay is the political decision which will spark the dynamism required to ensure the success of the process and to set up the institutions capable of meeting the demands of our external responsibilities.

To that effect, it seems to me that the Strasbourg European Council should adopt the decisions needed to enable the new treaty to be adopted and later ratified by the national parliaments before the end-of-1992 deadline, fixed for the completion of the large market without frontiers. Without such a commitment, I fear

that the preparation of Economic and Monetary Union and the success of the first stage will suffer from a manifest lack of dynamism. We need a commitment to results. Such is the lesson of events.

I have always been a practitioner of the policy of small steps — as evidenced by the unfolding current experience. I stray from it somewhat today, because our time is limited. A qualitative leap is required, both concerning our concept of the Community and our modes of external action. It is imperative to overcome all the resistance we meet, if only to adapt the instruments we have available in order, for example, to improve, by enriching it, the Lomé Convention, or to make a success of our programme of aid to Poland and Hungary. We must open our markets more to countries which have a vital need to export, rather than increasing their indebtedness. We must have available financial instruments which may contribute to the adaptation and modernisation of their economies.

I am deeply convinced that we will not succeed with our current practices of deliberation and decision-making: the Council, the Parliament and the Commission constitute obviously a more effective institutional triangle than it was a few years ago, thanks to the Single Act, but this is still insufficient to enable us to react to the accelerations of History.

I wish, for the honour of coming generations, that we will be able to repeat, within the coming two years, the very words spoken by another great European, Paul-Henri Spaak, when the Treaty of Rome was signed: “This time, Western men did not lack boldness and did not act too late”.

A new political impetus is required. The Commission is ready for it and will fully play its role of initiative. It will propose answers to the questions raised by this new leap forward that I summarize as follows: who decides and how are the various decision-making levels articulated (subsidiarity once again); who is in charge of implementation, with what means; who controls; what democratic apparatus is required?

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Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Truly, we live in exciting times, but also dangerous ones. The European Community’s challenge is to make a decisive contribution to the progress of our history.

Addressing an audience which includes a great majority of students, I find myself dreaming of a Europe freed of the chains of Yalta, of a Europe which invests in its immense cultural heritage, of a Europe stamping the mark of solidarity on a world often too harsh and too forgetful of that part of itself which suffers from under-development.

I tell these young people: you will be able, if we make a success of our Europe, to realize your full potential and to have space in which to blossom. Since you are invited to take part in a unique adventure, which brings together peoples and nations, for better and not for worse. In it you will rediscover your philosophical and cultural roots, which are as old as Europe itself. However, in order to do this, you must make a personal commitment and demand, from those who govern you, calculated boldness, fertile imagination, and a clear commitment to make of Europe a necessity for existence and an inspiration to act.”

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