

## Speech by Joseph Maria Laurens Theo Cals (The Hague, 14 October 1965)

**Caption:** In an address to the Second Chamber of the States General in The Hague on 14 October 1965, the Netherlands Prime Minister, Joseph Cals, calls for a rapid settlement to the empty chair crisis.

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[...]

I would now like to say a few words about certain aspects of the present crisis in the EEC and the course the government proposes to follow. First, however, I would like to associate myself with the opinion of the honourable representative, Mr. Nederhorst, who considers that the tension within the Community cannot be studied independently of the major problems of the Atlantic Alliance and of world politics. The action taken by member States illustrates this perfectly. Their action is so closely linked with their policy in the Atlantic Alliance, including their approach to the communist bloc, that it is impossible to treat the problems of the EEC separately. The honourable representative is certainly aware that the situation, which has been particularly disturbing since 30th June, has not yet improved. While the position was not yet clear on 30th June, there can no longer be any doubt, since the press conference by the President of the French Republic (it is nevertheless strange that there are no official statements on which we can base ourselves, on which we can rely) that fundamental aspects of the Community are involved. Perhaps I should even say that the whole question of European integration in the form which we knew and followed up to now, and which we want to continue to follow, is at stake. As Mr. Nederhorst said, it is a crisis for the whole system of western co-operation.

But, since it is evident that France through "written procedure", still intends to contribute to the preservation of what already exists, there is yet no reason to fear immediate signs of decomposition in the Communities. It is nevertheless clear that this ambiguous situation cannot continue for long. Unfortunately, it is conceivable that sooner or later the governments will find themselves in a position where they will have to recognise - if not *de jure*, at least *de facto* - that the Communities in their present form are no longer working.

[...]

A return to the previous situation is almost unthinkable in the economic field, but the institutional and political repercussions will certainly be most serious if the present deadlock continues.

In this context, the question arose as to whether and to what extent the five member States attending the Council meetings could consider they had the right to take legitimate decisions. This question is easier put than solved, particularly in the legal sense. But when the continuation of the Communities is really at stake - and I realise that outlook is not bright, but let us consider for an instant the worst that can happen - I believe a definite decision will also have to be taken on the use of these means, for the Rome Treaty could never have intended the existence of the Communities to be rendered impossible owing to the continued absence of one of its members at meetings.

Nevertheless, the government does not wish to accept such a dark outlook. That is why it is now trying to solve the difficulties which have arisen and, in particular, to have the interrupted talks resumed. I should like to break off here to speak about the recent suggestions for renewing the Brussels talks.

You are well aware, Mr. President, that this question was the principal feature of the conversations held at the "Catshuis" on 16th September between MM. Harmel, Spaak and Fayat, on the one hand, and my colleague in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Mr. de Block, and myself, on the other. During these conversations, consideration was given to the possibility (and it has since been discussed with the governments of the other member countries) of convening a meeting of Ministers for Foreign Affairs after the normal meeting on the 25th and 26th, if the situation concerning the French attitude did not change on 25th and 26th October ; I repeat : a meeting of the Council, not a discussion between the six Ministers for Foreign Affairs, but a meeting convened by the Chairman of the Council in the framework of the Communities, a meeting of the EEC Council in accordance with the rules of procedure, but without the Commission. There is explicit provision for this in the internal rules of procedure of the Council.

I should like to state formally that the Netherlands Government does not intend to discuss questions

specifically concerned with the EEC - and here I am thinking, of course, of the financial aspects of the agricultural market dealing with the execution and application of the Rome Treaty - in the absence of the Commission. As we all must recognise the European Commission remains the driving power behind the process of integration. Its task, which is obvious and indispensable, is set out in the treaty itself. In our opinion, to consider the Commission as a technical body intended merely to help the Council shows a complete misunderstanding of its rôle, absolutely no account being taken of the fact that no decisions can be taken other than through co-operation between the Council and the executive.

Mr. President, the object of such a meeting would be to provide us with an opportunity of forming a more exact opinion of France's wishes and conditions which, for the moment, are still vague. I already referred a moment ago to the way in which we were informed of them ; but the importance of such an attempt needs no further emphasis, and without this opinion it will not be possible to resume the reasonable discussion the government is seeking.

[...]

The government is and remains of the opinion that any form of attack on the Rome and Paris Treaties is unthinkable. We do not want to haggle or, proverbially, to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds.

[...]

The object of the government's European policy is the creation - I already referred to the community aspect a short time ago, but I repeat it now - of an open supranational Community within which parliamentary democracy will be able to carry out its appointed task to the full.

[...]