

Address given on the occasion of François Mitterrand's official visit to Portugal (Lisbon, 6 April 1987)

Caption: On 6 April 1987, during the official visit to Portugal by François Mitterrand, President of the French Republic, Mário Soares, Portuguese Prime Minister, delivers an address in which he emphasises the age-old relations between France and Portugal and the need to strengthen joint efforts within the European Economic Community (EEC).

Source: SOARES, Mário. *Intervenções*. Volume 2. Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda, 1988. p. 243-247.

Copyright: (c) Translation CVCE.EU by UNI.LU

All rights of reproduction, of public communication, of adaptation, of distribution or of dissemination via Internet, internal network or any other means are strictly reserved in all countries.

Consult the legal notice and the terms and conditions of use regarding this site.

URL:

http://www.cvce.eu/obj/address_given_on_the_occasion_of_francois_mitterrand_s_official_visit_to_portugal_lisbon_6_april_1987-en-9115c515-48dc-403d-a0do-e9a2b2153bb7.html



Last updated: 05/07/2016

Coordinating European efforts *

Your visit is the first one that a European Community Head of State has made to Portugal since we became full members of the EEC. When France held the Presidency of the EEC, it was also you who came to Portugal in person to announce the good news of our inclusion in the Community, at a time when many Portuguese were still doubtful. We have not forgotten the great significance of that important gesture.

I should like to begin these few words of welcome with a reference both to France, to which we are bound by such old, deep-seated and historical links of friendship, and to you yourself.

Your presence among us gives me the opportunity to greet you on behalf of the Portuguese people, not only as the leader of the French nation and the great European that you are but also as a friend of Portugal who, in the difficult days of the dictatorship and the troubled times of the April Revolution, never failed to show solidarity and to encourage us whenever we had to fight to defend freedom and democracy. And if I may pay due homage to the friendship on a personal note, I should also like to salute a friend of so many years whose qualities of intelligence, courage and sensitivity I admire so much as politician, statesman and intellectual.

Welcome to Portugal, President François Mitterrand, and all your colleagues whom we are very honoured to receive.

Mr President: You are visiting Portugal at a time when my country is striving to adapt to its new status as a member of the European Community, which all interested observers have acknowledged to be a serious task that is being undertaken with a strong Community spirit. The political stability enjoyed in Portugal today has contributed a great deal to this, after the difficult but exciting period devoted to consolidating the democratic system and the effort made in recent years to restore financial balance. This has given us the confidence to face the challenges inevitably raised by our status as EEC members. That this has been possible within just one single agitated decade in which we had to lay the ghosts of the past and hegemonic temptations from various quarters seems to me to be clear proof that the Portuguese long yearned for the democratic regime under which we live today and that they are not prepared to give up the freedoms they have won.

We have always seen our accession to the EEC, a natural counterpoint to decolonisation, as a means of reinforcing our democratic system, modernising our structures and expanding the boundaries of our external coexistence. We are convinced, just as we were in the past, that we can make a useful contribution to Europe by projecting the values that made our old continent the defender of freedom and social justice. In a world divided by conflicts of all kinds, one in which hegemonic temptations continue to arise, Europe must once again find the strength to play the role expected of it by the most unprotected nations on other continents: a mediatory role in the confrontation between the superpowers and in defending the interests of nations that wage a daily battle against underdevelopment and which suffer hunger, disease and cultural and technological backwardness. If this urgent mission is to be fulfilled, European states must overcome long-standing quarrels once and for all, put their energy and the inexhaustible creativity of their peoples at the service of common objectives and work decisively towards new forms of unity. I am one of those who believe in the ideas that inspired the founding countries of Europe and that cemented the peace and progress that our continent has experienced in recent decades. The European Community must not only be a common market, and much less a new way of evading inequality and imbalances. It must instead be an area of solidarity and economic and social cohesion. The institutional reforms taking place, given fresh impetus by President Delors' European spirit, must be warmly welcomed. The Single Act was an important milestone on the path towards European integration, but if we wish to achieve the objective of establishing an internal market in 1992, we must not allow ourselves to be discouraged or opportunities to be squandered merely because of national egoism. The diversity of cultures, habits and traditions which characterise the nations of Europe will enrich the Community and provide it with instruments that will help it to project its values worldwide. The historical bonds that link some Community countries to other continents where they sowed the seeds of their culture and language — as did Portugal, which is commemorating the 500th anniversary of the Portuguese voyages of discovery this year — represent a valuable factor for drawing together new complementary qualities and new means of cooperation. Coordination is also required to avoid any duplication of effort and wasteful rivalry.

Mr President: Relations between Portugal and France go back for centuries and have almost always been marked by a happy coincidence of interests and by the sharing of common cultural values. In times of internal persecution, when they were gagged by severe and irrational censorship, the Portuguese were always generously received in France, where they were able to exercise the creativity of free men. I am one of those who were able to benefit from that tangible expression of fraternity represented by the asylum granted to political refugees. Many thousands of Portuguese people went to France in search of better working conditions when their native land was harsh and unrewarding and the authorities insensitive to their concerns and needs. France is still home to a huge Portuguese community whose labour contributes to the economic progress of the country that welcomed them and which has created, side by side with the French people, very satisfying and lasting forms of relationship. It is as if those Portuguese people, whom I have heard you praise highly on many occasions with great pride, were the advance guard of the modern European Portugal which is the country you are visiting today. I firmly believe that their work and their qualities fully entitle them to the recognition and respect with which they are treated in France, being members as they are today of the People's Europe that we must create.

Mr President: Europe will never be a driving force in the modern world unless the spirit of solidarity that must underpin its integration is also reflected in the field of political cooperation in all areas of international life, particularly those in which the fundamental values of its ideology are at play and which involve legitimate interests of Community states. In this respect, I should like to refer to the problem of Indonesia's occupation of Timor, in flagrant breach of the most basic rights of that territory's citizens and with scandalous disregard for the rules of international coexistence laid down in the United Nations Charter. I am pleased to see that the repeated appeals that Portugal has made to the international community in condemning this situation are beginning to bear fruit. France, as the cradle of liberty and fraternity, has to be with us, since only in this way will it be on the side of right and justice.

In defence and security too, as well as in science and technology, coordinated European effort is vital if we are to avoid losing the energy and dissipating the resources which are essential for ensuring European participation in the collective endeavour which, with the United States, we must make to preserve our own cultural values and to fight for the advancement of all humanity. Such advancement cannot be achieved while uneven development and unequal rights continue to prevail in the world. They must, therefore, be eliminated urgently in the name of solidarity and justice. The situation is particularly disturbing in South Africa, where the apartheid regime continues to engender humiliation and violent confrontation. Portugal, which has enjoyed a long-standing personal relationship with the countries of southern Africa, is closely monitoring developments in that region and has done its utmost to convince those who continue along the road of discrimination and injustice of the error of their ways. Mozambique and Angola, countries which have suffered particularly severely from South Africa's destabilising actions, deserve the international community's full support so as to enable them to restore peace in their territories and to begin a new era as sovereign states which are genuinely free of foreign influence. Here, too, the role of Community Europe can and must be paramount.

Mr President: On the eve of the dismantling of the remaining barriers to trade and industrial and technological cooperation, an even broader field in bilateral relations between France and Portugal is now opening up. I am certain that in the future we shall maintain the fraternal relations that have characterised the history of our two nations. It is to that excellent relationship that I should like to raise my glass, in a toast in which I should like all those who are present here today to join me. I drink to the traditional friendship between the French and Portuguese peoples, to the progress and strengthening of Europe and to the personal happiness of you, Mr President, and Mrs Danièle Mitterrand.

* Address delivered on 6 April 1987, on the occasion of the President of the French Republic's official visit to Portugal.