

Address given by Nicolas Hommel on the occasion of the departure of Paolo Massimo Antici (Brussels, 1 March 1978)

Caption: Address delivered by Nicolas Hommel, Secretary-General of the Council of the European Communities from 1973 to 1980, on 1 March 1978 in Brussels on the occasion of the departure of Paolo Massimo Antici, Deputy Permanent Representative of Italy. In his address, Nicolas Hommel pays tribute to Mr Antici's work in the service of the Community and recalls the circumstances in which the 'Antici Group', a procedural innovation named after the Italian diplomat, was institutionalised.

Source: Allocutions, messages de fin d'année de Monsieur Nicolas Hommel, Secrétaire Général du Conseil des Communautés Européennes, 1973-1980. [s.l.]: [s.d.].

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MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE OF PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVES (I)

Brussels, 1 March 1978

Departure of Paolo Massimo Antici
Deputy Permanent Representative of Italy

Mr President,

Following a tradition that has now become one of Coreper's many unwritten rules of all kinds, I am happy to be present at this ceremony so that I may say to you, Mr Antici, in my personal capacity and also on behalf of my colleagues in the Secretariat, how sorry we are that you are leaving and pay tribute to the valuable contribution that you have made to the European Community for so many years.

Over the years, you have become a familiar and friendly figure in this big Community family. You have been coming here for many years. You have made a lot of friends because you were, quite simply, liked for your kindness, courtesy and decency. All those who have had the privilege of working with you and relaxing with you off duty will have happy memories of that.

We are going to miss you in future, but, fortunately, you will still be with us because of a procedural innovation that is named after you. I know that you are too modest to claim the credit for it, but this name, based on a combination of different elements, is nonetheless a well-deserved tribute to your many years of work for the Community and your remarkable skills. Your departure will deprive us of your personal contribution to the ambiance, the atmosphere, of what we might call the Coreper club. It will be a source of much regret, which will certainly be mutual. But the work of the Antici Group, now very much an institution, will give you the assurance and, I think, also the satisfaction of 'going down in history' and will bring back memories of the collegial atmosphere in the group and the gastronomic pleasures that the group sometimes enjoyed during its work.

But it is not this emotional and human aspect that is most important; it is the contribution that you have been able to make to our Community. You have played an important role for two reasons.

One is your own character, as it has developed in the course of your career. In the first few years, you witnessed the Hungarian drama in 1956 at first hand. That must have strengthened your feeling and belief that only a united Europe could face up to the danger that you were witnessing. Whilst working in Luxembourg, you were in close contact with what was, at the time, the stronghold of the European idea. You then experienced supranationality and its limits as Chef de Cabinet to Mr Martino in the Commission. That almost ideological background in European affairs made you particularly well suited for the role of a Permanent Representative, which is to reconcile national aspirations with fulfilment of the commitments and obligations entered into under the Treaties.

The other reason is that the Italian Permanent Representation plays a particularly important and influential role with the authorities in the definition of European policy. The communication difficulties created by geographical distance, the fact that, in Italy, the political scene is more often gloomy than in other countries and also the fact that government coordination is less formal and rigid than elsewhere mean that the Permanent Representation has greater discretion, autonomy and latitude in Coreper negotiations. As a result, both the Italian Permanent Representative and his Deputy are able to give wider and freer expression to their Community beliefs.

Consequently, Coreper has been fortunate to have in you a man ideologically and professionally well suited for his task and lucky enough to have more latitude than some to give free expression to his Community beliefs in seeking a compromise. However, I would not be doing full justice to your work if I did not mention your

considerable diplomatic skill. That skill has always remained one of your strengths because it has never gone so far as to impair your credibility.

I should like to say that you were particularly understanding towards the Secretariat and, what is more important, you had absolute respect for its two fundamental requirements, its objectivity and its independence. My dear friend, the whole of the Secretariat will always appreciate that diplomatic approach.

I and all the Secretariat officials who have had the privilege and pleasure of working with you wish you every success in your future career, which will take you to Rome, to a senior position worthy of your considerable experience and talents. Thank you, Mr President.