

Address given by Klaus Meyer following the resignation of Christian Calmes (Bruxelles, 14 June 1973)


Caption: On 14 June 1973, Klaus Meyer, Secretary-General of the Commission of the European Communities, delivers an address following the resignation of Christian Calmes, who had been Secretary-General of the Council for 21 years. In his address, he outlines the key role played by Christian Calmes in the establishment of the Secretariat-General and thanks him for the establishment of effective cooperation between the two institutions.

Source: Allocutions prononcées à l'occasion de la cessation de fonctions de S.E. Monsieur le ministre plénipotentiaire Christian Calmes, Secrétaire Général du Conseil des Communautés Européennes. Bruxelles: Secrétariat général du Conseil, 15.06.1973. "III: M. Klaus Meyer, Secrétaire General Adjoint de la Commission des Communautés Européennes", p. 5-7.

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Klaus Meyer,
Deputy Secretary-General of the Commission of the European Communities

Secretary-General, Mr Calmes,
Gentlemen,

We have found ourselves having to adopt something of a routine for saying farewell over recent months, especially in the Commission, but your departure in particular, Mr Calmes, will undoubtedly have a very significant impact. We are parting company not only with one of the European institutions' most senior and most experienced officials but also with a European in whose life, profession and conviction have been inseparable features. You may now retire, dear friend, safe in the knowledge that what you created will continue, even though you will no longer be at the helm. And that is, in my view, one of the most significant hallmarks of a truly great achievement. Without the instrument that you yourself shaped, the Council could not have adopted or implemented the host of decisions that it took, both major and minor. And the one absolute requirement for it to carry out its work was, and still is, the instrument that you developed. And that, incidentally, becomes really apparent when you see other bodies in the Community of Nine that do not, as yet, benefit from having a secretariat of that kind.

Even the Council Secretariat was designed, in its infancy, on a very small scale. As I have resisted the temptation to quote passages from literature or political classics, allow me instead to quote, rather prosaically, from a *Note Verbale* dated 29 August 1952 from the Federal Republic of Germany to the Netherlands Foreign Ministry. It reads: 'With regard to the Secretariat of the Council of Ministers, Federal Chancellor Adenauer intends to propose to the Council of Ministers that the Government of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg be requested provisionally to appoint a suitable head. Since the Secretariat's work will be restricted to technical functions, it seems sufficient and expedient to appoint a relatively young man who will be familiar with the local conditions.' Those modest origins, as you, Mr Calmes, are best placed to know, were very soon radically altered. Only one thing remained constant: a suitable man was appointed as head of the Secretariat, initially for just six months, albeit with an option to renew the term of office on expiry. From those modest origins, you went on to create a highly efficient instrument that ran smoothly and almost perfectly around the clock, from the highest strategic functions right down to the purely practical functions, and all this without ever having a genuine setback to speak of. You let your creation speak for itself. You always put your job before yourself. Furthermore, you always showed a heartening neutrality and objectivity, even though, or precisely because, you often stood at the intersection of major conflicts of interests and political clashes. Without those special qualities, the Council Secretariat could not have become what it is today, and the Secretary-General could not have acquired the great authority and independence that you were able to bring to the position. It is with a very heavy heart that your colleagues bid you farewell. In spite of your Herculean workload each and every day, you have still managed to be an exemplary and successful father to your children, which again is testament to the human capacity of your personality.

The Commission is also especially sorry to see you go because you had a clear idea of how work should be divided between the Council and the Commission and because, with you in charge, there was no quibbling over role and function between the Commission or Commission departments and Council services. You understood from the outset that the good of the Community is best served if the two institutions perform the tasks laid down for them by the Treaty. On a general note, the Commission would like to thank you for your invaluable contribution to the life of the Communities, and I should like to add a special note of thanks for that long-standing, exemplary and effective cooperation with the Commission. It just remains for me now, Mr Calmes, to extend to you my best wishes for this next stage in your life, as you carry on the family tradition in the roles of historian and Chamberlain for the Grand Duke, and best wishes, too, for your personal well-being and for that of your family.