

Address given by Willy Brandt to the European Parliament (Strasbourg, 13 November 1973)

Caption: On 13 November 1973, Willy Brandt becomes the first Head of Government of a Member State of the European Communities to address the European Parliament meeting in plenary sitting. The German Chancellor delivers an address in which he outlines his opinions on European integration. With regard to the European Communities, Brandt discusses, in particular, the establishment of a European Government and proposes a programme that must be implemented without delay.

Source: Official Journal of the European Communities. Debates of the European Parliament. 13.11.1973. [s.l.], p. 20-25.

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

The documents available on this Web site are the exclusive property of their authors or right holders.

Requests for authorisation are to be addressed to the authors or right holders concerned.

Further information may be obtained by referring to the legal notice and the terms and conditions of use regarding this site.

URL:

http://www.cvce.eu/obj/address_given_by_willy_brandt_to_the_european_parliament_strasbourg_13_november_1973-en-27b2333f-7ea1-4fc0-b908-756c562ccc6d.html

Publication date: 03/07/2013

Address given by Willy Brandt to the European Parliament (Strasbourg, 13 November 1973)

Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, may I first thank you for the welcome you have given me and also for the honour which the European Parliament has announced its intention of conferring on me.

A German Chancellor addressing the European Parliament on French soil—that is not an everyday constellation but an event which has its significance and which I am glad and very grateful to try and do justice to.

I regard this as an important stage which indicates to us how far Europe has progressed along the road to unification since the Second World War, and I should like to take this opportunity to discuss our views on the continued course of European unification before this knowledgeable Assembly. Yet, you more than anyone else have a right to hear from the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany about his Government's and people's attitude in the crisis of recent weeks.

The tragedy in the Middle East, which is so close to us not only geographically but also culturally and historically, require of me, I feel, to speak as a German and as a European.

The conflict in the Middle East has put the difficult undertaking of *détente to the test*. Certainly, the United States and the Soviet Union bear a special responsibility. But the conflict is also a challenge to Europe. What goes on in this agonized neighbouring region affects us directly. Europe must therefore, if it can, contribute towards solving that problem. And this it can only do in the closest of cooperation.

Last week for the first time ever the nine States of the Community set out their position in more detail in a joint paper drawn up by their diplomats. The fact that a certain measure of uniformity now lends weight to the European voice is ultimately also in the interest of the States directly involved in the conflict.

A choir of contradictory European voices is of no help to anybody. But political unity has its price. It demands the discarding of accents which some of the Member States would want to set more strongly than others ; this seems to be unavoidable. People will have to get used to this, with us and elsewhere.

Let us see last Tuesday's Resolution as an attempt to make a beginning and break a vicious circle by reasonable arguments. From here we can go on seeking ways and procedures for translating the resolution adopted by the Security Council into practical solutions.

With regard to German-Israel relations, nobody will be surprised if I say here too that they have a special character. This characteristic remains untouched. For us there can be no neutrality of the heart and the conscience. The Middle East conflict concerns us perhaps more than others; it appeals to our bitter responsibility. But it is for that very reason that we make ours the demand for equitable and durable peace in that region.

If we were allowed indifference we would have less cause to feel so deeply involved. The fact that we cannot be indifferent is also to the benefit of the Arab world, as I would strongly emphasize. For only a lasting peace settlement will make that region, now full of hostility, a viable area whose States will jointly contribute to the welfare of all.

The European Community could constructively participate in such regional cooperation, and I think we should be agreed about our readiness to do so.

This presupposes that the States of Europe and the States of the Middle East try to speak with each other. I have no doubt that the European Community will be prepared to do so; even now it maintains contractual relations with most of the States concerned.

However, threats and blackmail would only disturb constructive developments. This is not the way to make

friends—the following suggestion I make to the European Community deserves perhaps careful consideration.

Could the Community, by strengthening the instruments already provided for in the individual treaties, not improve the conditions for restoring peace in that region? I am having in mind food aid, support for the settlement of refugees, and the many and varied possibilities for cooperation which already exist and which we shall continue to seek.

For the benefit of the people in the Middle East the essential point is first to establish peace and then to stabilize it. Europe could help with both tasks.

Let me now speak on European unification and say something I would not have said in this way ten years ago: we can, and we will, create Europe!

(Applause)

We have had to put up with delays and setbacks. This has called for criticism, partly justified. Also from you, the members of the European Parliament. I understand that, and my Government endeavours to follow you advice as much as possible.

Yet it is true when I say that we have without doubt made progress, thanks not least to the impulses provided by the two summit conferences at The Hague and Paris.

We can, if only we want to, now set out on a new phase of the European journey. I am certain that European union will come, which is why I time and again appeal to our partners throughout the world to regard this as a fact and in this way to anticipate Europe's future, to take it for granted as of now, so to speak.

The move towards European union is indispensable. It alone will offer our people the scope their political, economic, social and cultural energies require. The unification of Europe is not merely a question of the quality of our existence. It is a question of survival between the giants and in the rugged world of the young and the old nationalisms.

Only in a Europe that has found its personality can we secure our national identities. The classical nation State belongs to yesterday. While —and maybe for long years to come—we may have to move in narrow fields, our future no longer lies in the isolation of the nation State.

Naturally, European union will not be the outcome of a revolution, of a sudden leap from the nation State to supra-nationality, nor from an uprooting of boundary posts or from a constitution brilliantly put on paper overnight.

Instead, we have been speaking of the European evolution—the constant, energetic developments in all those spheres already incorporated in the process of integration, and in the other spheres that are not officially considered 'integrated'. The sum of these measures will one day—probably sooner than some people think—swing the pendulum from quantity to the new quality.

We should shorten the time-limits we have set ourselves—be it for economic and monetary union, be it for what I have termed the social union, be it for political union. According to the Paris summit decision, the European union is to become a reality, within this very decade!

It is of decisive importance that on the road to European union we should have a proper sense of proportion. The proposal of the French President that the heads of Government of the Community should meet at regular intervals to discuss the internal and external problems connected with the growing union intensively and without the burden of a 'machinery' certainly is in keeping with that sense of proportion.

This proposal concurs very opportunely, by the way, with the intentions of my Government and with the

suggestions of the British Prime Minister. I take this initiative to mean that this body can develop into a kind of regular presidential conference and become an accepted notion of, indeed, a decisive step towards Political union.

Every step forward must be commensurate with the situation and with the necessities; it must equip the Community or the organs of political cooperation with the new powers needed for the fulfilment of the tasks which all agree must be fulfilled at the given time.

It is not so much a question of language than of concrete results. It is a matter of increasing the efficiency both within the Community and European Political Cooperation. The two must now work effectively together.

After twenty years of efforts to achieve European integration we should all by now have learned that the functional rather than the constitutional method is more likely to get us home. I do not mind if one calls this pragmatism. The goal is clear. It is, as I have put it from time to time, a sensibly organized European Government which in the fields of common policies will be able to take the necessary decisions and will be subject to parliamentary control.

(Applause)

The European States will transfer to that government those sovereign rights which in the future can only be effectively exercised together; the remaining rights will stay with the Member States.

In this way we shall both preserve the national identity of our peoples which is the source of their strength, and add the European identity from which fresh energies will ensue.

Such a European Government will be in charge of the economic and monetary community, the social community, perhaps also the educational community, definitely the community of foreign affairs, and—certainly with a cogent logic one day—the community of a security administered under European sovereignty.

One these spheres have become the responsibility of a European Government, a basic law also will obviously be required which will have to be approved by our citizens.

Up to now we have given them little opportunity to feel themselves to be what they have largely been for some time : citizens of Europe. We know from opinion polls that many of them, like us, regard European unity as the aim of political efforts. But we may have too rarely linked the European consciousness with their everyday lives. This I have pointed out time and again in recent years, if you permit me to say so.

It will be of vital importance for the Community to grow beyond economic cooperation and political organization to become the socially progressive region in the world. European integration must serve the people directly.

I do not mean simply a vague concept of life. Our citizens should physically feel that Europe improves their working and living conditions, that it has an effect on their everyday life. Europe must at long last remove the barriers in the form of frontier checkpoints or aliens law for the many hundreds of thousands who within the Community travel from one country to the other or avail themselves of the right of establishment.

One should not accept the fact that whilst barriers are being reduced the number of customs officers is being increased instead of diminished, *(Applause)* that customs regulations are becoming longer instead of shorter, more complicated instead of simpler.

(Applause)

If we give our national bureaucracies a European dimension then we shall be making a mistake.

(Applause)

It certainly is not the will of our people that we create a Europe in which we wander about like citizen K. in Kafkas's 'Schloss'.

This is where the political will should at long last carry the day over the many national administrative egoisms which may be justified individually but all in all can no longer be tolerated. What we want is a Europe of daily reason and of common sense and we must be prepared to state this and where necessary to act.

Mr President, my Government hopes that at the end of this year a new and clear step forward will be taken along the road to a European Government. This is what is required of us if we are to respect the decisions of the Paris Conference of October 1972.

The dramatic development on the international scene of recent weeks have demonstrated the inability of the European States to serve as a factor of peace and stabilization in the world as long as they are unable to act as one. People from other continents have felt perhaps more than we that in a world whose destiny cannot, and should not, be determined by two super powers alone, the influence of a united Europe has become indispensable.

In this 'year of Europe' the relationship between the Community and the United States should be defined, and after that, the relationship with Canada and Japan. At the same time the COMECON is seeking contact. A majority of African countries want association agreements, and considerable hopes are attached to European unification also in other parts of the world.

Special importance accrues to the definition of the relationship between uniting Europe and the United States of America. This will be a long-term process which will not come to an end before European union has been completed. We are linked by similar ideals. Our security interests are firmly interlocked through the Atlantic Alliance. America has always come out strongly in favour of European unification. Each of our nations will bring the experience of friendship into the Atlantic dialogue.

On the other hand, Europe has become self-confident and independent enough to regard itself as an equal partner in this relationship and it is as such that it must be accepted. Partnership cannot mean subordination. Partnership proves its value in the balance of interests, in their will jointly to settle their common problems, to fulfil their joint responsibilities by sensible agreement and in reliable mutual respect.

This, ladies and gentlemen, must become apparent in the declaration which is to lay a new foundation for the relations between the United States and the European Community. In this way we shall be meeting the requirement of the constructive dialogue as expressed in the resolutions of the Paris Conference and which my Government for one has been advocating. A consolidation of the Atlantic Alliance, which needs to be firmly anchored particularly during the phase of *détente*, will strengthen the common basis.

The practical importance of the Community for cooperation and communication with the East European States and the Soviet Union becomes evident already in the Geneva session of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. There and elsewhere our negotiating partners will notice in the daily work that the Community is not encapsulating itself as a 'bloc'.

All-European cooperation is not impaired by West European union. And West European unification must not be held up by all-European cooperation. That is not merely a realization of my Government, it is the attitude of the Community.

Challenges arising from new tasks for the Community can, as a rule, but promote the process of inner consolidation. European political cooperation will be having to stand a test in ever wider fields. The dynamism that is beginning to develop there calls for more intensive and broader consultations. The range of

subjects has to be constantly widened. Bilateral negotiations and plans of individual Governments in their relations with other world powers and the Third World should also be reviewed together with partner States.

The economic and monetary union of today is the prerequisite of European union of tomorrow. This is where progress must be fastest.

Having gone so much astray in the past years we must now at long last achieve a better harmonization of our cyclical policies, for this is the most important preliminary to common economic policy. A policy of stability cannot be effective or successful in isolation. Either we all submit to the fate of progressive inflation or we resolve to adopt a joint policy of resistance to the erosion of our currencies—and thus of the achievements of our citizens for which they have worked hard enough.

My government realizes that we shall not be able to achieve the transition to the second stage as proposed under the original programme by January 1974. The new stage should, I feel, come as close as possible to the content of the original second stage. It will not be enough just to make up the leeway. New decisions are needed, especially for the coordination of economic policy and monetary policy which places more precise obligation on us, and to bind Member States more closely to the economic guide-lines.

At the same time we should further develop the monetary mechanisms created by the Community. The regrettable fact that we are not yet all together in the so-called 'snake' should perhaps not keep us from taking limited decisions at the end of the year on currency support for all Members of the Community.

Economic and monetary union will only prove successful—this we all know—if the Community launches a joint effort patiently to even out the structural differences between Member States, and especially between individual regions of Member States. But the criteria for the promotion of regional projects must be so strict as to ensure that assistance is provided only where it will really serve the rehabilitation of the regions concerned.

Moreover, the Federal Government still regards the common agricultural policy as an important element of European unification and it will pursue any further development in this field in accordance with the agreed principles. In actual fact, for reasons I will not go into now, a larger measure of integration has been achieved with agricultural policy than with any other Community policy. We now have to catch up in the other spheres more rapidly than hitherto.

Taking agriculture itself, we must progressively stabilize markets to establish a better balance between supply and demand. Surpluses difficult to sell on world markets are poor evidence of a purposeful and successful European integration.

(Applause)

The Community must also participate in the development of a World Food Programme for it clearly shares responsibility for providing food for the developing countries.

The latest developments have drastically shown how very much we are dependent on mineral oil. Up to now we thought that the Community could afford the luxury of holding different views on the basis and instruments of a common energy policy. Today we know that a common line, precisely in this field, is literally vital. The threatening energy crisis shows that we are all in the same boat. I urgently appeal to the competent institutions of the Community to do everything within their means to mobilize cooperation. Not later than at the Conference of Heads of Government in Copenhagen must we clarify the state of European solidarity.

Before this Assembly, too, ladies and gentlemen, I would suggest that the financial behaviour in the Community be improved. As long as our citizens—sometimes wrongly—believe that the management of finances is more lax in the Community than in Member States they are unlikely to understand or approve of our allocating more funds to Brussels. As an instrument of control we need an unassailable machinery.

To name only a few salient points: more transparency, more responsibility for the competent commission Member, a European audit office and, last but not least, wider powers of control for the European Parliament.

(Applause)

This indicates the path we should follow.

Here I would urge speedy and effective decisions. I do know that the European Commission shares this concern, and I should like to thank them for their effort to make new, 'watertight', arrangements in this respect.

Our Community must also prove itself as a social union, although I do not want now to go into details of how this should be done. In the early years the time was perhaps not yet ripe for greater emphasis on social objectives reaching beyond national boundaries. For too long we have allowed social policy to be a mere appendix to competition. In the Community one seemed to regard social policy mainly as a problem of subsidies. Now we cannot and must not wait any longer. In Paris last year we gave the signal for building social union, and I wish to stick to it.

The European Union we want requires democratic legitimation, an economic basis and its own social policy aims. And there are several reasons for treating social integration as an element in itself: social progress must have the same rating as economic growth because in Europe too production and consumption can no longer be regarded as an end in themselves. They must directly serve the well-being of our European citizens. Only thus can Europe overcome the danger of technocracy.

I see these as being our clear objectives:

- to develop an active Community labour market policy;
- to overcome the problems of employment for certain categories by improving vocational education;
- to plan a social policy for migrant workers and coordinate it with third countries;
- to make a joint effort to ensure humane working conditions governed by common standards;
- to adjust social benefits in each Member States regularly and dynamically to its growing economic strength;
- to allow for participation and codetermination of workers in enterprises and establishments.

The Federal Government gives a high priority rating to the improvement of the Community's institutional basis. Here, too, the major decisions will no doubt only be taken in connection with the preparations for European Union. All the same, the institutions must be developed and improved in advance, keeping pace with substantive progress.

I referred earlier to President Pompidou's proposal for regular meetings of Heads of State or of Government. These meetings could generate decisive impulses—without giving the responsible institutions an excuse for inactivity. The Heads of State or of Government should at each meeting take stock and state as exactly as possible the extent of progress towards European unification in all fields, both in the Community and in political cooperation.

This Assembly brings together the representatives of the Member States of the European Community in accordance with the provisions of the Treaties of Rome and Paris. Having seats in their national parliaments, they have a clear democratic legitimation. Moreover, the treaties call for constituting a parliament by general

direct elections; that is the aim. But we have no right to relapse into a state of paralysis as long as we have not reached that goal.

Nothing must keep us from progressively adding to the responsibilities of the European Parliament. Its powers must be widened. Parliament needs to have a say in decisions, especially those which, in conformity with the treaties, provide for the substantive extension of the Community's competences without the participation of national Parliaments.

A mediation committee of the kind you have suggested and which exists in Bonn between the Bundestag and the Bundesrat is well suited to preparing budgetary decisions by both the Council and Parliament.

(Applause)

I would also recall the suggestion I made that the political weight of this Assembly should be strengthened by arrangements which would allow leading national parliamentarians to participate in this Assembly's debates, at least at certain times. Parliamentary life contains much routine, but it also requires flexibility. Being an institution does not imply a right to rigidity.

I have noted with gratitude that this Assembly has long become the parliamentary forum for the political unification of Europe. I recall the annual debate on progress towards political union and the colloquia on questions resulting from European political cooperation. I would encourage your every initiative in this field.

You have many possibilities for stimulating of your own accord the construction of Europe and the development of a European policy. The link between Europe and Africa would have been inconceivable without the joint conference of the European Parliament and the parliaments of the African States and of Madagascar in 1961.

The European Parliament has a part to play in fulfilling what is surely the most important agreement between the Heads of State or of Government: preparing the comprehensive report on the transformation of the totality of the relations of the Member States into a European Union, which is our declared, our unshakeable aim. We want to achieve that goal before 1980.

We are now at the end of 1973, and that means that time is pressing. You know this as well as I do, which is why I ask you to concentrate your efforts on this Report. Allow me to outline the main elements of a European *ad hoc* programme which brooks no delay:

1 — By the end of this year we still need to see clear progress towards economic and monetary union, towards a common regional policy, towards a common social policy, and towards the further development of the common agricultural policy.

2 — We need to improve the Community's financial behaviour. Every penny for Europe must be spent to advantage.

(Applause)

3 — We need a decision which will give the European Parliament a say in Community matters.

4 — By the end of this year we still need progress towards the solidarity of the Community in Europe's responsibility for peace and stability in the Mediterranean, in the definition of our relationship with the United States of America, in the cooperation with the Soviet Union and the East European States.

5 — We need more frequent meetings of Heads of Government as suggested by the French President, as I see it in the form of a kind of regular presidential conference which gives decisive political stimulus and thus forces all the responsible organizations and bodies to push forward their cooperation.

6 — As soon as possible we need clear and realistic proposals mapping out the way to European Union, respecting fully what exists and what has been achieved in spite of many obstacles in the past 20 years.

In conclusion, Mr President, let me state quite simply: From what I can see, the Federal Republic of Germany has chosen European Union as its permanent home. In it we seek our future.

This Assembly therefore will always be assured of the support of the Federal Government whenever it presses ahead towards European Union.

(Sustained applause)