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Speaking at a meeting of the Institute of Public Relations in London on 20th May 1976, The Rt Hon George Thomson said :

The present recession is fortunately beginning to lift. But Western industrial society is never going to be the same again. We are not going to return comfortably to the automatic growth of the sixties and early seventies, and if we want to get back to the high levels of employment of the post-war period, we will only do it by painful and cooperative effort by the industrial nations of the West as a whole. Economic nationalism knows no answers to the problems of the end of the century.

When the present high tide of slump recedes, as it is beginning to do, we shall discover that down on the seabed convulsions have been taking place, and we shall find left behind big new pools of permanent unemployment in industries and areas accustomed in the past to prosperity. It is not too much to say that there are areas of the Western world where the survival of multi-Party democracies depends on meeting these economic challenges - and areas on the frontiers of the Third World where their resistance to Communism depends on the West showing the will to succeed. The peace of the world still rests on the balance of military power provided by the Atlantic Alliance in which Europe and the United States remain close partners. ~~The~~ ~~balance~~ ~~for~~ ~~maintaining~~ ~~that~~ ~~military~~ balance remains as strong as ever. But while sustaining it, the West now faces the question as to whether the possible sharing of political power by the Italian and French Communist Parties means that Soviet Communism

may be able to advance in the West by a political back-door, while the military front-door remains relatively secure. The Soviet Union has made no secret of the fact that détente does not mean an ideological truce.

There is no way of getting rid of the problem of the voting power of the great Western Communist Parties in France and Italy by pretending it is not there, or even by saying that under no circumstances will the non-Communist Parties share power with Communist political forces. The ebb and flow of electoral forces cannot be dealt with by any Canute-like order to the Communist waves to recede.

The only way to deal with this aspect of the West's problem is to continue to be able to demonstrate that our modern mixed economies and multi-Party democracies can still meet the challenge of producing both prosperity and liberty. This is where the European Community faces in many ways its greatest challenge. Its member nations must show a willingness on the one hand to see resources transferred from the strong economies to the weaker, and on the other hand for an acceptance of the kind of Community economic discipline that enables the twin plagues of unemployment and inflation to be tamed. Certainly an integrated and united European Community is the best answer to the question-mark which hangs over the role of the Italian and French Communist Parties. It is a framework which encourages and sustains multi-Party moderation. Provided we can go on making the European Community work and ensure that it enjoys the support of the minds and hearts of its citizens, it is by far the most effective insurance policy against totalitarian extremes of either the left or the right.

For this reason alone, the success of the efforts to build a true European Community remains of major concern to every citizen of Western Europe, as indeed to every democrat throughout the world.