

COMMISSION
of the
EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

Address
by
Jean Rey,
President of the Commission of the
European Communities,
to the
European Parliament.

Strasbourg
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The single Commission of the European Communities, set up under the merger Treaty of 8 April 1965, began its work on 6 July last.

Today for the first time all fourteen members are attending a meeting of the Parliament and this is therefore the right moment to give you a general account of what we have done so far and of how we see the task before us.

My statement will not be very long and, as has always been my custom in the Parliament, it will be based on notes, without a written text. Consequently I ask the members of the European Parliament to excuse me for not being able, as I leave this platform, to hand you the complete text of what I have said.

Before entering upon the main part of my speech, I think I should remind you that our single Commission is the successor to three European Executives, of which we are the heirs.

Earliest in time was the High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community, which, under its various presidents, Jean Monnet, René Mayer, Paul Finet, Piero Malvestiti and Dino Del Bo, was the first of the European Community Institutions; it worked out the first integrated policies and began the continuous dialogue among the European Institutions themselves, and between the High Authority and the Governments of the Member States.

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We are, too, successors to the Commission of the European Atomic Energy Community, whose presidents were Louis Armand, Etienne Hirsch and Pierre Chatenet, and which was responsible for implementing all the provisions of the Euratom Treaty, in particular for constructing one of the very first big centres in the field of scientific and technical research; responsibility for this centre now lies with us.

Thirdly we succeed to the Commission of the European Economic Community, to which I belonged myself under the presidency, for nearly ten years, of Professor Walter Hallstein, and which had first to build up the customs union and see that it worked, and subsequently to elaborate the common policies provided for in our Treaty.

It is, I feel, only right that we should express our sincere gratitude to the three Executives for the enormous task they have accomplished in the last fifteen years, but everyone will understand why I should be thinking in particular of the man with whom I, and some of my present colleagues, worked more directly - Professor Walter Hallstein, to whom you recently paid tribute in this House. Let me say quite simply that it would be extremely difficult to vie with the intelligence, capacity for work and political courage of Professor Hallstein. It will, at the same time, be completely impossible to forget them.

This is what I wanted to say before coming to the substance of my statement, and since you have no written text, I shall begin by outlining what I am going to say.

I shall begin with the responsibilities we have to assume under the present Treaties; then I shall refer to the problem, which is so topical, of the extension of the Communities; next the merger of the Communities and the issues involved; and finally the new tasks which the merger now in hand allows us to tackle.

With reference to the responsibilities discharged by our predecessors, the Treaty of 8 April 1965 to which I have just referred requires us to carry out all the duties, all the tasks previously carried out by the three individual Executives. As we undertake this work, we are well aware of the importance, and even in some cases of the gravity, of the problems we have to tackle in each of our three Communities.

In the Coal and Steel Community, quite apart from the difficulties now besetting the iron and steel industry in Europe, we face a coal crisis, of which it would not be too much to say that it has not yet reached a point of equilibrium. We will one and all have to devote fresh and major efforts to the solving of this problem.

As for Euratom, you are aware - you have discussed the matter in this House - that our Governments are, alas, far from agreed as to the future work of the European Atomic Energy Community. It has consequently not so far been possible to work out and adopt the 1967 budget, which is one of the points on your agenda. There is still wide disagreement among the Governments on Euratom's third research programme. Therefore we shall in the months ahead have to review these problems not only within the Commission but also with the Governments in order to produce proposals acceptable to all.

Meanwhile we manifestly need to have arrangements which can tide us over. It did not take long in the Commission to agree on what these arrangements could be. Our decisions were reached this week; we shall begin straight away an examination of these proposals with the Scientific and Technical Committee; after that, the Commission will be in a position to establish definitive proposals and start discussing them with the Council.

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Lastly, where the European Economic Community is concerned, you know how we stand. The customs union is almost complete and we now have to continue the policy of building up the economic union itself. These are problems with which this House is quite familiar.

We can certainly be satisfied with certain sectors where good progress has been made; I am thinking, for example, of the recent decisions on harmonization of taxes. In other sectors, such as transport and the common commercial policy, progress has not been as rapid as it should. These are only a few examples; I have no wish at this stage to draw up a complete balance-sheet of all our activities.

I would however like to stress our special interest in the social field. We are convinced that, in the years that have passed - and despite the quite remarkable work done in Luxembourg - our Communities have not made enough progress in the social field. We are impatient for a new impetus to be given as regards social progress in our Community. We shall later have more to say to you on this point.

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At the same time, of course, we must continue the negotiations with other countries that are already in progress. We must now try to reactivate the negotiations with Austria, which are at present rather in the doldrums - but not, I hope, for long. We must begin the negotiations with Spain decided upon by the Council. We must see that the talks with the Maghreb countries are revived; these have never actually been abandoned, but should have progressed faster.

There is, too, a fresh problem: the agreement that should be concluded with Israel when our trading agreement expires. And we should not only continue and develop our association with the African countries but, if possible, extend it to include further countries.

These, then, are the problems that confront us at present in our three Communities. If, in this necessarily incomplete review, I have perhaps omitted some point or other which the Parliament thinks specially important, I should be glad if you would tell me of it presently.

The second chapter will be shorter, for reasons of which you are all aware. It concerns the extension of the Communities.

In the present political context, however, it is not possible to pass this subject over in silence, especially as you will tomorrow be meeting with the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe in this same hall. Everyone will nevertheless understand that the Commission and its spokesman must be particularly discreet, for the Council of Ministers has instructed us to render an opinion on this issue in accordance with Article 237 of the Treaty of Rome, and we have agreed that this should be submitted to the Council by 30 September. Evidently, the work of elaborating our opinion is not yet completely finished; good progress has been made in our Commission and our Administration, but some problems of substance or procedure still have to be settled, and on these our minds will have to be made up next week.

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Furthermore, even if we had already reached firm conclusions, we should obviously have to inform the Council of Ministers of them first; it would not be right for the Ministers to hear of them through the press.

Having said this, I think I can tell you the two ideas that have guided us in our work.

First, we considered that we, as the Commission, ought to provide our Ministers with a positive contribution to the study of the internal problems that extension raises for the Communities.

Choices will have to be made. Nobody expects us to produce solutions here and now, for these, of course, can be found only after negotiations; but we can at least make suggestions, throw out ideas, offer guidelines. We have endeavoured to do this in a constructive spirit, for we are fully aware that the extension of the Communities - an aim of all three Treaties - would be a great advance, a long stage on the way to establishing the continent of Europe.

Our second principle has from the outset been that the Communities must not be enlarged at the expense of its power, its drive; these must in no circumstances be impaired. Your Parliament has said this so often that I know my point is taken.

We hope that this report will provide the basis for fruitful discussions between ourselves and the Ministers in the meetings which have already been scheduled for October and November.

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We also hope to obtain support for our view that the time has come to embark on these negotiations, for the fact is that only with our European partners, the United Kingdom and the other countries concerned, can the range of problems arising be properly studied, only with them can we decide whether in fact the time has come to take this momentous step.

This is all I have to say on the question of extending the Community.

My third point is the merger of the Communities. The Brussels Treaty covers two kinds of problem, firstly, the merger of the three Executives - now a single Commission - and of our administrations; secondly, the merger of the Treaties.

We began merging the administrations in July, with a promptness that did not escape the notice of outside observers.

We began by allocating the responsibilities of the fourteen members of the single Commission. Then we set to work to recast the administrations, beginning with the Directorates-General, which, with their departmental heads, are to be the framework of our unified Community administration.

A good start has been made. We know the task is a very difficult one; we have no illusions on that account. Be that as it may, we do not intend to allow our merger problems to delay work on any of the policies for which we are responsible; the two operations will proceed side by side. I think what we have done in July and September has already made this clear.

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I may add here that we are bearing in mind the clauses annexed to the Treaty of 8 April on how the Community institutions and our administration should be divided between Brussels and Luxembourg. We are determined to comply with and to execute the relevant decisions, even if in one field or another this means a few practical difficulties which we shall endeavour to overcome.

This brings me to the merger of the Treaties, which raises a number of technical problems which are not insoluble but are certainly complicated.

Our three Treaties are not the same.

The later two benefited from the experience gained with the first, but they may have suffered from a political climate which was no longer quite what it was in 1950-51.

Between us, we shall have to find solutions to a number of these problems.

Moreover - and this is a more delicate area - political choices will have to be made.

A number of our Governments regard this task as urgent, given the amount of preparatory work which will be necessary. Negotiations will be required between the six Governments. Once the single Treaty is approved by them, it will have to be laid before the Parliaments for ratification and, according to the Treaty of 8 April, the whole operation must be complete within three years at latest!

Again, there are some who feel, perhaps rightly, that there may be some interplay between the internal merger problems and the negotiations on the extension of the Community, and that work on the Treaties should accordingly be begun

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without delay. Our Commission intends to work fast in the coming months and to place before the Ministers a document containing our preliminary suggestions as to the lines along which solutions might be sought.

My last topic, before I close with my political observations, concerns the new tasks to be undertaken.

As everyone realizes, the planned merger of our Communities, or the merger of the Executives pending the merger of the Treaties themselves, gives us all new opportunities, which must be seized straight away, either of undertaking new tasks or at least of giving greater impetus to those already under way.

Amongst those that we have in mind - I shall not list them all - I should like to mention at least four.

The first is a more systematic study of the industrial policy to be pursued in our Community.

We have all given - and rightly, to my mind - a high degree of priority (as is required both by the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community and by the policy itself) to the construction of the common agricultural policy, and work in this field has, as you know, been crowned with success.

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But we feel that, with this new stage, the time is now ripe to go more deeply into the problems raised by European industry, which is faced with a new large market inside the Community and keener competition from outside. The second task I wish to mention is the elaboration of a common energy policy. This is a policy for which we have all called so often. It has been made so much more difficult to achieve by the fact that while there were three separate Executives, responsibility for coal fell to Luxembourg, for nuclear energy to Brussels, Rue Belliard, and for oil to Brussels, Avenue de la Joyeuse Entrée. Our inter-Executive bodies have worked hard, but the concentration of responsibilities will unquestionably give us an opportunity to move much faster.

May I venture to suggest that the same point applies to the Ministers? There has been much talk of the merger of the Communities and of the Executives. The merger of the Councils of Ministers called for by the Treaty of Brussels of 8 April 1965 is just as important a factor. I would ask you to take the word of someone who for four years - from 1954 to 1958 - was the Belgian representative at the ECSC Special Council of Ministers. Three times I presided over the Council, for three months. One of the lessons I learned is that an arrangement under which certain ministers attend meetings to deal with coal and steel while others deal with the general economy is not perhaps the best way to reach coherent decisions rapidly. The single Council of Ministers we now have is, in my opinion, a distinct improvement.

The third task was debated by you only this spring: that of a European research policy.

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In this field Europe lags behind. Everybody agrees that it is no longer enough to deplore this; it is time to seek out practical remedies. We have added this problem to our list of matters to be tackled.

The fourth task that I want to single out is regional policy. While recognizing that there have been very appreciable achievements thanks to our predecessors in Luxembourg and Brussels, we feel that in the matter of regional policy there is still much to be done in the Community. Not all the possibilities have been explored and not all the necessary measures have been put in hand. In particular a fresh impetus should be given to regional policy conceived at Community level and, it must be said, with the constant co-operation - without which it could not be successful - of the Governments of the Member States.

In order to achieve all this, we came to the conclusion that we ought to entrust each of these tasks to one of our colleagues, these being new or expanding fields calling for a major effort.

We also decided that, in reorganizing our administration, we ought to endeavour to ensure that new, or at least expanded, administrative units should be able to devote themselves more exclusively to the four big tasks I have just listed.

This is how, all in all, I could sum up our programme: to go ahead with all the existing policies, to merge our administrations and Treaties, to co-operate in and contribute to the extension of the Communities, and to undertake the new tasks for which the merger has been designed.

This statement, however, would be incomplete if in concluding I failed to affirm - and I speak also on behalf of my colleagues - that our Communities and Europe are in need of

a fresh political élan. We believe that the merger Treaty and the opportunities it offers can be instrumental in providing this élan.

I should like to remind you that the preamble of the merger Treaty itself opens with the following phrase, which was adopted by our six Governments and ratified by our six Parliaments:

"Resolved to progress toward European unity ..."

The merger is therefore far more than a mere rationalization of administrative departments or a harmonization of the three Treaties negotiated at different periods; it is also one of the means, one of the stages, leading to European unity.

We are aware that this means increased responsibility for the single Commission. First, as I have just mentioned, because all areas of European affairs now come under our joint responsibility. Secondly, because we enjoy - temporarily perhaps - the confidence of the Governments that have unanimously appointed the fourteen members of our Executive.

Being assured at the outset of their confidence, which I trust will last, and with the support of the Parliament, to which I shall have occasion to speak again, it seems to me that we have at our disposal the machinery and the authority that will enable us to work with greater energy towards further achievements.

In speaking of a fresh political élan, I am thinking of two fields in which progress is possible. The first is a strengthening of the Community's policies and, if possible, of its institutions. I have already spoken to you about the strengthening of our policies. We shall have to give more thought to the question of strengthening the Institutions.

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You will readily understand that, in the few weeks we had at our disposal in July to deal with the merger and in September to draw up our report on a possible extension of the Communities, we have not been able to discuss thoroughly the large number of problems facing us, but we did not wish to delay our meeting with the European Parliament.

I should like, nevertheless, to tell you here and now that we in the Commission are convinced that, without relinquishing any of our responsibilities, powers or authority, we must make arrangements for more personal and more constant cooperation with the Governments of the Member States, not only with the Council of course, with which we meet regularly, but - I wish to repeat this - with the member Governments themselves.

I shall give two examples from the recent past. My friend Mansholt, Vice-President of the Commission, would never have succeeded in building up and carrying through the immense effort needed to construct the common agricultural policy if there had not been constant personal contact with the six Ministers of Agriculture who, in the six countries, were responsible for taking the political decisions required by the Treaties.

In the Kennedy Round, which was concluded recently, we should never have achieved success, although my colleagues provided assistance almost every day and although we were aided by a delegation endowed with all the technical skill needed for the task, if I, too, had not had personal contact with the Ministers and if I had not during the final weeks and days gone in person to discuss matters in Bonn, Paris, Rome and

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the Benelux countries in order to be sure that I enjoyed sufficient personal support to be able to assume at the decisive moment the responsibility for difficult decisions.

We think that these are examples that ought to be followed. We have decided that, as a beginning, I should make a tour of the capitals of our six Member States - not alone, of course, but with one or other of my colleagues depending on where I should be going. My first visit - to Bonn - took place the day before yesterday; with the President of the Council, the Ministers concerned and the Chancellor himself, we reviewed the problems confronting us.

I shall be going to Paris in the first half of October, to Rome in the second half, and to the Benelux countries early in November. I have already visited the Luxembourg Prime Minister, M. Werner.

Once this round of visits is over, our intention is certainly not merely to repeat it at fixed intervals. What we want is to maintain these personal contacts between our merged Executive and the Governments of the Member States because we are convinced, from experience, that in this way we shall be able to get progress made on problems where there are differences of opinion within our Council.

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Might I then say - modestly but clearly - that we hope that the Commission's attitude will be reciprocated, and that when the Ministers themselves have to consider questions on which agreement must be reached, they will not fail to invite us - wherever, of course, questions impinge on the Community responsibilities we now bear?

The second aspect of the fresh political élan we hope to see is the progress of what is called political union. Many times, from this same rostrum, my predecessor, Walter Hallstein, and other political leaders have emphasized that the task facing the Communities is already essentially political in character. This goes without saying. But you know that in other places other political problems are being discussed, and that our Governments have been discussing them for six years.

Despite six years of negotiations - they started in February 1961 - there is in 1967 no consensus between our Governments either on means or on ends.

This is a situation that we greatly deplore because - and I think this must be said - we could reach a point at which there will be a dangerous inconsistency between the growing strength of our Communities - which is making an enormous impression in the world, as the large number of States anxious to join us shows - and the acute political disagreements persisting between our Governments. As the Commission of the European Communities, we shall have to devote some thought to this problem and see whether we cannot make suggestions to our Ministers, otherwise than in a public forum, which would enable progress to be made.

There is at least one such suggestion that I should like to make publicly.

We have wondered whether - pending unanimous agreement on problems of substance, of principle or of method - certain tasks could not already be undertaken in common, whether we could not prove that we are moving forward quite simply by moving forward, and thus give new life to co-operation in this field.

The point was made so well by this House - in a debate held at your own initiative - on the Middle East crisis, during which we heard words that still linger in our memories, deploring the fact that the progress of integration has not yet been sufficiently rapid to allow Europe, as such, to bring its influence to bear in this grave conflict, at least in order to reduce the sources of friction and to tackle the problems of harmonized development in that part of the world.

It is probably still too early, to make concrete suggestions on this point, and I shall not presume to do so. But it would be good if we were one and all to devote some thought to these matters. Each one of you has not only European responsibilities but also responsibilities in your home Parliament. It would be worth considering whether a pragmatic approach of this kind might not yield useful results.

However this may be, let me conclude by assuring you that we are perfectly well aware that our task, the task of us all, is to achieve not only the economic unification of Europe but also political progress.

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As a matter of fact, on looking at the problems that have been piling up on our desks every week since 6 July, we are finding that they are not only numerous but often complex.

However, despite the fact that the increase in our numbers has made the Commission a little more unwieldy - a disadvantage happily offset by the great gain in quality - we intend to be in a position to take the decisions incumbent on a European institution, after proper reflexion, of course, but nevertheless rapidly - and we have so far succeeded in doing this.

Secondly, I should like to explain our approach to our work. We do not see ourselves merely as administrators of the Community; we are also there to provide inspiration. In this connection, I would recall a phrase that I used in the old Commission and which sometimes drew a smile from my colleagues: where our European faith is concerned, we must be more than the clergy - we must be the prophets. That is our approach.

It would be fatal to ignore the anxieties that one hears expressed outside this Parliament, in particular the anxiety of our general public on finding that there are still so many disagreements, either between Community policies and the policies followed by Governments, or between the Governments themselves.

The words of our former President Gaetano Martino have just been quoted.

The experience of our American friends two centuries ago is also highly relevant to our situation today.

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They adopted their Declaration of Independence in 1776. Twenty-five years, a quarter of a century later, the violent dispute between the Jeffersonians and the Federalists broke out. The former supported the third President, Thomas Jefferson, who argued that the Union had been made by and in the interest of the Member States - the term was already in use in those days - and that, where the interests of the Member States conflicted with those of the Union, the interests of the Member States should therefore prevail.

Arrayed against the Jeffersonians was the outstanding group of Federalists, who retorted: the Union will never be anything if the general interests which it embodies cannot prevail over the particular interests of the Member States, however worthy, however legitimate these may be.

I do not need to tell you what the outcome of that dispute was.

You can see how our Community policies are gaining ground and how - despite the perfectly understandable national resistance of large countries that were for so long opposed to one another in their traditions, their economies and their history - these policies are taking shape and gaining substance with remarkable speed.

As to our determination and as to our diligence, you need have no doubts. But we know that we cannot succeed without help. We need the help of public opinion. In particular we need the help of your Parliament.

The European Parliament embodies the democratic aspect of our venture. By its advice, its opinions and its promptings, gave consistent and unfailing support to the three Executives of which the new Commission is the heir.

We know that in the future your Parliament will not fail us.