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Speech by Mr. Jean REY, President of the Commission
of the European Communities to the Congress of
the EUROPEAN MOVEMENT

The Hague, 8 November 1968

Your Majesty,

May I be permitted, at the beginning of this short address, to express our great appreciation of the fact that Your Majesty is honouring this assembly with your presence.

We Europeans realize that the presence of Her Royal Highness Princess Juliana at the Hague Congress in 1948 and Your Majesty's presence at today's Congress are a token of the great interest that you have again and again been ready to show during these twenty years in the efforts to achieve integration on the European continent.

Your Majesty's support has always been a valuable encouragement to us, and I should like to say on behalf of my colleagues how very much we appreciate it.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I bring you the greetings of the Commission of the European Communities.

My colleagues and I are happy to see you gathered in this great conclave to commemorate the Hague Congress which, twenty years ago in this very place, after Winston Churchill's famous Zürich speech, launched the powerful movement of public opinion which has been the source of the great economic and political initiatives aimed at integrating the continent of Europe.

Where do we stand after these twenty years ?

Enormous progress has been made, and we should not allow our present disappointments, our current impatience, to blind us to this fact.

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The reconciliation of the peoples of Western Europe is now a matter of fact. Great institutions have been set up. To speak only of what concerns the Communities, the completion of customs union, the functioning of the common agricultural policy, the work being done on economic union, the steady progress being made in tax harmonization in transport policy, in social policy and in competition policy, and much else besides, all this gives the lie to assertions that the Europe of the Communities is paralysed. At the same time, the establishment and functioning of the association between the Community and a number of European countries, the success of the Kennedy Round, the negotiations that have been going ahead in recent weeks with Morocco, Tunisia and Yugoslavia, and the coming renewal of the Yaoundé Convention show that the Community is continuing its activities abroad without any slackening of pace.

But all this progress, however substantial, still falls short of the pressing needs of our times.

Europe ought to be united, but it remains divided; despite all hopes, progress towards enlargement of the Communities has not yet been resumed. Europe ought to be strong, but it still has no economic and monetary policy fit for this continent. Europe ought to speak with authority and with one voice in world politics, but it has not yet made any serious progress on the road to political union. Europe ought to fulfil its duties to the developing countries more boldly and generously, but it has not yet established a common policy towards these countries.

Too many purely national trends are still in evidence; our continent is still bedevilled by too many fiscal, legal and technical anomalies. Europe has not yet attained its proper stature, and it is still living too much in the settings and habits of yesterday at a time when, more than ever, Community solutions ought to have precedence.

This Congress should be the occasion for a thorough self-examination, measuring the further efforts we must make and seeking to give a new impetus to the movement for European unification.

May I make three points before I close :

First, the road to Europe's independence and strength lies through its unity. Europe has not the military, industrial, technological and financial power of the United States; only in two fields is our Community already, without enlargement, equal to the United States: in the field of trade and in its agricultural policy, because in these it is integrated, expresses itself with one voice and thus can speak and deal as one equal with another. The road to Europe's independence, let us repeat, lies through its unity.

Secondly, the reinforcement of Europe presupposes reinforcement of its institutions. Of all the great European organizations only the Community (and I hope that nobody will see in this claim any sort of superiority complex, which is very far from my thoughts), only the Community, I say, has been in a position to build common policies. The same men who could not achieve this in the setting of other European organizations have been able to do it in the framework of the Community, because the institutional machinery has made this possible. The road to the independence of Europe lies through the strengthening of its institutions.

Thirdly, the present crisis makes it quite plain that, as we pointed out in our declaration of 1 July this year, an end must be made of the paralysing and out-dated veto system. Vetoes - and the counter-vetoes they evoke, which are every whit as harmful - no longer respond to the needs of a living and dynamic Community.

In those fields where they have the power to decide by majority vote the States must have the courage to do so, to bow with good grace to the decisions taken. On the other hand, in those fields where decisions must be unanimous, they doubtless have the right to differ in opinion, but afterwards they must not just agree to differ but must take account of each other's opinions and work unremittingly together till they have found the compromises, the give and take which is inevitable in Community life

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Mr. President, it is our generation and not the next which must strive to resolve these problems. No one is more aware than you of the inexorable demands of our times, no one did more than you in your ten years as President of the Commission of the European Economic Community to invest them with flesh and blood. I have no doubt that under your chairmanship the great Congress opening today will mark a new and important step forward in unification of the continent of Europe.
