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Address

by

M. Jean REY

President of the Commission  
of the European Communities

on the occasion of the presentation  
of the Charlemagne Prize

15 May 1969

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Herr Oberbürgermeister,  
Herr Bundesminister,  
Your Excellencies,  
Fellow-members of the Commission,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

A few weeks ago when Oberbürgermeister Heusch came to inform me that the Award Committee of the International Charlemagne Prize of the City of Aachen had decided that the 1969 prize should go to our Commission collectively, my colleagues and I were deeply moved, and the magnificent ceremony now being held here, at a spot where so much history is enshrined, can only add to our feelings of appreciation.

This you will very easily understand if you reflect for a moment on the meaning of the traditions - hallowed by the centuries - of Aix-la-Chapelle, one of the strongholds of the belief in Europe, and on that of the Charlemagne Prize, won in the past by so many distinguished champions of the idea of a united continent. But it has affected us most profoundly of all to discover that the Commission's stubbornness and tenacity at a time when the work of building a new Europe has been more than usually difficult are supported and encouraged by those who march in the van of the movement.

Gentlemen, you have wished to honour us as a corporate body, and our reply will therefore be in the same manner. Our Commission has nominated two of its members, M. Jean-François Deniau and myself, to speak at this ceremony and at the same time has asked its Vice-President, M. Fritz Hellwig, to speak on its behalf on another occasion today.

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Community Executive. Then we think of the Euratom Commission, presided over first by Louis Armand, then by Etienne Hirsch and Pierre Chatenet, which created the first great nuclear and technological research centres in Europe. Finally, the Commission of the European Economic Community, presided over for ten years by Professor Hallstein, which embarked on the immense task of building the common policies now the foundations of our work. I have mentioned the names of the Presidents, but I should have mentioned all the members of these three bodies, several of whom, from each of the three Executives, are today members of our single Commission. Your tribute today is rightly made to a formidable political, economic and social achievement of the past twenty years.

Your timing is also highly appropriate, for our task has not been an easy one during these two years. No difficulty has been spared us, neither the complications of merging three different administrations into a homogeneous body, nor those of preserving the creative vigour of an organism larger in terms of numbers and technically more cumbersome, and of which the complexity of the problems, like the number of meetings and the mass of paper, has steadily increased, nor, lastly and obviously not least, the grave political disagreements which have arisen between the Governments of our Member States. These have not yet been unravelled and they have considerably complicated our task, slowed down the Community's progress, and damaged the climate of confidence here in Europe.

And yet what a lot of work has been done, and what a lot of progress made! It would take far too much of your time to list all the gains made. We drew up a detailed record of them in our annual General Report, which was published two months ago: the completion of the customs union; the launching of the chief agricultural market organizations; the adoption of customs and commercial policy regulations; the progress of fiscal harmonization; the progress of the common transport policy; the introduction of the free movement of workers in the Community; the



Rome chose the word "community" as a name for their great undertaking.. A community consists of two elements, one spiritual and one institutional. The spiritual element is a common faith. In our case, it is our belief in the reconciliation of the European peoples, in the decay of nationalism, in the construction of a united, independent, outward-looking and generous European continent.

The institutional element is basic. There is no question of an undertaking whose aim is to eliminate the nations of yesterday and today and replace them by any kind of single and centralized European power. But there is no question either of a mere association of sovereign states, of which there are already so many. We started from the idea that the Community institutions must have limited but real powers imposing their authority on the Member States and be organized to allow of constant exchanges of views - the beginnings of a future federal constitution - between the Governments representing the Member States, on the one hand, and the institutions more specifically representing the Community, on the other.

It is this institutional machinery which has provided the creative drive in our Communities. If we compare these with the other European organizations, such as OECD, the Council of Europe, WEU or Benelux, which, I hasten to add, have rendered much distinguished service, we see that only our Communities have been able to build up common policies because only they had the institutional facilities necessary. It is not a question of men, it is a question of powers, for the same men who, in other settings, were not able to construct common policies have succeeded in just this in the Community framework.

Nobody should be surprised therefore that our Commission watches with jealous care over the maintenance of the powers of the Community institutions. In the Commission's view, it would

We consequently think that the time has come to attempt to enlarge the existing Community, now being welded into a single unit, and to find ways and means of making room for the other European countries, each at the appropriate time, and stage by stage.

We believe that the Community in its present form is already the leading trading power in the world, and, this being so, that it must practise an open and generous policy with regard to the developing countries in general and the Yaoundé countries in particular.

We believe that, after two world wars which in fact were two European civil wars born of the clash of European nationalisms, Europe has pointed the way to a new organization of the world on continental scale and that it must take care not to reproduce at continental level the errors of yesterday's nationalisms. This is why we attach so much importance to permanent co-operation arrangements with the other continents, and in the first place with our great American partner, with whom we share so many responsibilities essential for the balance and progress of the free world. This is also why we are striving, tirelessly, and will continue to strive, to open a dialogue and, if possible, achieve co-operation with the countries of Eastern Europe, and indeed with all the continents.

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Ladies and Gentlemen, the world is governed by ideas. The great leaps forward in human history were first the work of a few thinkers who stepped out of line to attack the legitimacy of the ideas and institutions of their day. Political democracy was born in the 18th century, when thinkers attacked the legitimacy of the institutions of the ancien régime and launched a great movement of thought which finally swept away the glaring abuses

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and political privileges of the past. Social democracy was born in the 19th century, when sociologists attacked the legitimacy of the economic and social system as practised at the time and its inhuman social consequences. European democracy was born in the 20th century, when the founders of Europe attacked the nationalist systems of yesterday, which had launched our peoples one against the other and covered our continent with blood and ruins.

Yes, the movement has been launched, and nothing can now stop it. If our generation is able to accomplish only part of the task, it will be for the rising generation to take over, but I am convinced that the year 1950, the year of Robert Schuman's declaration, will be recognized as a day among the great dates in world history, like the Reformation of 1517, the United States Declaration of Independence in 1776, and the French Revolution in 1789. One day the names of the great Europeans of our period - Robert Schuman, Alcide de Gasperi and Konrad Adenauer - will be honoured as are those of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and Abraham Lincoln in the United States of America today. One day our children or the children of our children will travel as pilgrims to Robert Schuman's house at Scy-Chazelle in Lorraine as young Americans go to Mount Vernon on the banks of the Potomac, and the reconciliation of peoples in the birth of the European continent after ten centuries of fratricidal strife will be seen by all as one of history's great events.

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be idle to speak of strengthening the Community if, at the same time, attempts were being made to weaken its institutions. On the contrary. The normal development of the Community is leading us to a gradual reinforcement of these powers, and this was the tenor of our statement of 1 July 1968, when we called for increased powers for the Commission, the abolition of the use of the veto, majority voting, and the election of the Parliament by universal suffrage.

By awarding the Commission as a corporate body the 1969 Charlemagne Prize you have set the seal in the eyes of European and world opinion on the essential role which our Commission must play in the life of the Community. We are immensely grateful for a gesture of encouragement the value of which there is no measuring.

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On this solemn day, which lends itself neither to the enunciation of an action programme nor to detailed discussion of the next stages and the means to be employed, I would like simply to close by recalling our basic convictions.

We believe that Europe is only strong where it is united. It is only the equal of the greatest - and particularly of the United States - where it is integrated and speaks with one voice, as in the common agricultural and tariff policies. This being so, we must press forward our work on the other common policies and hasten to strengthen the Community's economic and monetary solidarity at the same time as we must, at long last, push forward seriously with its political union.

We believe that the Community is an essential element in the unification of Europe but that it represents only a part of Europe.

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signing of the Tunis and Rabat agreements; the negotiations with Yugoslavia; the renegotiation of the Yaoundé Convention; the framing of the large-scale programmes for the reform of agricultural structures; nuclear policy and technological policy; energy policy; regional policy; and the strengthening of economic and monetary solidarity. All this work, finished or now in hand, shows that in spite of difficulties and crises, the building of the new Europe goes on and that the forces impelling it towards unity are in fact much stronger than those holding it back.

Despite differences of method and of approach, all the Member States believe in the strengthening and progress of the Community, and this is what really matters. As I am within the frontiers of the Federal Republic of Germany, I know that you will all approve my taking this opportunity to tell the representatives of the Federal Government in particular how much we have appreciated their clear-sighted and realistic contribution to the Community's internal and external progress.

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Let me say how much we appreciate your unprecedented decision to award the Charlemagne Prize this year to an institution rather than a single individual, and to select our collegiate body for this honour. It is your choice of the Commission as a corporate body which is significant in a decision we believe to be of special importance.

For if there is one original and essential feature to our Communities, it is without doubt their institutional machinery. It is no accident that the authors of the Treaties of Paris and

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Gerne hätte ich mich an Sie in allen Sprachen der Gemeinschaft gewendet. Dies würde jedoch den Rahmen dieses Festakts sprengen.

Tuttavia, desidero salutare nella loro madrelingua i rappresentanti degli Stati membri di lingua italiana e olandese, per sottolineare che la Comunità Europea deve concepirsi al di là delle differenze di lingua e di origine di coloro che la costruiscono.

Ik wil evenwel de Nederlands- en de Italiaanssprekende vertegenwoordigers van de lid-staten in hun taal begroeten om aan te tonen dat de Europese Gemeenschap de verschillen in taal en oorsprong van hen die bij de opbouw ervan zijn betrokken, weet te overbruggen.

Pour le surplus, étant donné que mon ami Deniau s'exprimera en français, j'utiliserai la langue allemande qui est assurément celle la plus familière à la grande majorité de cet auditoire.

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Mr. Bürgermeister, we have understood, and I would like to emphasize this point, that the tribute paid to us is not addressed merely to our Commission, which has been a unified one since 1 July 1967, but also to our predecessors whose work it is our responsibility to continue today. Our thoughts go first to the High Authority of the Coal and Steel Community, which, under the successive presidencies of Jean Monnet, René Mayer, Paul Finet, Piero Malvestiti and Dino del Bo, was, in the words of the Treaty of Paris, the first supranational executive institution, and was the first of the bodies which were to exercise powers and assume responsibilities without precedent in Europe, and thus the first

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