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European Day at the Hanover International Fair

Speech by President Malfatti

In a speech on the 29th of April at Hanover on the occasion of the European Day organized by the Bundesverband der Deutschen Industrie at the International Fair, the President of the Commission of the European Communities, Mr. Franco-Maria Malfatti, said:

Negotiations with Great Britain: "We read much in the Press of the difficulties that are being encountered in the negotiations with Britain, but the problems are few and concern certain quite specific and technically delimited matters. Now the problems are not insuperable: the issues involved are certainly not such as to justify the failure of an enterprise whose political and economic implications extend far beyond Europe itself. I consider this very fact should be a spur to mobilize every last ounce of political will: in this way we can overcome the danger of getting bogged down. This active political will needed to put the remaining difficulties in their true political perspective will have to make itself felt in the coming weeks. I am myself confident of the outcome of the negotiations. This is a historic opportunity, which may never recur, for transformation into a Community uniting ten of the most highly industrialized and democratic countries of Western Europe at a moment which is potentially favourable to the relaunching of European unification towards the objective of a European government.

In the present negotiations for enlargement what is at stake is the possibility of redrawing in terms of unity the geopolitical map of a large part of our continent."

The international presence of the Community: "This is a time of transition for us which is why we are often told that the Community is an economic giant without political responsibility. This seems to me a facile criticism, only partly justified. The process of unification has certainly still a long way to go and it is for that reason that we sometimes conduct our relations with the rest of the world in the light of immediate and pressing needs only. But I think too that the time will very soon be upon us when these grave shortcomings will have to be made good by a clear and institutionally defined political will."

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Relations with the United States: "Relations between the world's two foremost economic and trading powers are bound to involve problems: it is in the nature of things that there should be differences on specific issues. It is simply a matter of tackling them without fuss, all the time bearing in mind the more fundamental interests that we share. The Community for its part has stated its willingness to deal with matters concerning the organization of world trade with an open mind. As soon as the enlargement operation has been brought to a conclusion, it is ready to begin talks with all those engaged in world trade to discuss points of common interest with a view to further liberalization of trade."

Relations with Eastern European countries: "Relations with Eastern Europe seem likely to occupy a central place in the future development of the Community. I think that it is in the interest of the Eastern European countries not to disregard the reality of the Community, particularly as the next few years will see the full implementation of our commercial policy vis-à-vis them. The economic advantage the Community's existence has represented for other countries is an advantage to our Eastern neighbours too - to say nothing of the political advantage of a solidly-knit Western Europe as regards the furtherance of security and détente in our continent. For these very reasons it is essential that the Six should hold together as closely as possible right from now, for I am convinced that this is the way by which cooperation with the Eastern countries can best be developed."

The debate on a European government: "The Commission which I have the honour to head is convinced that it has a major responsibility to bear in the dialogue which is to point the way to the future institutional organization of the Community. The Commission is, it feels, acting in accordance with a very definite moral duty, as well as with the political circumstances and functional requirements in making its contribution to the debate now in progress. It is on these grounds that the Commission has been and is urging that the debate be conducted within the Community's institutions, though with all the necessary safeguards, in order to permit fruitful discussion."

Earlier on when the vigour seemed temporarily to have gone out of Europe's administration, the demand springing from idealism began to be voiced that action be taken to strengthen the democratic element in the Community structure: the allowing of fuller expression to the representative forces in the member countries was regarded as a means to impart a fresh impetus to the whole European venture. Today Community-level decision-making is beginning to affect life in those countries more and more; to keep it in being without increased supervision and the proper democratic feedback would be to deprive it of its necessary infrastructure and inevitably cause it to be mistrusted and resisted by the most vital forces in our society. Hence the essential importance of stepping up the role of the European Parliament.

I should like to conclude by saying that it is our very success which underlies our concern and our dissatisfaction today. It is the position of our Community in the world which constrains us to move faster in order fully to attain on the institutional plane and that of political strategy those objectives of cohesion and organic completeness which no longer lie in the vague future but arise in the present, as objective needs, from day-to-day circumstances."