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# Europe needs the crises

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# Europe Needs the Crises

Dr Sicco L. Mansholt *

IE: Dr Mansholt, as former President of the Commission of the European Economic Community you must be shocked by the picture the European Communities offer at present. What is your view of the European crisis?

MANSHOLT: I take it very seriously, for this crisis is a very deep one because there are far-reaching controversies about the fundamental political questions in almost all areas, no matter if it is a question of purely economic problems or if the monetary union is concerned, if the energy problems or foreign policy in general are at stake.

### Crisis in the System

IE: Would you go so far as to say that in this particular case it is no more a crisis *in* the system but a crisis *of* the system?

MANSHOLT: No. The system as such is not a bad one. The European institutions are efficient as far as they are able to promote cooperation and integration and might make it possible for us to arrive at a real community, that is urgently required by Europe. Unfortunately, however, this system cannot work because the European population is not in a position to express its will. So far there is a defect *in* the system, but it is not a crisis *of* the system.

IE: Does this mean that in your opinion this crisis does not differ considerably from other ones experienced by the European Economic Community already in the past?

MANSHOLT: No, certainly not. This crisis differs from former similar events in that it involves the fundamentals of the Community. There is no agreement on the role and function of the nation states within the Community, a fact that is mainly expressed by the attitude of France. The crisis concerning the economic union exists because under politico-economic aspects France adopts its own course and does want to develop a common economic policy, but at most a common monetary policy, whose final purpose it is that the Franc can always be supported by strong currencies like the D-Mark and the Dutch Guilder.

The crisis of the Community caused by the energy supply problems is again a consequence of the fact that France does not intend to sacrifice any part of its foreign policy and considers the procuring of energy to be part and parcel of its foreign policy.

### Who is to be Blamed

IE: You blame rather unambiguously France for the present dilemma of the European Communities. Are the other Common Market countries not as much responsible as France for this crisis because they also pursue their very strong national interests?

MANSHOLT: Not to the same extent. I do not intend at all to acquit them of all and every blame. Of course there is a lack of cooperation also in different other countries, for instance in the Netherlands and Western Germany. Everyone in his way, and also the British raise difficulties. On principle, however, I have to point out that de Gaulle's policy of a nationally independent France with national objectives and with its national foreign policy, which is still continuing, constitutes the basic cause of all European difficulties.

IE: Dr Mansholt, on the other hand the French Minister of Finance, Giscard d'Estaing, recently said that it is not the lack of intention, which obstructs the unity of Europe, but its nations' differing level of development. Would you contest this opinion?

MANSHOLT: I would not deny that the differing state of development of the nations belonging to the European Communities raises problems. However, our Community starts from the idea that the strongest will help to carry the burden under which the weak have to suffer. Within the Community it was always supposed that this attitude was accepted as one of its fundamentals if a newcomer wanted to join it. Therefore I am not inclined to the opinion that this is the source of the difficulties. The main cause I have indicated already. No one is ready, now and at this moment, to bring about a political union, which would mean that in all spheres, not only the economic but also the political one, also regarding the defence problems as well as foreign policy issues, all members have to act jointly – and

* Former President of the European Commission.

that the existing institutions must take the pertaining decisions in concert.

**Possible Solution of the Crisis**

IE: Do you detect, under these conditions, any politically realisable way at all to master the present crisis?

MANSHOLT: Of course we can get out of the present blind alley only if we are prepared to make compromises, and such compromises require a change of political attitudes. If, however the differences in political opinions should continue, we would remain in this dead-end street for the time being. I am of the opinion that during the next years everything depends on the developing and carrying through of a policy, which aims at dismantling these differences. This can only be done in two ways: First, the number of those political parties, that are really prepared to undertake a European policy, may increase. Hitherto this is not yet the case to a sufficient extent. Second, in my opinion Europe, or the countries in Europe, respectively, will in future be confronted with growing difficulties and problems resulting from the question concerning the limits to growth, respectively the raw material and energy supply problems. All these issues will force the European countries to cooperate and develop a common policy.

IE: Dr Mansholt, early this year you stated in an interview your firm conviction that we shall have some kind of European Government between 1980 and 1985. Do you still stand for this opinion after the European Communities' last debacle at the Washington Conference where the main issue was the energy supply problem?

MANSHOLT: Yes, I stand for this opinion. We still have enough time – ten years. I am even convinced that because of the mineral oil supply crisis or mineral oil price crisis, respectively, which occurred earlier than frequently prognosticated, we shall be forced to act more quickly and not to waste any time. Europe will be created under the pressure of crises. Without critical situations there will be no progress attained.

IE: Then we may wish Europe as many crises as possible during the next years?

MANSHOLT: To the above effect most certainly. I also hold the opinion – as I have already said – that the mineral oil-price crisis just at this moment is virtually a great boon, for it will force the nations to common actions.

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