
May 1983

Biography of Gaston E. Thorn
President of the Commission of the European Communities

Gaston E. Thorn, President of the Commission of the European Communities (EC) since 1981, has been a prominent political figure for most of his 54 years. Thorn was born in Luxembourg on September 3, 1928. As a youth he was arrested and incarcerated by the German occupation forces in 1943 for anti-Nazi political activities. After the War he obtained a Doctorate in Law after studies at the Universities of Montpellier, Lausanne and Paris. During his student days, Thorn served as Chairman of both the Luxembourg National Union of Students and of the World Conference of Students.

Thorn stood for election to Luxembourg's Parliament for the first time in 1959 and was reelected at every subsequent election. He first became a member of the European Parliament during that same year and rose to Deputy Chairman of the Liberal Group and Chairman of the Developing Countries Committee. Between 1959 and 1961 he was Secretary-General of the Luxembourg Democratic Party and was that party's President from 1961 to 1980.

In 1975 Thorn was made President of the 30th Session of the United Nations General Assembly.

Thorn entered the Government in Luxembourg in 1968 as Foreign Minister, Minister for Civil Service and Minister for Sport in a Christian Social/Democrat coalition. In 1974 he became Prime Minister, heading a Liberal/Socialist coalition. Between 1974 and 1979 Thorn also served as Luxembourg's Minister of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs and assumed the post of Minister for Economic Affairs in 1977. He held the positions of Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Minister for Economic Affairs and Minister of Justice in a Christian Social/Democrat coalition government from 1979 to 1980.

Thorn succeeded Roy Jenkins as President of the EC Commission on January 6, 1981.