

A d d r e s s

by

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President of the Commission  
of the European Economic Community

on the occasion of his being awarded  
THE INTERNATIONAL CHARLEMAGNE PRIZE  
of the City of Aix-la-Chapelle

on May 11, 1961

Herr Oberbürgermeister, meine Herren Präsidenten, Minister,  
Mitglieder der Europäischen Exekutiven, Staatssekretäre,  
Exzellenzen, Magnifizenz, meine Damen und Herren.

I am greatly moved, My Lord Mayor, at receiving from your hand the honour which the Directorate of the International Charlemagne Prize of the City of Aachen has conferred upon me. I thank the awarding body from the depth of my heart, as I thank you, My Lord Mayor, for the kind words of appreciation with which you have told us of the motives for this award.

I know that I am greatly honoured - and if I did not know it, a glance at the names of my predecessors in this distinction would make me conscious of it.

If I am now to make a reply, I can find no more modest formula than to say: I am well aware that the honour is not being done to me for what I am, but to the purpose which I have given to my work. And therefore I cannot find any better expression for the gratitude I feel than to endeavour to say why I have dedicated myself and my strength to the cause of Europe. I have done this because I believe in the unity and in the unification of Europe,

because I am convinced that we can bring  
this unification about, and

because I feel that it is our duty  
to do so.

This venerable hall, this age-old Christian and European city, steeped in history, incite me to turn my glance back into the past of our Continent: into a past full of greatness and humiliation, full of riches and incomprehensible destruction, full of great deeds and full of suffering. I do not flinch from looking back. In looking back

my purpose is not - as is sometimes the case with our opponents - to borrow from the past concepts like imperialism or hegemony or centralism and use them as a die with which to stamp European events - the most modern events of our day - with disappointment and bitterness inherited from the past, those who do this are striking false coin.

Rather do we look back, because we are sure that in the memory of the past, in observing our own evolution, we shall come to understand what we are, to realize more surely our true character, our potentialities, our needs, our responsibility. We look back, because we know that all life, including that of nations, is movement; because we would be denying the dynamism of our own action if we were ever to interpret life as something other than incessant change, a constant evolution, a création continue - and not as a condition, not as something static. Therefore, the past is present in all our doings, in everything connected with European unification - just as the future is present in them; for all politics is a constant process of keeping fit for the tasks which the next day will bring.

There is little in our past in which the independent political unity of Europe has found a more symbolic expression than in the man whose name distinguished the prize which I am honoured to receive today. When the light of history had risen fully over Northern Europe, the old continent had been living at peace internally and protected on its frontiers by the Pax Romana. Again and again it has sought both to end its quarrels - the feeling that they were fratricidal was never quite extinguished - and to defeat the external dangers which were never entirely absent. Of all the successful (or apparently successful) attempts that of Charlemagne is the most credible because it lacks those dubious and reckless elements which were inherent in other attempts. But it succeeded for a historical moment only, and then followed the beginnings of the long process at the end of which we find that national structure of Europe whose main characteristics were determined by the Congress of Vienna. This structure has survived

into our century, into our days even, as a delicately poised system of states skilfully and painfully kept in balance by the concert of powers through adding and taking away weights. Yet, in the end, it has lost its justification because it has failed in the one decisive test which any European political system must undergo: in two world wars it has demonstrated its inability to preserve the internal peace of Europe and to guarantee its external security.

Contemporary European history and - please God - its safe and happy future date from that time. Winston Churchill drew up its programme with visionary power when in 1946 he spoke in the European city of Zürich of the need to create "a kind of United States of Europe". Other statesmen (need I mention them by name? Perhaps I had best say: other recipients of the Charlemagne Prize) have taken up the creative task and countless Europeans have put themselves at its service. "Where princes build, there is plenty of work for carters" - today, the place of the princes is taken by the nations themselves. These statesmen and those who have helped them have put an end to the apparent but deceptive automatism of the balance of power in Europe, they have also ended the game of changing alliances to suit convenience, and have decided to entrust Europe to European self-government - if you will permit me to use this word on municipal soil.

True, the conditions of our times have helped us.

In this context I am not thinking primarily even of the threat to Europe by an expansive, combative system impelled by a fanatic ideology, a system for which in the long run coexistence with liberty means no more than a state of provisional toleration - much as this danger has contributed to making Europeans realize the need for unification.

I rather refer to two fundamental circumstances which we might describe as the very criteria of the new global age which has dawned

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in our lifetime.

The first is a new sense of space. Technical development - especially in transport - has made the world shrink in a way that would have been beyond the imagination of previous generations. Every one has become everyone's neighbour. Not one European state extends in any direction over a distance which anyone of its inhabitants could not cover in a single day. But other states, other economic units are of continental dimensions. They set the pace because they are already in a position to make full use of the modern large-scale potentialities, whilst the European allotment gardeners do not know where to use their motor ploughs.

Secondly, we find that what is very comprehensively called "evolution", and in particular the intellectual progress of mankind, has gathered breath-taking speed. Let me speak only of the most elementary expression of sovereign power: the technology of war has left the politicians so far behind that any idea of one of the European states still having genuine sovereignty to decide alone on war and peace is doomed to ridicule

Of course, neither of these circumstances - the changes in the categories of space and of time - has an automatic effect. No political change is the mechanical result of changes in environment. Wherever there are politics, the human will is engaged. But what is happening if that man is beginning to realize his dominion over his environments to an extent he previously dared not consider. Who, when we were students, spoke to us of any policy on economic trends in the sense in which we today understand this term? To most of us the economic cycle was rather like sunshine or hail, one had to know that it existed, and the optimists thought it was good, while the pessimists considered it a misfortune. Today, anticyclical policy is a central part of economic policy and the areas in which man is endeavouring to extend his dominion by its use are growing constantly greater. Certainly, this new boldness - like any other - entails

certain risks. In particular it entails the risk of paying too little respect to what has been handed down by tradition. But do not let us overestimate this risk: I think, in fact I fear, that we Europeans at any rate have least cause to worry about the preservation of inherited habits!

This brings us to the innermost core of the European phenomenon. The dreadful convulsions which mark European history in the first part of our century, have aroused a new freedom from prejudice in our relations with the traditional political structure. Not that the sense of nationality has been extinguished - despite the horrible abuse to which it has been put. No: Europe is and always will be variety. Its power and its character lie in the immense richness of its countryside, its peoples, its talents, its memories which we call history. But the sense of nationality has changed. It has been purified. It has put away its destructive qualities, its hereditary enmities, its rivalries, its aspirations to hegemony.

For Europe has come to realize that it represents not only variety. It is also unity, unity in diversity. Amidst all the differences there is a basic substance of identical elements, conditions, capacities, values, and psychological as well as intellectual concepts held in common, a sense of interdependence in happiness or misfortune, in jointly shaping or suffering our fate, in great common weaknesses, but also in brilliant common achievements - cultural, economic and political. Is not America even, although certainly not coterminous with Europe nor a part of it, at least to a considerable extent a European creation? And is not the Iron Curtain much more than a deeply smarting national wound - does it not cut right through the very heart of Europe? Europe has now undertaken to give political expression and political form to this unity in diversity. This is happening most forcibly, intensively and in the most advanced manner in our European Communities, where essential sectors of economic

policy are placed under a Community discipline with the help of organizational means patterned on the experience gained with federal constitutions. The fact that - as yet - this core of Europe is formed by no more than six countries is not of our doing, it is the doing of those who have so far not accepted the invitation to join - for reasons, incidentally, which we must fully respect. Yet, this is not a chance development. The area covered by the Communities is identical with the territory of those states which were brought to the edge of physical and political destruction by the wanton national socialist adventure. This experience has left in the hearts of these nations the fervent wish that such a thing shall never happen again. In their constitutions they have opened the way to waivers of sovereignty in favour of European institutions - what a dramatic development!

This is as far as any explanation of what is happening in Europe today will go. For the true changes, the changes which make history, are not those reflected in external, technical or economic facts which influence our behaviour. True, these material conditions and their evolution are important because man lives by bread, but not by bread alone. The true changes, however, are occurring in the soul of man. We no longer want to see in our European neighbour our enemy who is striving to kill us, or planning to undermine our prosperity or our prestige. We do not want the worker from Southern Italy whom we call to the North because we need him to be regarded as no more than a factor of production, we do not wish that he shall be treated differently from ourselves. We wish to be co-citizens in our common Europe.

Is that mysticism? It is as mystical as the fact that where 100 years ago windmills were turning we now find atomic piles. It is as mystical as the expectation that tomorrow or the day after we shall fly to America at a speed allowing us to arrive at an earlier hour than that of our departure - because we have overtaken the sun.

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For, of what kind are the obstacles in our path? They were created by human will and what human will has done human will can undo.

It is on this will that we stake the fate of Europe.