

A D D R E S S

by

Professor Dr. Walter HALLSTEIN
President of the Commission
of the European Economic Community

to the

Second Congress of the
European Foundation for
Cultural Purposes

on

13 December 1958
in Milan

I am very grateful to have the opportunity today of addressing this distinguished audience on the subject of:

"The Unity of European Culture

and

the Policy of uniting Europe

To my mind, this subject is of great importance, not only for understanding that policy, which, more than anything else, typifies political happenings in present-day Europe, but also for working out the criteria which should guide our own political behaviour, defining our objectives and choosing the appropriate means to ensure their attainment. What has been accomplished up to the present in the direction of a new order in Europe hardly extends beyond the field of economics and the satisfaction of the material needs of the people of Europe.

The danger therefore exists - and we know by experience that it is no purely theoretical danger but one of a highly practical, even of a political, nature - that what we have been pursuing with so much energy and perseverance since the end of the second world war may be misinterpreted as being no more than a material, or economic, exercise. Moreover, we would not even be justified in blaming the victims of this misapprehension. What words do they hear when there is talk of European integration? Coal and steel, free movement of goods, circulation of capital, customs tariffs, quotas. They hear of commercial policy, transport policy, agricultural policy, social policy, monetary policy, market policy, investment policy, etc... This is calculated to give the impression that the only objectives are increased trade, greater output and productivity, a better division of labour, more extensive markets and a higher material standard of living.

These are in all truth essential aims, but they are not the only aims. For the very idea of a European Coal and Steel Community, of a European

Atomic Energy Community and of a European Economic Community would never have been conceived if there had not existed, deep down in the consciousness of Europeans, a condition of receptivity to these solutions and even a readiness to urge their adoption. Only if all European political events, our activities, the resistance they meet and all possibilities of overcoming it are considered in the context of the culture and of the cultural history of present-day Europe, can we approach an understanding of this receptivity and uncover the strongest and most urgent motives of our action. I use the word "culture" here in its widest sense, not in the narrow positivist meaning which limits it to the Fine Arts and Science, to the sublime and disinterested striving after the Beautiful and the True.

I

It is customary to say - it has already become a formula - that Europe presents an example of unity in diversity, and when we apply this formula to European culture we are generally of the opinion that this unity is more evident there than in the political sphere.

1

It is true: Europe is culturally a unit. This unity of European culture is first of all an historical fact. Even today this idea is so generally accepted by the world at large that both America and Russia see Europe primarily as a unit and accept only with reluctance the European habit of placing the accent on the nation. Historically, this unity derives from the fact that Charlemagne constructed Europe as a unit not only from the point of view of politico-military power, but also from that of the mind. This he did by calling to his court all the great intellects of his time whom he could gather, not only from the Frankish Kingdom, but also, most significantly, from the more

highly civilized societies of the Anglo-Saxons, the Visigoths and the Lombards. He did not stop there, but entrusted this intellectual Areopagus with the historic mission of taking over, enriching and transmitting the heritage of Antiquity on the basis of the universal imperatives of the Christian faith and the ancestral character of his peoples. All differentiations were thought of as no more than elements in this all-embracing programme, and indeed it is as such that they fit into later European history - the religious and national divisions being no exception. In this way, absolute cultural unity was maintained up to the close of the Middle Ages. Even later, it survived in this or that practical aspect, or as an ideal, thanks to great European institutions and representative bodies - not the Church alone, although it was, for long centuries, the backbone of European culture. Let us recall the culture of chivalry, in which the politically dominant class gave expression to its ideal, an ideal bearing the stamp of the spirit and thus of universal validity. Or we need only remember that as late as the 17th and 18th centuries the "Grand Tour of Europe" was still de rigueur for all young noblemen, or that universities were by origin European institutions which, for the first time in history, here in Europe, gave corporative autonomy to the cultural domain of knowledge, or that their degree conferred the "venia ubique legendi", the right to teach anywhere in Europe. Let us think, in the field of the Fine Arts, of the international corporations of master builders and art schools which, long after the birth of the modern national states, preserved the common values of a European language of form. At the same time, the jus publicum europaeum and the European republic of scholars continued to embody important vestiges of European unity. It should not be forgotten that, up to the period of German classicism, that is until about 1800, even the gradual growth of separate national cultures was to a great extent no more than the expression, in national languages and forms, of Europe's heritage from Antiquity and Christianity - but increasingly from Antiquity. These cultures were, moreover, expressly intended as a European enrichment of the various national civilisations. It may be remarked in passing that it is precisely for this reason that it is impossible to interpret European civilisation from the purely formal point of view of aesthetic categories, or from the material point of view of subsidiary factors occurring in the history of the several nations.

The conditio sine qua non for an understanding of that culture is a minimum knowledge of the heritage which is common to all Europeans and which they have kept alive throughout the centuries, i.e. the Bible, the myths of Antiquity and the history of the Ancient World.

This brings us to a second element which it is impossible to omit even in a brief survey: the fact that European civilisation as a whole is indebted to values older than Europe itself, which are recognized as universal. Since the days of Ranke, it has been considered that, in addition to the Germanic tradition, Christianity and Antiquity were the foundations on which Europe was built. These elements must not, however, be regarded only as simple historical data, but as universally binding values. Their scope has been contested from many sides in the course of European history, but it has always been recognized that they represented not merely fortuitous historical contingencies but were the expression of absolute values which conferred rank and dignity on all European achievements. Touched by the spectacle of the primitive Germans trying to adapt their archaic mentality, so unaccustomed to conceptual distinctions, to the biblical and Latin world far removed from their own history, we realize that these very efforts were a proof of reverence for the universal imperatives of faith and culture. Here again is a feature common to all European culture: the absolute character underlying these fundamental values and their resultant power to radiate their influence over all that is human.

The attempt of humanism - and in particular that of the Age of Enlightenment - to apprehend and apply universal values in accordance with the criteria of reason alone, and completely regardless of all historical and sociological links, has doubtless been proved erroneous. The inevitable historical reaction followed.

After these two phases of the historical development of European civilization, we find recognition of the extent to which the millenary structure of European culture had been unique and "European" not despite its constant preoccupation with the universal, but just because of it. And this is still true today. We would fail to grasp the full reality of Europe if we were

to consider that any European grouping was sufficient unto itself, whether it be the Europe of the Six, a community of States of continental Europe in process of ever-closer integration, or the Europe of the 17, in other words OEEC Europe, or again the Europe of the Council of Europe in Strasburg. If this new Europe wishes to perpetuate the cultural unity of the old, if it wishes to be as deeply rooted in it as was its predecessor in the cultural unity of Antiquity and Christianity, it too must submit to the universally binding law of the Spirit.

If we now consider Europe in its diversity, it is indispensable that we have a keen realization of the problem which confronts us: where is the point beyond which this diversity ceases to be simply the individual expression of general truths and begins to call into question the very existence of a community? There can be no doubt that in this sphere, too, division and dispersion have largely been Europe's historical fate, even though not quite to the same extent, it is true, as on the political plane.

The most striking illustration is furnished by language. Even within the old Roman "limes", where vulgar Latin constituted a common linguistic basis, this not only gave rise to a multitude of popular dialects but also, after the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, to several literary languages. Five centuries later the common use of Latin as the language of learning was sacrificed to nationalism. From this time onwards, it is precisely in the great works of the European languages and the European spirit that we discern a particularist character which militates against the different peoples sharing in all the wealth of European culture. Translations of great literary works in particular have left much to be desired; the verse of Dante is really as difficult to translate as the language of Hegel's philosophy. On the other hand, the European languages indisputably show certain common traits. This is due to the two families of languages, the "Germanic" and the "Romance", their influence on each other, and their interpenetration. It should also be pointed out that scientific terminology everywhere is based on Latin and Greek roots.

To realize the potential danger of this diversity, the danger, in short, of the destruction of the unity of European culture, is to have achieved much. We may hope that where this danger is recognized, a halt will at least be

called to the progress of disintegration. There is also merit in recognizing that our own point of view is provincial when measured against the background of Europe and, consequently, in striving to broaden it. But all this is not enough. It is not sufficient for us to interest ourselves in the other European national civilizations as in something foreign and then, after an interesting and sweeping cultural jaunt, return to our own provincial world. Nor does it suffice to see in European culture nothing more than the simple sum of a number of national cultures. Our aim must be to rediscover our own heritage in the other European cultures which have grown foreign to us and thus really to recognize once more the unity of European culture in its diversity. Only thus will we have a reliable criterion to define the boundaries between Europe's culture and the extra-European cultural heritage. Only thus will it be possible for us to class impartially the various phenomena to which a national culture lays claim and to accord them the rank and priority which are their due on the European plane. For instance, we must bring ourselves to recognize, without any feelings of jealousy, that the cathedrals of Cologne and Ratisbon bear witness to the cultural supremacy of France at the time they were built and, furthermore, that in this Gothic civilization France provided the premises for a whole European culture. We should no longer allow the outstanding figure of the founder Charlemagne to be dismissed with a few words of honorable mention in the national history books of Germany and France simply because he lived before any German or French history in the real sense had begun. It is also high time to admit that the contest between the German and Polish nations for the honour of counting Copernicus among their sons neglects the essential allegiance of this man who was first and foremost a canon of the Ermland church and a citizen of the European republic of scholars.

II

What is the relation of all this to our political efforts for the unity of Europe? Is it presumption to point out in passing that everything done in the political sphere since the end of the second world war also constitutes a great cultural achievement? Even those who use the word "culture" in an

inadmissibly narrow sense cannot but recognize, for instance, that the Treaties of Rome represent a considerable achievement on the intellectual plane. It is indeed the first occasion on which the, so to say, purely intellectual part of the work to be done was accomplished by independent procedure. When we were in Messina, in those never-to-be-forgotten early summer days of 1955, we decided that the fresh start on the work of unifying Europe, the "relance de l'intégration européenne", should be tackled in two stages. In the first of these, the experts chosen from the civil services of the six countries, were to work together as such. On the assumption that a political decision would be taken in favour of the economic integration of the Six, they were to examine possibilities and means of bringing it about. They were given a political chief, not to keep them in leading-strings, but to maintain the political drive and prevent it from petering out in the sands of the thousand and one difficulties which must inevitably be encountered. It was only when this work was completed and the results written down in a report which will be known in European history as the Spaak Report, that we met in Venice, a year later, to take the political decision and begin the negotiations with governments on the basis of this report; the Treaty was ready for signature in the quite unbelievably short period of nine months.

Let us reflect for a moment on the significance of this fact. We often hear it said that integration is a revolutionary development, and it is clear that what is meant is that the conditions of economic activity for the inhabitants of Europe, indeed, for their life together, are to be renewed from the ground up. However, this work is free of the destruction and violence commonly associated with the idea of revolution. On the contrary, the most splendid feature of the achievement is that it was accomplished by the quiet force of truth and truth alone, and that no means other than persuasion were used to overcome the inevitable difficulties. Neither let us forget the importance of the fact that for a decade a few hundred men, responsible men, at the very heart of their respective national civil services, have been striving tirelessly for European unity in confident co-operation, and conscious of their common responsibility. Let us beware of under-estimating the reality

of this European spirit, this communion of souls in the Platonic sense.

Let us rather strive to penetrate beyond the still imperfect formal expressions of the policy for Europe and to reach its essence. This will only be revealed to us if we understand the process as a political one. It is customary to say that European integration and all wider relationships are of an economic nature. But this is not correct even if the word economic is used in a formal and definitional sense. Let us illustrate the point by reference to the case of the European Economic Community. It is not true to say that it is first and foremost the business world which is being unified. Business, after all, means the activities of persons aiming at the satisfaction of the material needs of a society; the activity of workers, industrialists, merchants, transport undertakings, etc. These activities are not being integrated. No enterprises are being merged to bring about what is called economic integration. It is rather the part played by the national states in fixing conditions for the economic behaviour of human beings which is being unified. What is being unified is our economic policy. In suppressing customs duties and quotas, in forbidding subsidies, in envisaging a common trade policy, a common agricultural policy and a common transport policy, in setting limits to the foreign exchange policy of States by depriving them of the sovereign right to create or maintain inflation, in doing all this, we take nothing away from the European citizen, nor do we restrict his liberties; we simply remove certain functions from the sovereignty of national states and pool them on another level, restoring to the States in the form of participation in the administration of these common portions of sovereignty what they thus abandon.

However, there is no such thing as an autonomous economic policy completely independent of general policy, absolute, and its own justification. Economic policy, too, in its own sphere, is an expression of the general conception of values of the community in which and for which it is applied. It may be said that what is called the economic integration of Europe is an imperative of economic reason. But it must be clearly understood that this reason could not operate if it were not accompanied by reflexion on fundamental values much more profound than mere reasoning about economic policy. If it is from now on forbidden to escape from fair competition from another European country by means of

artificial state-organized protectionist measures, this means that such competition is recognized as being in no way different from internal competition. If it is forbidden from now on to oppose the immigration of unemployed from Southern Italy, this means that these men are considered in neighbouring countries as having the same right to work as the inhabitants of these countries. Is this not tantamount to recognizing the existence of the unity of the territory and of the human community inhabiting it?

For all this, it is no less true that the relations of Europe with the rest of the world give a powerful impulse to her economic integration. This results in particular from the fact that technical development urges and indeed forces us to adopt an economic policy based on a large area in order to be able both to furnish the now essential means of production and to secure adequate markets. In competition with economic giants of the size of the United States of America and the Soviet Union, it is no longer possible to tolerate the division of Europe into economic areas which are far too small. It is equally beyond all doubt that the mortal threat under which Europe at present lives is a powerful incentive to integration. In the sphere of general politics, as in that of economic policy, however, the effect of this external pressure is only to reveal already existing agreement and common points of view. Necessity has sharpened the vision of the European, so that he recognizes that the things which separate him from other Europeans are of human contrivance, barriers not erected by Nature but by the hand of Man. But what men have erected they can also sweep away. All that is required is steadfastness of purpose.

Must I forestall another possible misunderstanding? We believe that the break-through to political community will also help to free the European mind from the narrow and cramped condition into which it had fallen under the influence of exclusive and dogmatic nationalism. Yet, we have as little intention of setting aside national forms of expression in the cultural sphere as of replacing national states by a new supranational organization in the political field. What we want everywhere is a purification of national sentiment and national consciousness. After the recent frenzied adventure in nationalism which plunged the world into such frightful disaster - a disaster

from the effects of which we are still suffering today - our ambition is to establish a harmonious order of national values. We do not want any monotonous, streamlined civilisation for Europe. We are striving for an order in which the diversity of gifts of the European peoples will enrich us all, for continuous exchange and peaceful competition in which each tries to stimulate his neighbour but not to eliminate him. Only thus will we be able to master the tasks which Europe as a whole must perform for the world at large, in conformity with that universality which is the perennial hall-mark of European culture. The task which here faces us is indeed no mean one. It is nothing less than that of providing a cultural pattern for the all-embracing technical era on which we have entered.

III

Does all this mean, therefore, that we can rely on the proper European attitude emerging of its own accord, organically and automatically, from practical co-operation on the political and economic levels? By no means.

In the world of human behaviour, nothing happens spontaneously by virtue of what might be called historical causality in Nature. Everywhere the human will plays its part. Consequently, even on the plane of the spirit the attitude of which we have spoken needs to be constantly and methodically cultivated. This is the concern of two types of authority: the political and the intellectual. I shall not be misunderstood if in this connection I include political authorities. I do not mean at all that the world of culture should become the handmaid of politics. However, it is a historical fact that in present-day Europe it is above all the public authorities which, more than any other factor, create the conditions of intellectual and artistic work, and, by the very fact and manner of creating them, exercise an influence on the trend of the work itself - in a way, moreover, which is not always without drawbacks. This fact lends even greater value to the establishment of an institution with the standing of the European Foundation for Cultural Purposes. This Foundation is not the creation of states or governments, but the result of a far-sighted and generous action, bringing together, in complete liberty, men and women who feel spontaneous concern for the preservation and development of European culture. It is such acts of European

self-help which time and again inspire those who bear responsibility with courage to continue their European work, since these acts convey an assurance that their work is in harmony with the opinions and the efforts of the most progressive elements in the European countries.

When all is said and done, however, the intellectual authorities are the decisive factor. None the less, intellectual authorities of the kind needed are as yet no more than in their earliest beginnings. These beginnings are extremely encouraging and full of merit, whether we consider colleges or European institutes or the efforts of this or that European university to give the European problems of our time a central place in its work. But these as yet sporadic efforts are not sufficient. Making possible the spiritual mission of contemporary Europe means above all calling into being the intellectual authorities which are to serve it. The intellectual authority par excellence - the University - is Europe's own creation. Permit me, therefore, to conclude with a pressing appeal to all those concerned for the founding of a European University.

I have already said that the universities are a specifically European creation such as did not exist in other cultures. At their origin in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, they were European even in the geographical sense, inasmuch as the most famous, Paris and Bologna in particular, drew their students from all over Europe and spread their light to the furthest confines of the medieval world. It followed that their degrees were not of local value but conferred the right to teach in any European University. The State university for his Sicilian kingdom which the emperor Frederick II had established in 1224 in Naples as an instrument of his ambition to bring even scholarship under his undisputed control was generally considered as an exception and as a violation of the rights of intellectual liberty. And even eminent subjects of the Kingdom of Sicily - none other than St. Thomas Aquinas among them - strove to escape from the State university. Later, however, the example of Naples triumphed as individual states began to base their university policy on their need for officials with an academic training and on the desire to propagate a more or less inclusive system of values peculiar to themselves. In this sense the universities played an outstanding part in the national

movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and even became, to a large extent, their spiritual centres. If today our consciousness is turning away from the individual nations and being directed again to our common Europe, it is the obvious thing to set the seal on this process by founding a European University.

Let no one object that this is superfluous, a luxury, on the grounds that we already have enough universities in Europe. That is not true. We have too few universities in Europe. Quite apart from the question I have just raised, I am convinced that it is an error to attempt to palliate over-crowding in our universities by increasing the numbers of teaching staff and multiplying university institutes.

Nor is it a valid argument to say that a tendency to think on European lines is everywhere evident anyway, manifesting itself in the universities by meetings, congresses, exchanges of teaching personnel and students and even, in some cases, by the establishment of special institutes. I do not deny that this tendency exists. But it does not answer the essential requirement. It is not sufficient to hold congresses on European themes. Exchanges of guest staff and students which, in any case, are organized on a far wider territorial basis than that of Europe, certainly constitute an extraordinarily welcome achievement: they make it possible both for the guests and the host Universities to broaden their view. The fact remains, nevertheless, that those who are not nationals of the country consider themselves as guests. They are not in their university. The institutes, too, achieve only a part of what is necessary, for the spiritual renewal of Europe demands something more than scholarly debates on specific European themes.

I do not mean by this that the new institution should be directed against existing universities. In asking for its establishment, we are no more than drawing the conclusions from the very long experience provided by the history of universities. Universities are conservative by their very nature and this is one of their most precious characteristics. Tradition is the essence of academic teaching. That is why the traditionalism of universities is legitimate. And that is why in the history of universities fundamental innovations have always been accomplished by means of new institutions. I have already quoted the example of

the State university of Naples. Let me now add others: the foundation of Wittenberg, in 1506, as a university of a special philological type which furnished the background for Luther's insistence on the Word; the foundation, in 1575, of Leyden, as the prototype of Calvinist, and later of enlightened, humanism; the foundation, in 1810, of the University of Berlin, as the model of the neo-humanist German State University combining research and teaching; and also the English universities of the nineteenth century, of a type which could never have grown up on the traditional foundations of the old universities of Oxford and Cambridge. I mention only in passing the problems raised by the "Ecole Polytechnique" and other technical colleges modelled on it which could not establish contact with the old university but produced a special sort of high school.

The new institution is not therefore recommended with the idea of setting aside existing universities. If I may be permitted to employ an expression borrowed from liberal economic theory, it is much more an orthodox means of inciting the existing universities to a new and comprehensive effort. For if anything has made the European universities great, it has been competition. Nothing is more effective than example, even in the cultural sphere.

This example should be furnished by a permanent meeting-place for European scholars and students in which all feel themselves at home and live side by side. Wherever they may come from, they should all contend with one another and look over each other's shoulders in their quest for truth. They should work together; each should bring to the daily round of scholarly work his own contribution, his pride in the traditions of his country, the special ways of his own people, and their intellectual and spiritual values. Of course, these possibilities should first be exercised on European problems, of which there is certainly no lack. I am thinking of a common European presentation of History. I am thinking of the problems posed by the attempt being made to create out of six formerly separate national economies something in the nature of a new economic organism, something that might be called a new economic body; I am thinking of the approximation of legal systems to some extent forced upon us by the existing Treaties; I am thinking of the study of languages; I am thinking of the diffusion of necessary knowledge concerning the specifically European

community law already promulgated. These are only a few examples to illustrate my argument. But we must not stop at these specifically European objectives, if only because our own tradition obliges us to be universal.

It would therefore be a great deed, if we were to make use of the opportunity furnished by the Treaties of Rome when they expressly prescribe the establishment of an institution of this kind. We would thus profit by the exceptional chance offered to Europe at this historic moment of her extreme weakness: the chance to find ourselves spiritually, to recognize our true image with all the clarity of which the human mind is capable.
