

The Churchill Europe Lectures 1996 – 2019

Let Europe Arise!



In 1946, Winston Churchill set out his vision of how Europe could rise up out of the destruction of World War II and rebuild itself as a peaceful, safe and prosperous continent. Churchill concluded his famous speech by urging: “Let Europe Arise!”

The speech was of visionary power and is often seen as the initiation of the European integration process. Sir Winston Churchill stressed the importance of overcoming the German-French antagonism to create a peaceful Europe and he called for a kind of “United States of Europe”.

The Churchill Europe Symposium series has two central objectives. First, it commemorates what is rightly seen as one of the most important speeches in the 20th century on Europe’s future. Second, at a time when Europe is developing faster than ever before, it aims to contribute to the continuing debate about the future shape of the continent’s institutions.

The symposium is organized jointly by the Europe Institute at the University of Zurich, the Swiss Institute of International Studies, the British Embassy and with the support of Bank Julius Baer & Co. Ltd.



Julius Bär

Sir Winston Churchill’s speech at the University of Zurich in 1946

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am honoured today by being received in your ancient university and by the address which had been given to me on your behalf and which I greatly value.

I wish to speak to you today about the tragedy of Europe. This noble continent, comprising on the whole the fairest and the most cultivated regions of the earth, enjoying a temperate and equable climate, is the home of all the great parent races of the western world. It is the fountain of Christian faith and Christian ethics. It is the origin of most of the culture, the arts, philosophy and science, both of ancient and modern time. If Europe were once united in the sharing of its common inheritance, there would be no limit to the happiness, to the prosperity and the glory which its three or four million people would enjoy. Yet it is from Europe that have sprung that series of frightful nationalistic quarrels, originated by the Teutonic nations in their rise to power, which we have seen in this twentieth century and even in our own lifetime, wreck the peace and mar the prospects of all mankind.

And what is the plight to which Europe has been reduced? Some of the smaller states have indeed made a good recovery but, over wide areas, a vast quivering mass of tormented, hungry, care-worn and bewildered human beings gape at the ruins

**“And what is the plight to
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of their cities and their homes, and scan the dark horizons for the approach of some new peril, tyranny or terror. Among the victors there is a babel of voices; among the vanquished the sullen silence of despair. That is all that Europeans, grouped in so many ancient states and nations, that is all that the Germanic races have got by tearing each other to pieces and spreading havoc far and wide. Indeed, but for the fact that the great Republic across the Atlantic Ocean has at length realized that the ruin or enslavement of Europe would involve their own fate as well, and has stretched out hands of succour and of guidance, but for that, the Dark Ages would have



Sir Winston Churchill at the University of Zurich, 1946

returned in all their cruelty and squalor. Gentlemen, they may still return.

Yet all the while there is a remedy which, if it were generally and spontaneously adopted by the great majority of people in many lands, would as if by a miracle transform the whole scene, and would in a few years make all Europe, or the greater part of it, as free and as happy as Switzerland is today. What is this sovereign remedy? It is to recreate the European Family, or as much of it as we can, and to provide it with a structure under which it can dwell in peace, in safety and in freedom. We must build a kind of United States of Europe. In this way only will hundreds of millions of toilers be able to regain the simple joys and hopes which make life worth living. The process is simple. All that is needed is the resolve of hundreds of millions of men and women to do right instead of wrong and to gain as their reward blessing instead of cursing.

“We must build a kind of United States of Europe.”

Much work, Ladies and Gentlemen, has been done upon this task by the exertions of the Pan-European Union which owes so much to Count Coudenhove-Kalergi and which commanded the services of the famous French patriot and statesman Aristide Briand. There is also that immense body of doctrine and procedure which was brought into being amid high hopes after the First World War. I mean the League of Nations. The League of Nations did not fail because of its principles or conceptions. It failed because these principles were deserted by those States who had brought it into being. It failed because the governments of those days feared to face the facts, and act while time remained. This disaster must not be repeated. There is therefore much knowledge and material with which to build; and also bitter dear bought experience to stir the builders.

I was very glad to read in the newspapers two days ago that my friend President Truman had expressed his interest and sympathy with this great design. There is no reason why a regional organization of Europe should in any way conflict with the world organization of the United Nations. On the contrary, I believe that the larger synthesis will only survive if it is founded upon

coherent natural groupings. There is already a natural grouping in the western hemisphere. We, British, have our own Commonwealth of Nations. These do not weaken, on the contrary they strengthen, the world organization. They are in fact its main support. And why should there not be a European group which could give a sense of enlarged patriotism and common citizenship to the distracted peoples of this turbulent and mighty continent? And why should it not take its rightful place with other great groupings and help to shape the onward destinies of men? In order that this should be accomplished there must be an act of faith in which millions of families speaking many languages must consciously take part.

We all know that the two world wars through which we have passed arose out of the vain passion of a newly-united Germany to play the dominating part in the world. In this last struggle, crimes and massacres have been committed for which there is no parallel since the invasion of the Mongols in the fourteenth century and no equal at any time in human history. The guilty must be punished. Germany must be deprived of the power to rearm and make another aggressive war. But when all this has been done, as it will be done, as it is being done, then there must be an end to retribution. There must be what Mr. Gladstone many years ago called “a blessed act of oblivion”. We must all turn our backs upon the horrors of the past. We must look to the future. We cannot afford to drag forward across the years that are to come the hatreds and revenges which have sprung from the injuries of the past. If Europe is to be saved from infinite misery, and indeed from final doom, there must be this act of faith in the European Family and this act of oblivion against all the crimes and follies of the past.

Can the free peoples of Europe rise to the height of these resolves of the soul and of the instincts of the spirit of man? If they can, the wrongs and injuries which have been inflicted will have been washed away on all sides by the miseries which have been endured. Is there any need for further floods of agony? Is the only lesson of history to be that mankind is unteachable? Let there be justice, mercy and freedom. The peoples have only to will it, and all will achieve their hearts’ desire.

I am now going to say something that will astonish you. The first step in the recreation of the

European Family must be a partnership between France and Germany. In this way only can France recover the moral and cultural leadership of Europe. There can be no revival of Europe without a spiritually great France and a spiritually great Germany. The structure of the United States of Europe, if well and truly built, will be such as to make the material strength of a single state less important. Small nations will count as much as large ones and gain their honour by their contribution to the common cause. The ancient states and principalities of Germany, freely joined together for mutual convenience in a federal system, might take their individual places among the United States of Europe.

I shall not try to make a detailed programme for hundreds of millions of people who want to be happy and free, prosperous and safe, who wish to enjoy the four freedoms of which the great President Roosevelt spoke, and live in accordance with the principles embodied in the Atlantic Charter. If this is their wish, if this is the wish of the Europeans in so many lands, they have only to say so, and means can certainly be found, and machinery erected, to carry that wish to full fruition.

But I must give you a warning. Time may be short. At present there is a breathing space. The cannons have ceased firing. The fighting has topped; but the dangers have not stopped. If we are to form the United States of Europe, or whatever name it may take, we must begin now.

In these present days we dwell strangely and precariously under the shield, and I will even say protection, of the atomic bomb. The atomic bomb is still only in the hands of a state and nation which we know will never use it except in the cause of right and freedom. But it may well be that in a few years this awful agency of destruction will be widespread and the catastrophe following from its use by several warring nations will not only bring to an end all that we call civilization, but may possibly disintegrate the globe itself.

I must now sum up the propositions which are before you. Our constant aim must be to build and fortify the strength of the United Nations Organization. Under and within that world concept we must recreate the European Family in a regional structure called, it may be, the United States of Europe. And the first practical step would

be to form a Council of Europe. If at first all the States of Europe are not willing or able to join the Union, we must nevertheless proceed to

assemble and combine those who will and those who can. The salvation of the common people of every race and of every land from war or servitude must be established on solid foundations and must be guarded by the readiness of all men and women to die rather than submit to tyranny. In all this urgent work, France and Germany must take the lead together. Great Britain, the British Commonwealth of Nations, mighty America and I trust Soviet Russia – for then indeed all would be well – must be the friends and sponsors of the new Europe and must champion its right to live and shine. Therefore, I say to you: Let Europe arise!

“Therefore, I say to you: Let Europe arise!”

Previous speeches

2019

Process of Discovery: What Brexit has taught us (so far) about Parliament, Politics and the UK Constitution

Rt Hon John Bercow MP

Speaker of the British House of Commons

A strong Europe in a changing world

Mark Rutte

Prime Minister of the Netherlands

Europe – challenges and perspectives in an ever more complex world

Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović

President of Coratia

2018

The Future of Europe – Foundations of Unity of the States of Europe

Andrzej Duda

President of the Republic of Poland

Roberto Balzaretti

Swiss State Secretary of Foreign Affairs

2017

Europa – einst Verheissung – heute Streitfall

Joachim Gauck

Former President of Germany

Alain Berset

Vice President of the Swiss Federal Council

2016

Europa – la dernière chance de l’Europe

Valéry Giscard d’Estaing

Former President of the French Republic

Pascal Couchepin

Former Swiss Federal Councillor for Home Affairs

70th Anniversary of Churchill’s speech at UZH

Jean-Claude Juncker

President of the European Commission

Johann N. Schneider-Ammann

President of the Swiss Federal Council

2015

The Future of Europe’s Security Architecture

Toomas Hendrik Ilves

President of the Republic of Estonia

Felix Gutzwiller

Chairman of the Swiss Foreign Affairs Committee of the Council of States

Seung Chong

International Lawyer and Author

Ukraine in Europe

Petro Poroschenko

President of Ukraine

Didier Burkhalter

Swiss Federal Councillor for Foreign Affairs

2015

Der Staat im dritten Jahrtausend

Fürst Hans-Adam II. von und zu Liechtenstein

Governing Prince and Head of State of Liechtenstein

2013

Democracy and the National Interest – The Challenge for Europe

Lord Christopher Patten of Barnes

Former European Commissioner for External Relations and former member of the UK Parliament

Moritz Leuenberger

Former Member of the Swiss Federal Council

From 1946 till today – a European success story. Why leadership matters.

José Manuel Barroso

President of the European Commission

2012

Quo Vadis Europe

Romano Prodi

Former President of the European Commission and former Prime Minister of Italy

Switzerland and NATO: Partners in Security

Anders Fogh Rasmussen

Secretary General of NATO

2011

Europe at the Crossroads

Tony Blair

Former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom

Doris Leuthard

Swiss Federal Councillor for the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications

Adam Roberts

Former Professor for International Relations at Oxford University

Europe’s political and economic challenges in a changing world

Herman Van Rompuy

President of the European Council

Micheline Calmy-Rey

Swiss Federal Councillor of Foreign Affairs

2009/2010

The Future of Europe

Jean-Claude Trichet

President of the European Central Bank

Jean-Pierre Roth

Former President of the Swiss National Bank

Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf

Swiss Federal Councillor of Finance

Kroatien an der Schwelle zur Europäischen Union

Stjepan Mesić

President of Croatia

2008

A Learning Organisation Tackles the Future

Ursula Plassnik

Austrian Minister of Foreign Affairs

Micheline Calmy-Rey

Swiss Federal Councillor for Foreign Affairs

What will happen in Europe?

Prof. Dr. Romano Prodi

Former President of the European Commission and former Prime Minister of Italy

Kroatien auf dem Weg in die EU

Dr. Ivo Sanader

Prime Minister of Croatia

2007

The Future of Europe: A British Perspective

Margaret Beckett

Former British Foreign Secretary

Die Bedeutung von Schwellenländern in der globalen Strategie der Deutschen Bank

Dr. Josef Ackermann

Vorsitzender des Vorstands und des Group Executive Committee, Deutsche Bank

2006

60 years after Churchill’s call for unity: where does the United States of Europe stand

Richard Freiherr von Weizsäcker

Former President of the Federal Republic of Germany

Europa in einer neuen Weltordnung

Dr. Hans-Dietrich Genscher

Former German Federal Minister

2005

Europe from an American Perspective

Henry Kissinger

Former US Secretary of State

Denis MacShane

Former Minister of State for Europe

Annemarie Huber-Hotz

President of the Swiss Federal Council

Österreich 10 Jahre in der EU – eine Zwischenbilanz

Dr. Wolfgang Schüssel

Federal Chancellor of the Republic of Austria



Sir Winston Churchill

30 November 1874 – 24 January 1965

Prime Minister of the United Kingdom

10 May 1940 – 26 July 1945

26 October 1951 – 6 April 1955

Member of the Parliament

From 1900 till the start of his term as Prime Minister in 1940.

Nobel Laureate in Literature

Nobel Prize in Literature for his mastery of historical and biographical descriptions as well as for brilliant oratory in defending exalted human values, 1953.

2004

The New Challenges

Aleksander Kwaśniewski

President of the Republic of Poland

Christoph Blocher

Swiss Federal Councillor for Justice and Police

2003

Reforms and Changes in Europe

Mikuláš Dzurinda

Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic

Franz Fischler

EU Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries

László Kovács

Former Foreign Minister of Hungary

Micheline Calmy-Rey

Swiss Federal Councillor for Foreign Affairs

Jeremy Soames

Member of the British Parliament and Grandson of Sir Winston Churchill

2002

Changing Spirit

Zoran Djindjić

Prime Minister of Serbia

Jean-Claude Juncker

Prime Minister of Luxembourg

Joseph Deiss

Swiss Federal Councillor for Foreign Affairs

Lord Jenkins of Hillhead

Former President of the European Commission

Gordon Pell

Chief Executive of Coutts Group

2001

Europe: Vision and Reality

Helmut Kohl

Former Chancellor of Germany

Sir George Mathewson

Chairman of the Royal Bank of Scotland Group

Samuel Schmid

Swiss Federal Councillor for Defence, Civil Protection and Sport

2000

Experiences and Perspectives

Valéry Giscard d’Estaing

Former President of the French Republic

Joseph Deiss

Swiss Federal Councillor for Foreign Affairs

Lord David Douglas-Home

Chairman of the Board of RBS Coutts Bank Ltd

1999

Security in Europe

Lord David Owen

Former British Foreign Secretary

Adolf Ogi

Swiss Federal Councillor for Defence, Civil Protection and Sport

Andrzej Olechowski

Former Foreign Minister of Poland

1998

Economic and Monetary Union

Sir Edward Heath

Former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom

Pascal Couchepin

Swiss Federal Councillor for the Economy

Prabhu Gupta

Director Organisational and Executive Development at UBS

1997

Expansion to the East

Václav Klaus

Prime Minister of the Czech Republic

László Kovács

Foreign Minister of Hungary

Lord William Wallace of Saltaire

London School of Economics and Political Science

Prince Karl von Schwarzenberg

Former Chancellor of Vaclav Havel

Eberhard von Koerber

President of ABB Europe

1996

Fiftieth Anniversary of Churchill’s Speech

Malcolm Rifkind

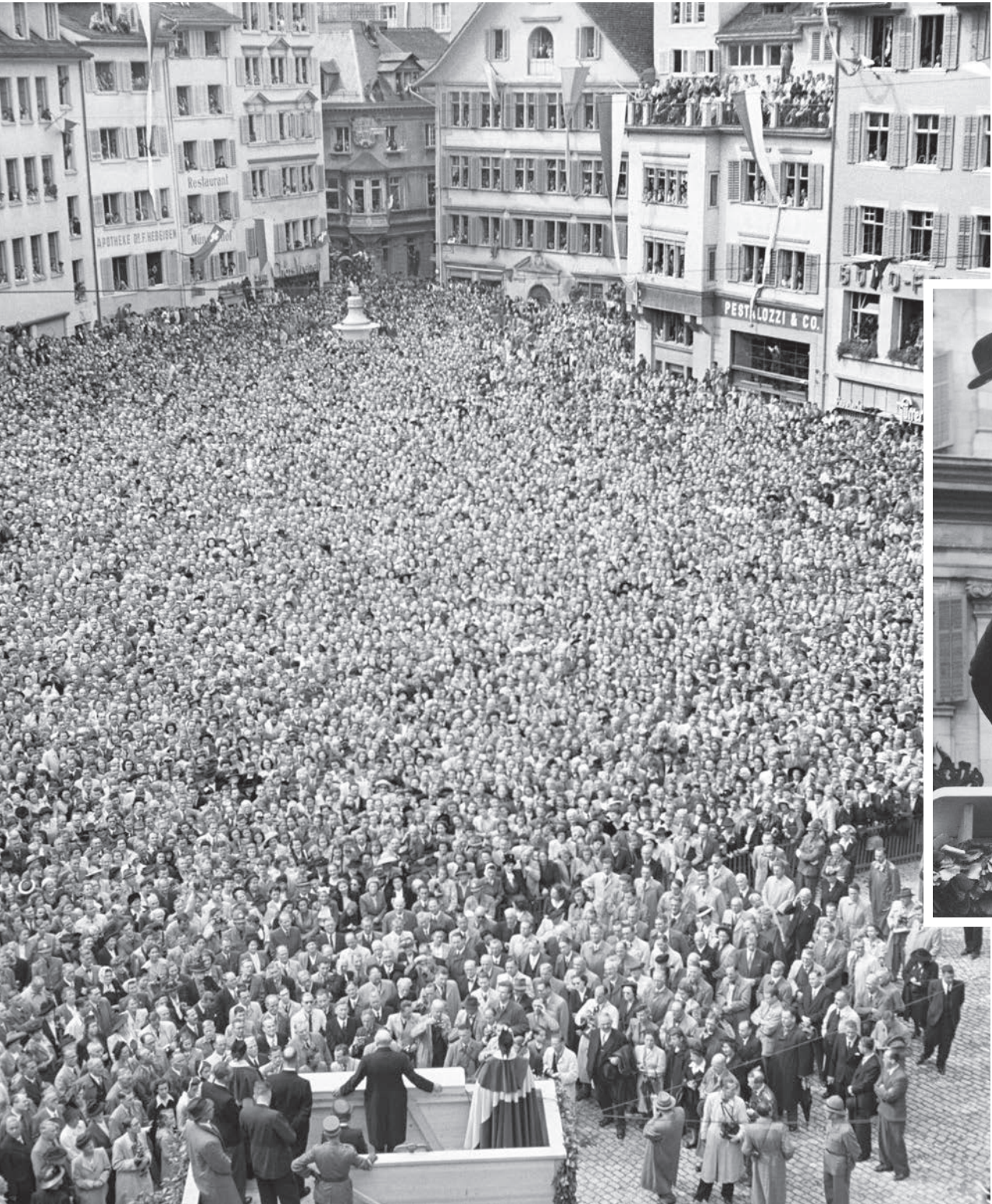
British Foreign Secretary

Flavio Cotti

Swiss Federal Councillor for Foreign Affairs

Nicholas Soames

Member of the Parliament and Grandson of Sir Winston Churchill



Münsterplatz at the Zunfthaus zur Meisen, 1946



Sir Winston Churchill at the Zunfthaus zur Meisen, 1946

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