

UNITED EUROPE MEETING

A SPEECH AT THE ALBERT HALL

14 MAY 1947

- 11 *May—The Conservative Party Central Office issue the “Industrial Charter”.*
 - 12 *May—The Royal Family land in England on return from their visit to the Union of South Africa.*
 - 14 *May—A further £50,000,000 of the American Loan is drawn by Britain. Total withdrawals now amount to £437,500,000.*
 - 14 *May—The United Europe Committee holds a public meeting at the Albert Hall, London.*
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All the greatest things are simple, and many can be expressed in a single word: Freedom; Justice; Honour; Duty; Mercy; Hope. We who have come together here to-night, representing almost all the political parties in our British national life and nearly all the creeds and churches of the Western world—this large audience filling a famous hall—we also can express our purpose in a single word—“Europe”. At school we learned from the maps hung on the walls, and the advice of our teachers that there is a continent called Europe. I remember quite well being taught this as a child, and after living a long time, I still believe it is true. However, professional geographers now tell us that the Continent of Europe is really only the peninsula of the Asiatic land mass. I must tell you in all faith that I feel that this would be an arid and uninspiring conclusion, and for myself, I distinctly prefer what I was taught when I was a boy.

It has been finely said by a young English writer, Mr. Sewell, that the real demarcation between Europe and Asia is no chain of mountains, no natural frontier, but a system of beliefs and ideas which we call Western Civilisation. “In the rich pattern of this culture”, says Mr. Sewell, “there

are many strands; the Hebrew belief in God; the Christian message of compassion and redemption; the Greek love of truth, beauty and goodness; the Roman genius for law. Europe is a spiritual conception. But if men cease to hold that conception in their minds, cease to feel its worth in their hearts, it will die.”

These are not my words, but they are my faith; and we are here to proclaim our resolve that the spiritual conception of Europe shall not die. We declare, on the contrary, that it shall live and shine, and cast a redeeming illumination upon a world of confusion and woe. That is what has brought us all together here this evening, and that is what is going to keep us all together—however sharply or even deeply we may be divided—until our goal is reached and our hopes are realised.

In our task of reviving the glories and happiness of Europe, and her prosperity, it can certainly be said that we start at the bottom of her fortunes. Here is the fairest, most temperate, most fertile area of the globe. The influence and the power of Europe and of Christendom have for centuries shaped and dominated the course of history. The sons and daughters of Europe have gone forth and carried their message to every part of the world. Religion, law, learning, art, science, industry, throughout the world all bear, in so many lands, under every sky and in every clime, the stamp of European origin, or the trace of European influence.

But what is Europe now? It is a rubble-heap, a charnel-house, a breeding-ground of pestilence and hate. Ancient nationalistic feuds and modern ideological factions distract and infuriate the unhappy, hungry populations. Evil teachers urge the paying-off old scores with mathematical precision, and false guides point to unsparing retribution as the pathway to prosperity. Is there then to be no respite? Has Europe’s mission come to an end? Has she nothing to give to the world but the contagion of the Black Death? Are her peoples to go on harrying and tormenting one another by war and vengeance until all that invests human life with dignity and comfort has been obliterated? Are the States of Europe to continue for ever to squander the first fruits of their toil upon the erection of new barriers, military fortifications and tariff walls and passport networks against one another? Are we Europeans to become incapable, with all our tropical and colonial dependencies, with all our long-created trading connections, with all that modern production and transportation can do, of even averting famine from the mass of our peoples? Are we all, through our poverty and our quarrels, for ever to be a burden and a danger to the rest of the world? Do we imagine that we can be carried forward indefinitely upon the shoulders—broad though

they be—of the United States of America?

The time has come when these questions must be answered. This is the hour of choice and surely the choice is plain. If the people of Europe resolve to come together and work together for mutual advantage, to exchange blessings instead of curses, they still have it in their power to sweep away the horrors and miseries which surround them, and to allow the streams of freedom, happiness and abundance to begin again their healing flow. This is the supreme opportunity, and if it be cast away, no one can predict that it will ever return or what the resulting catastrophe will be.

In my experience of large enterprises, I have found it is often a mistake to try to settle everything at once. Far off, on the skyline, we can see the peaks of the Delectable Mountains. But we cannot tell what lies between us and them. We know where we want to go; but we cannot foresee all the stages of the journey, nor can we plan our marches as in a military operation. We are not acting in the field of force, but in the domain of opinion. We cannot give orders. We can only persuade. We must go forward, step by step, and I will therefore explain in general terms where we are and what are the first things we have to do. We have now at once to set on foot an organisation in Great Britain to promote the cause of United Europe, and to give this idea the prominence and vitality necessary for it to lay hold of the minds of our fellow countrymen, to such an extent that it will affect their actions and influence the course of national policy.

We accept without question the world supremacy of the United Nations Organisation. In the Constitution agreed at San Francisco direct provision was made for regional organisations to be formed. United Europe will form one major Regional entity. There is the United States with all its dependencies; there is the Soviet Union; there is the British Empire and Commonwealth; and there is Europe, with which Great Britain is profoundly blended. Here are the four main pillars of the world Temple of Peace. Let us make sure that they will all bear the weight which will be imposed and reposed upon them.

There are several important bodies which are working directly for the federation of the European States and for the creation of a Federal Constitution for Europe. I hope that may eventually be achieved. There is also the movement associated with Mr. Van Zeeland for the economic integration of Europe. With all these movements we have the most friendly relations. We shall all help each other all we can because we all go the same way home. It is not for us at this stage to attempt to define or prescribe the structure of constitutions. We ourselves are content, in the

first instance, to present the idea of United Europe, in which our country will play a decisive part, as a moral, cultural and spiritual conception to which all can rally without being disturbed by divergencies about structure. It is for the responsible statesmen, who have the conduct of affairs in their hands and the power of executive action, to shape and fashion the structure. It is for us to lay the foundation, to create the atmosphere and give the driving impulsion.

First I turn to France. For 40 years I have marched with France. I have shared her joys and sufferings. I rejoice in her reviving national strength. I will never abandon this long comradeship. But we have a proposal to make to France which will give all Frenchmen a cause for serious thought and valiant decision. If European unity is to be made an effective reality before it is too late, the wholehearted efforts both of France and Britain will be needed from the outset. They must go forward hand in hand. They must in fact be founder-partners in this movement.

The central and almost the most serious problem which glares upon the Europe of to-day is the future of Germany. Without a solution of this problem, there can be no United Europe. Except within the framework and against the background of a United Europe this problem is incapable of solution. In a continent of divided national States, Germany and her hard-working people will not find the means or scope to employ their energies. Economic suffocation will inevitably turn their thoughts to revolt and to revenge. Germany will once again become a menace to her neighbours and to the whole world; and the fruits of victory and liberation will once more be cast away. But on the wider stage of a United Europe German industry and German genius would be able to find constructive and peaceful outlets. Instead of being a centre of poverty and a source of danger, the German people would be enabled to bring back prosperity in no small measure, not only to themselves, but to the whole continent.

Germany to-day lies prostrate, famishing among ruins. Obviously no initiative can be expected from her. It is for France and Britain to take the lead. Together they must, in a friendly manner, bring the German people back into the European circle. No one can say, and we need not attempt to forecast, the future constitution of Germany. Various individual German States are at present being recreated. There are the old States and Principalities of the Germany of former days to which the culture of the world owed much. But without prejudice to any future question of German federation, these individual States might well be invited to take their place in the Council of Europe. Thus, in looking back to happier days we should hope to mark the end of that long trail of hatred and

retaliation which has already led us all, victors and vanquished alike, into the pit of squalor, slaughter and ruin.

The prime duty and opportunity of bringing about this essential reunion belongs to us and to our French friends across the Channel. Strong bonds of affection, mutual confidence, common interest and similar outlook link France and Britain together. The Treaty of Alliance which has lately been signed only gives formal expression to the community of sentiment that already exists as an indisputable and indestructible fact. It is true that this task of reconciliation requires on the part of France, which has suffered so cruelly, an act of faith, sublime in character; but it is by this act of faith and by this act of faith alone that France will regain her historic position in the leadership of Europe.

There is also another leading member of our family of nations to be held in mind. There is Italy. Everything that I have said about the imperative need of reaching a reconciliation with the German race and the ending of the fearful quarrels that have ruined them, and almost ruined us, applies in a less difficult degree to the Italian people, who wish to dwell happily and industriously within their beautiful country, and who were hurled by a dictator into the hideous struggles of the North. I am told that this idea of a United Europe makes an intense appeal to Italians, who look back across the centuries of confusion and disorder to the glories of the classic age, when a dozen legions were sufficient to preserve peace and law throughout vast territories and when free men could travel freely under the sanction of a common citizenship. We hope to reach again a Europe purged of the slavery of ancient days in which men will be as proud to say "I am a European" as once they were to say "Civis Romanus sum". We hope to see a Europe where men of every country will think as much of being a European as of belonging to their native land, and wherever they go in this wide domain will truly feel "Here I am at home". How simple it would all be, and how crowned with glory, if that should ever arise.

It will of course be asked: "What are the political and physical boundaries of the United Europe you are trying to create? Which countries will be in and which out?" It is not our task or wish to draw frontier lines, but rather to smooth them away. Our aim is to bring about the unity of all nations of all Europe. We seek to exclude no State whose territory lies in Europe and which assures to its people those fundamental personal rights and liberties on which our democratic European civilisation has been created. Some countries will feel able to come into our circle sooner, and others later, according to the circumstances in which they are placed. But they can all be sure that whenever they are

able to join, a place and a welcome will be waiting for them at the European Council table.

When I first began writing about the United States of Europe some 15 years ago, I wondered whether the U.S.A. would regard such a development as antagonistic to their interest, or even contrary to their safety. But all that has passed away. The whole movement of American opinion is favourable to the revival and re-creation of Europe. This is surely not unnatural when we remember how the manhood of the United States has twice in a lifetime been forced to re-cross the Atlantic Ocean and give their lives and shed their blood and pour out their treasure as the result of wars originating from ancient European feuds. One cannot be surprised that they would like to see a peaceful and united Europe taking its place among the foundations of the World Organisation to which they are devoted. I have no doubt that, far from encountering any opposition or prejudice from the Great Republic of the New World, our Movement will have their blessing and their aid.

We here in Great Britain have always to think of the British self-governing Dominions—Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa. We are joined together by ties of free will and affection which have stood unyielding against all the ups and downs of fortune. We are the centre and summit of a world-wide commonwealth of nations. It is necessary that any policy this island may adopt towards Europe and in Europe should enjoy the full sympathy and approval of the peoples of the Dominions. But why should we suppose that they will not be with us in this cause? They feel with us that Britain is geographically and historically a part of Europe, and that they also have their inheritance in Europe. If Europe united is to be a living force, Britain will have to play her full part as a member of the European family. The Dominions also know that their youth, like that of the United States, has twice in living memory traversed the immense ocean spaces to fight and die in wars brought about by European discord in the prevention of which they have been powerless. We may be sure that the cause of United Europe, in which the mother country must be a prime mover, will in no way be contrary to the sentiments which join us all together with our Dominions in the august circle of the British Crown.

It is of course alleged that all advocacy of the ideal of United Europe is nothing but a manœuvre in the game of power politics, and that it is a sinister plot against Soviet Russia. There is no truth in this. The whole purpose of a united democratic Europe is to give decisive guarantees against aggression. Looking out from the ruins of some of their most famous cities and from amid the cruel devastation of their fairest lands,

the Russian people should surely realise how much they stand to gain by the elimination of the causes of war and the fear of war on the European Continent. The creation of a healthy and contented Europe is the first and truest interest of the Soviet Union. We had therefore hoped that all sincere efforts to promote European agreement and stability would receive, as they deserve, the sympathy and support of Russia. Instead, alas, all this beneficent design has been denounced and viewed with suspicion by the propaganda of the Soviet Press and radio. We have made no retort and I do not propose to do so to-night. But neither could we accept the claim that the veto of a single power, however respected, should bar and prevent a movement necessary to the peace, amity and well-being of so many hundreds of millions of toiling and striving men and women.

And here I will invoke the interest of the broad, proletarian masses. We see before our eyes hundreds of millions of humble homes in Europe and in lands outside which have been affected by war. Are they never to have a chance to thrive and flourish? Is the honest, faithful, breadwinner never to be able to reap the fruits of his labour? Can he never bring up his children in health and joy and with the hopes of better days? Can he never be free from the fear of foreign invasion, the crash of the bomb or the shell, the tramp of the hostile patrol, or what is even worse, the knock upon his door of the political police to take the loved one far from the protection of law and justice, when all the time by one spontaneous effort of his will he could wake from all these nightmare horrors and stand forth in his manhood, free in the broad light of day? The conception of European unity already commands strong sympathy among the leading statesmen in almost all countries. "Europe must federate or perish", said the present Prime Minister, Mr. Attlee, before the late terrible war. He said that, and I have no reason to suppose that he will abandon that prescient declaration at a time when the vindication of his words is at hand. Of course we understand that until public opinion expresses itself more definitely, Governments hesitate to take positive action. It is for us to provide the proof of solid popular support, both here and abroad, which will give the Governments of Europe confidence to go forward and give practical effect to their beliefs. We cannot say how long it will be before this stage is reached. We ask, however, that in the meantime His Majesty's Government, together with other Governments, should approach the various pressing Continental problems from a European rather than from a restricted national angle. In the discussions on the German and Austrian peace settlements, and indeed throughout the whole diplomatic field the ultimate ideal should be held in view. Every

new arrangement that is made should be designed in such a manner as to be capable of later being fitted into the pattern of a United Europe.

We do not of course pretend that United Europe provides the final and complete solution to all the problems of international relationships. The creation of an authoritative, all-powerful world order is the ultimate aim towards which we must strive. Unless some effective World Super-Government can be set up and brought quickly into action, the prospects for peace and human progress are dark and doubtful.

But let there be no mistake upon the main issue. Without a United Europe there is no sure prospect of world government. It is the urgent and indispensable step towards the realisation of that ideal. After the First Great War the League of Nations tried to build, without the aid of the U.S.A., an international order upon a weak, divided Europe. Its failure cost us dear.

To-day, after the Second World War, Europe is far weaker and still more distracted. One of the four main pillars of the temple of peace lies before us in shattered fragments. It must be assembled and reconstructed before there can be any real progress in building a spacious superstructure of our desires. If, during the next five years, it is found possible to build a world organisation of irresistible force and inviolable authority for the purpose of securing peace, there are no limits to the blessings which all men may enjoy and share. Nothing will help forward the building of that world organisation so much as unity and stability in a Europe that is conscious of her collective personality and resolved to assume her rightful part in guiding the unfolding destinies of man.

In the ordinary day-to-day affairs of life, men and women expect rewards for successful exertion, and this is often right and reasonable. But those who serve causes as majestic and high as ours need no reward; nor are our aims limited by the span of human life. If success come to us soon, we shall be happy. If our purpose is delayed, if we are confronted by obstacles and inertia, we may still be of good cheer, because in a cause, the righteousness of which will be proclaimed by the march of future events and the judgment of happier ages, we shall have done our duty, we shall have done our best.