

Plea by Paul van Zeeland (16 March 1951)

Caption: On 16 March 1951, Paul van Zeeland, Belgian Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade and the principal driving force in the European League for Economic Cooperation (ELEC), delivers a heartfelt plea for the creation of a genuine united Europe.

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So that hope may endure!

Mr Chairman, ladies and gentlemen,

I have not come here this evening to deliver a lecture but rather to make a plea, a plea *pro domo*. The house on which I wish to speak is, of course, our common home: Europe — the old family home, bearing the marks of time but still standing and still under threat, ‘my Father’s house in which there are many mansions’, yet all under the same roof.

I am sure that what I have to say will not bring any new fact or original argument to your notice, but I should be loath to miss this unique opportunity to try to convey an impression of the disparate elements of this edifice.

Do not ask me to be impartial, I could not be so: I am ‘pro-Europe’.

I shall endeavour to be objective, to be rigorous with the truth. I promise you frankness and sincerity, but my diplomacy may be found wanting, since I am in thrall to a passionate desire: to ensure that the men of Europe act before it is too late!

Is Europe a reality?

This is not a question you should ask of the purveyor of definitions; seek an answer instead from the traveller, or from your memories. Try something out to start with: buy an aeroplane ticket to some other part of the world, understand and take to your heart the people whom you get to know there, make the most of your journey. When you return, I am sure that you will say to anyone who will listen how you perceived your difference, how you felt not just French or Belgian, but European, and, over there, how many times people made you feel that they actually saw you as a European!

Let us try something else, something a little easier and more within everyone’s reach: let us call on our memories! Let us remember the prestige, the role and the primacy of Europe during the 19th century. From the Vienna settlements to the 1914–18 war, everywhere where less advanced peoples rushed to catch up with the intellectual and material standards of our nations, everywhere where bold dreams became a reality and were transmuted into startling achievements, the spirit of Western civilisation and the fruits of European labour can be seen.

Need we recall the security of the world’s trade routes? Need we call to mind the Suez Canal? Need we point to Africa, Oceania and Asia opening their worlds to new influences? Need we extol the prestigious ascent of the Americas? Let me remind you of just one fact, one fact alone, as it were to catch your attention: the direction in which capital continually flowed was from Europe to America until 1914.

The labour, the genius and the dynamism of the peoples of Europe were the leaven of the world.

Ah yes, you will say, ‘the peoples of Europe’ — but were they ‘Europe’?

Once again, remember. Europeans moved from one country to another without passports. The movement of goods encountered only one obstacle (the least among all the ones that we have thought up since): customs duties. Only a few specialists had any inkling of capital transfers or international payments, the rest were quite unconcerned by them. In this very hall, there are probably many who still remember the Latin Monetary Union, and the coins made of silver — and gold, too — which made us welcome everywhere.

But, more than all that, there was a climate which gave Europeans an awareness of their strength, a sense of their responsibilities towards the world, a shared pride in their distant, turbulent and glorious past, in a word the climate of the Western civilisation that was theirs.

I was about to hazard a definition of this civilisation which would bring it to life before you when I was delighted to discover in the work of one of our greatest Belgian poets, Émile Verhaeren, some lines which will say it infinitely better than I could myself. Listen to his words and appreciate their beauty:

‘Sur un sol neuf, l’œuvre antique s’était nourrie
De force jeune et redressait son équilibre;
Au long des murs, reparaissait l’ancien feston,
L’acanthé et la volute et la fleur corinthienne,
Mais par-dessus la barre et l’angle du fronton,
S’élançait la ferveur d’une ligne chrétienne ...
Ainsi, sans heurt aucun ni sans rudesse,
La foi y soulevait vers le ciel la sagesse
Et dotait la raison des ailes de l’esprit.
Le monument total était si bien construit
Que l’on ne distinguait guère
Où le marbre joignait la pierre
Ni sur quel horizon tranquille ou emporté
Il imposait aux yeux sa plus nette beauté.
Il triomphait quand l’ombre à l’aube était unie.
Trente siècles le dédiaient à l’univers !
Il était un, profondément, quoique divers,
Et le vent dispersait sa nombreuse harmonie
Sans divulguer jamais
Qui de Paris, ou d’Athènes, ou de Rome,
Rendait l’accord aussi divinement parfait ...’

[On new ground, the ancient work had drawn new strength and recovered its balance; along the walls, the ancient festoon reappeared, the acanthus and the volute and the Corinthian rosette, but above the bar and the angle of the pediment rose the fervour of a Christian line ... Thus, without a jolt or jarring effect, faith raised wisdom up to the heavens and endowed reason with the wings of the spirit. The whole monument was so well formed that it was hard to discern where the marble joined the stone or on what quiet or spirited horizon it urged its purest beauty on the eye. It triumphed when shadows were one with the dawn. Thirty centuries pledged it to the universe! It was profoundly one, though diverse, and the wind spread its manifold harmony without ever revealing who, from Paris, Athens or Rome, had made its concord so divinely perfect ...]

(Enthusiastic applause.)

Then came the rise of German imperialism and the invasion of 1914: the great misery of Europe had begun ...

Should we again gauge the extent of our fall, what some with revealing haste have called ‘the decline of Europe’? We know well that it was, and could only be, a temporary setback. But let us not foster any illusions, let us not deceive ourselves: the fall was cruel, and it was precipitous. Here are some figures, a few sketchy indicators for comparison:

In 1925, Europe still accounted for 43 % of world crude steel production. In 1948, it produced only 30 %.

As regards wheat, in 1934–38 it still accounted for one third of world production. In 1948: one quarter.

In the same year, 1948, the United States of America alone produced over half the steel, coal, cotton and copper consumed in the world.

At the same time, Latin America — America is not just North America — was advancing by leaps and bounds: with a share of 50 % for two products and around 25 % for seven or eight others, it now supplies the

world with the main strategic materials.

Of course, we rejoice at the progress made by others and do not complain about it. Of course, the Americas are just a piece of our old civilisation transplanted elsewhere, but essentially the same. And, of course, in Europe we may congratulate ourselves on having achieved such an admirable recovery after this most recent war. All that is true. Even so, we have to face facts:

In order to achieve our recovery, we needed foreign aid, aid which was given generously and sensibly, but aid which we were obliged to accept! We were able to do so with our heads held high, because we had helped to save the world from the worst of disasters. Even so, we have to face the truth, which is hard: what role does Europe play today? What clout does it now have in the decisions which affect the world both politically and economically? In this respect, let us call to mind a past which goes back only some 40 years.

Permit me — I promised that I would be frank — to remind you that, not very long ago, we had a bitter experience when it came to deciding where and how to direct the distribution of raw materials in the world.

Are we to accept this relegation of Europe from the top table? Are we to resign ourselves to holding this diminished position in world affairs? Shall we leave the sceptre in new and strong hands, certainly, but which have taken it up only reluctantly and because we let it slip from our own? We shall not do it, we cannot do it!

But how are we to set about regaining our position?

Since I have the privilege of speaking this evening in the land of Descartes, I shall try to bring as much formal logic to what I have to say and, keeping to the classical tradition, I shall divide my remarks into three sections:

- (1) We must recreate Europe.
- (2) We can recreate Europe.
- (3) We are already recreating Europe.

1. — We must recreate Europe.

We must recreate Europe; for a start, we owe it to ourselves, to our compatriots, to our brothers, to our children; we also owe it to the rest of the world.

I used a big word: I just said ‘to our compatriots’. This will, I hope, have immediately made it clear to you how I look at the problem. Indeed the word ‘compatriot’ is derived from the Latin *patria*, meaning ‘mother country’: the goal we are pursuing is certainly not alien — quite the contrary — to the notion of mother country.

The mother country is necessary. It is a noble and fine idea, one by which we have lived and expect to continue living. But, today, the traditional political frameworks have become too narrow. We are beset by opposing forces. On the one hand, we are finding that it is essential to create political frameworks extending beyond the limits of our native lands; on the other hand, national sentiment is stronger than ever, and legitimately so, everywhere. Should we be surprised at that? No. Our generation has gone to war twice. Twice we risked our lives and all that we held most dear for a cause which transcended both, but, at the same time, we were defending our homes, our own notions of life and happiness. That is why this national sentiment is something to which we cling more than ever today, and legitimately so. But we have understood that, if we really want to save our homelands and enable the nation state to survive — that is true for all countries without exception, even more so for the small countries — we must emerge from our compartmentalisation and the dispersion into which we lapsed through laziness between the two wars.

What is the aim of the nation state? What are the essential objectives of any political organisation in which power is vested? This aim is threefold:

To begin with, it is to ensure the effective defence of homes, to protect women and children in the most traditional and most direct sense.

Secondly, to secure for all who have entrusted their destinies to that state, that mother country, a material standard of living worthy of them and commensurate with what is possible at the time.

Thirdly, to keep our community among the leading nations of culture and to enable it to enjoy the advantages of the most advanced scientific civilisation in the world.

You know what I am getting at: on none of these points is the nation state now able to achieve its objectives in isolation.

When, after the 1914–18 war, we conceived the League of Nations, it was because we already realised this insufficiency, the fact that the nation state could not succeed if left to its own devices.

From the military and political point of view, what country in Europe, including the great powers, would dare to assume the responsibility today of declaring itself able to defend its homes, be victorious, protect its frontiers, repulse attacks from whatever quarter they might come? Not one! ...

Modern warfare? You know that it calls for arms which only an industry that is practically without frontiers can produce. Such power transcends the narrow economic zone of each individual country. It is only groups or federations which can claim to produce the arms needed for modern warfare.

Let us accept the facts as they are, even at the political level: the groups and blocs which have been set up and which we see casting their shadow over the map of the world have become giants in the face of which an isolated European state is from the outset doomed to impotence. We are all well aware of this, but it is time that we allowed this awareness to emerge from the depths of our hearts and impel us to act.

It is just as true from the economic point of view. Have you not noticed that, within the limits of the old frontiers, it is no longer possible for us to produce the things that modern science can offer man? There are now a number of major products which no country in Europe is able to manufacture if it relies merely on its own resources.

We need a market in production and a market in consumption which are commensurate with global movements.

If we finally relinquished top ranking in the economic field, we would not stay at the top in the scientific field indefinitely. I shall tell you in a moment that it is not too late — on the contrary. Even so, let us not deceive ourselves. If we compared the relative share of Europe now in the number of inventions, discoveries and applications of scientific developments occurring worldwide with what was happening 40 years ago, you would be surprised, and probably dismayed, at the threat which the current situation poses for Europe.

However we approach the problem, we owe to Europe and to those who have confidence in us to recreate the conditions in which our various mother countries will be able, as before, to defend us, to give us the prosperity to which we are entitled and to keep us in the top echelons of civilisation.

I did not give you a definition of ‘mother country’; you do not need it, you are not expecting it. But those listening to me who, during the war, were temporarily separated from their mother countries, I am sure, often thought of something that Casimir Delavigne put into words: ‘the mother country, how sweet is that name when one is in exile!’. Another quotation, from Sully Prudhomme, seems splendidly apposite to the endeavour on which we are embarking: ‘the mother country’, he said, ‘has given me a heart which it cannot contain; the more I feel French, the more I feel human’. That is the cast of mind within which we hope to transpose the nation state to the framework of Europe.

For our own sakes, of course. But Europe was never content to think only of itself and its peoples. For

centuries — as I was saying — it has been the guide, the counsellor and the initiator for the entire world.

Look at the state of the world today. Do you find it satisfactory? Is this poor world in balance since Europe no longer plays in it the role that it once did? Whose fault is it? The best thing is for each of us to accept his or her share of responsibility and to recognise that a prestigious, powerful, influential and dynamic Europe, such as it was in the past, is something that the whole world misses. I cannot help thinking that, if the Europe of today were still the Europe of the beginning of the century, with its generosity, its resources for intervention in the interests of peace and the good of mankind, then the Korean drama, the Indo-Chinese tragedy and many other situations in which people lived in fear for what tomorrow might bring would never have arisen or would soon have ended.

Whatever the case may be, there will be no balance in the world unless we Europeans succeed in regaining the role which belongs to us.

I do not want to turn back the clock, to sweep aside the changes which have taken place over 40 years, which I acknowledge not only as facts but as progress. And I welcome them with all my heart. I am well aware that Europe, if it recovers its great and indispensable role, will have to adopt new methods and take new roads. It will have to command much less, to advise and persuade more often. And it is much more difficult to persuade than to give orders.

Even so, we are awaited. We must become strong again, not just for our own sake, but — as in the past — for the sake of others.

2. — We can recreate Europe.

Can we recreate Europe? Here again, you will probably find me optimistic. I am optimistic, I persist in being so, and I would like to convince you that we have grounds for optimism, especially at this time.

We should reassure ourselves that we have lost nothing of the traditional strengths which we had in the past and which had brought us to where we were.

We still have the people, the resources and the genius of Europe.

The people, Europeans taken individually, are they inferior to any other sample of humanity across the world?

You have, no doubt, travelled a lot. I for one have wandered all around the world; I have acquired a great love of people, a conviction that all races are essentially equivalent and that men of outstanding merit are born, grow to maturity and act in all civilisations. From my travels, I have also acquired the profound conviction that our Western civilisation, based on Christianity, has remained the *sine qua non*, the route which all the world's peoples in the end should take if they wish to achieve the level which we reached in our past and rise to the new peaks which mankind has yet to ascend. Do not misunderstand me: I do not wish anyone, any soul in the world, to renounce his own civilisation, his particular aspirations; that is not necessary, far from it! But there is at the root of our civilisation a certain number of principles without which man cannot rise above an average level of development. The leaders of the most diverse peoples of Europe have understood this, and I hope that, in the future, they will draw the appropriate conclusions.

However that may be, we can count on the people from our countries to assist us in our undertaking. I am happy to compare a workman from Europe with a workman from America, a European poet with an Asian poet, an engineer or a scientist from our part of the world with an engineer or scientist from anywhere in the world.

So, why are we lagging behind? Is it because others had raw materials at their disposal of which we were deprived? You know very well that that is not the case: the peoples who have linked their political future to that of Europe supply us with all the raw materials which are essential to us; we have everything available to us if we want it.

What has happened, then? Why are others advancing so much more rapidly than we are?

Certainly, there have been the two wars with their aftermath of material and moral destruction. But why have these wars weighed more heavily on Europe than on the rest of the world?

Look at the problem from whatever angle you wish, take the time to analyse it in depth, you will always arrive at the same conclusion: it is our divisions, exacerbated at the very moment when we should have a clear understanding that our destiny calls on us to agree among ourselves, which are responsible for this temporary setback. The day when we have the courage to forge that vital union, we shall recover all the forces that are available to us. On that day, far from regretting the advances achieved in the rest of the world, we shall rejoice in them, for we shall find in them the buttressing needed for our own action. But we really need to start by creating a union.

Let me refute here some of the objections that one hears, so regularly that, ultimately, they become an annoyance and an irritant. Most focus on a comparison between the United States of America and a future United States of Europe. First of all, note that I never use the phrase 'United States of Europe'. It is as though we have lost our creative imagination, as though we can see only one possible formula for the future: a United States. There are many others, from the League to the Federal State, via the Confederation and who knows what else. All political formulae are conceivable and can be applied at any given time.

The constant comparison drawn between the United States of America and a future United States of Europe does an injustice both to Europe and to the United States. People are in the habit of saying: 'in Europe, it would not be so easy as in the United States'! But it was not easy in the United States! Do not think that the 13 colonies, when they joined together to embrace the extraordinary destiny which is today that of this great country, were any closer to each other than are the countries of Europe in our day. In some states, the social system was based on the aristocratic tradition; others had democracy in its most basic form. Some colonies relied on agricultural production, others on trade. Languages other than English were spoken in some states, in particular French and Spanish. It took more time then to travel from New York to Boston than it takes today to go round the world. And so on and so forth. The project was not easy; it underwent so many difficulties that it could not escape the worst one of all, civil war.

People should stop repeating that Europe is burdened by the past! Of course, the past, especially the recent past, has left its scars. There are even wounds which have not yet closed completely. We are not oblivious to them. Let us look at them, let us try to heal them, but, once again, do not let us foster any illusions.

If we go back a little further into the past, we shall find so many more reasons to move closer together than to maintain the divisions which exist today. I shall cite merely one example, which I have chosen among many others for the sake of brevity:

It is not so long ago that Belgium was still a patchwork of sovereign states. The counties and duchies which formed its provinces waged war with one another. I live in a small town on the borders of Hainaut and Brabant. Well, on a wall in this small town there is still a plaque commemorating the murder of 12 inhabitants of the territory by enemies from the neighbouring territory, i.e. Brabant. For centuries, the people of Hainaut, Brabant and Flanders fought against one another! What remains of these memories? We are now one nation, as united as any other in the world.

And if I were to look at Belgium's relations with other countries in Europe, I would search in vain for one with which we have not, at some time or other in our long and rich history, had either serious difficulties or outright quarrels.

Why not instead search the past for something which may help us to recreate a greater present, one which will be more useful to the world as a whole?

The peoples of Europe who currently come to Brussels can tell themselves that they are not very far from

home. I have to say that, when I come to Paris, I do not feel that I am in a foreign country. I hope that you have the same feeling when you come to my country.

Is it not our determination to stay close to each other that helps us to overcome obstacles? Why should we not extend these feelings? For it to be so, to succeed on the political level in completing a lap as difficult as that, to create new institutions, to entrust ourselves to new leaders, a series of pressures need to act on our will. Otherwise, the forces of inertia would be too strong. This pressure exists within ourselves. It exists because we have understood that we could not wait any longer and that, if we wanted to remain in the top echelons of humanity, we had to accept change.

At the same time, there is pressure from outside: a threat which is the same for all. And, in response to that threat, we feel bound by ties to one another. It may be that, from the evil represented by the threat, good will come in the form of a certain union.

We hold significant trump cards in our hands. I have already included the threat from outside among them. In response to that threat, we have decided to form the Atlantic army. In that army, we shall meet up again with our American and Canadian friends; we shall then be ten European countries side by side. I hope that the European army will become discernible within that Atlantic army!

Whether it be in a European army or in the Atlantic army, we shall stand shoulder to shoulder, wearing the same uniform, facing the same risk and feeling the same hope.

There is another opportunity which I should like to see you take, because it seems unique in history, and I do not think that it will be there for long: the goodwill of the United States of America. For the first time, to my knowledge, the country which wields most power and is economically and militarily the strongest in real terms — that country does not seek to maintain hegemony. It wants Europe to regain its position. It is so sincere in that desire that it is prepared to make material efforts to help it. It has already furnished the proof of that. But beware! There is nothing to say that this attitude will withstand the intoxication of power. More than once in the past, public opinion in the United States has shifted.

At present, in my opinion, the Americans are sincerely pacifist, hostile to any notion of imperialism. But it will not come as any surprise to you when I say, with the same frankness, that the United States did not always have this attitude; there were times in their history when Americans were indeed imperialists.

So let us be quick to grasp this opportunity!

Fourth trump card, fourth opportunity:

In any joint action, it is necessary for someone to lead, direct, take initiatives and give the signal for action when the time comes. In Europe, we needed a country to take on this role. Which one could that be? Any of the small nations? Far be it from me to think of diminishing their importance: the small nations are necessary to world equilibrium. The fact that they stood their ground at times when the law of the jungle held sway shows how indispensable they are. I would not wish to take false humility too far, and I think that I may safely say that the small nations have contributed their share of outstanding figures in human history. Even so, when someone has to take the lead, impel others to act and take on the role of a pioneer — which is what we have in mind — the task must fall to one of the great powers. That is why the small countries, despite their virtues and merits, cannot play this role effectively.

What great power in Europe could we turn to for such an effort?

Britain? I do not think so. Why? Because Britain, which is indispensable to Europe — Europe cannot be created without it, any more than it can without Italy, Germany, or any other of the countries which have traditionally formed part of it — Britain, I say, occupies a place apart, one that is unique. It is not only in Europe, but also in the world, as we are, but in a more special way than we are. It has a role of its own, in the world and in Europe. Because of this, it has to exercise greater reserve. I want to take this opportunity to pay

tribute to our British friends, who have made a valiant contribution to European integration. They sometimes seem to lag behind, but their leaders need more energy than we do to venture the steps that they take.

If we cannot count on Britain, to whom should we look? You know where this is leading: to France.

We wished, hoped and yearned for the moment when we would see the leaders of France accept both this honour and this responsibility. They have done so, and here I turn with particular pleasure to one of those leaders, Mr Schuman! (*Mr Van Zeeland points to Mr Schuman, amid enthusiastic applause.*)

Thus we have all the trump cards in our hands; but the best cards in the pack serve for nothing unless they are played. It is time to play them. Happily, we have already begun: the creation of Europe is on course.

3. — We are recreating Europe.

Europe is not being created fast enough, certainly. We have had many disappointments, as well as some pleasant surprises. Where are we now? In some respects, ahead of what the most committed had dared to hope; in other respects, we are frankly lagging behind.

In fact, we are further ahead than I had believed possible in such a short time: what are two or three years when it comes to the creation of lasting political institutions?

In attitudes, regrettably, we have had a reversal. Remember the enthusiasm aroused in large crowds of people by the idea of Europe hardly two or three years ago? I am still convinced that it is the only idea with the power to generate action in the Old World, I cannot find another. You nevertheless sense a certain weariness, a kind of moral fatigue, in more than one quarter. Such projects pass through a series of curves. Those who have studied languages know well that their proficiency develops in stages: after one or two months, they think that they are very advanced; they continue their studies and suddenly feel that they have not learned anything. Yet it is the moment when they begin to doubt their own ability that they make real progress. I think that the same goes for Europe. This cooling off which overtakes some convinced supporters of 'Europe' is merely a sign that things are advancing despite all appearances and through every setback. Do you think that the meetings of the Council of Europe are always stirring experiences? Assuredly not! (*Mr Schuman laughs heartily, and the rest of the audience with him.*) There are often routine sittings in which there is much preoccupation with points of detail. But I would ask those of my colleagues here today who also serve in national governments whether cabinet meetings are always stirring experiences (*laughter*). However, the concept of the mother country retains all its beauty in our eyes.

We have the will to create Europe, and we shall create it!

The Council of Europe? It is an astonishing achievement in such a short time. And do not tell me that the Assembly and the Committee of Ministers do not see eye to eye; I shall not reply: 'what does it matter!', but: 'so much the better!'. If the Assembly were not a step ahead of the Committee of Ministers, I would begin to lose faith in the future of Europe. Happily, the Members of the Assembly have retained their confidence and their dynamism. They sometimes shake the Ministers up a bit; sometimes the Ministers need it. I do not mean 'always', but it is sometimes necessary for the Committee of Ministers to apply the brakes and bring back to the realm of tangible possibilities certain ideas which had great appeal on paper but were really too much ahead of their time.

All that is worthwhile, indeed necessary. I urge the Assembly to continue to be impatient and the Committee of Ministers to continue to be prudent — but not too prudent all the same! (*Laughter. Applause.*)

There is not only the Council of Europe. Some organisations are already at work, but they are slow and ponderous. I would not hold up the OEEC as a model of efficiency or rapidity; but we have to acknowledge the lesson that we may be able to learn from it: here is an organisation of 18 or 19 members — I do not know exactly — in which the rule of unanimity continues to be applied and in which we nevertheless succeed in taking a few steps forward. In this context, agreement is possible only if we accept sacrifices. We convince

others one by one that these sacrifices make sense; we ask them all to agree to them in the interests of a higher purpose — one from which they will also derive an advantage, but later, as part of a long-term policy.

If organisations of this kind manage, despite the restraints which slow down progress, to advance, to move forward, to record achievements, we are justified in remaining confident.

Let us look around: there are still a number of institutions which work, and great hopes which result from French initiatives: the European army, the Schuman Plan, the pool of agricultural products, the organisation of transport. Shall we succeed in all these fields? Yes, I am convinced of it. If not today, tomorrow; if not tomorrow, the next day. We shall do so because we want to, and we want to because we feel it is essential.

But not so fast! We need to draw support from anything which can serve our purpose, from all the other institutions which already exist and to which we do not attach sufficient importance — whether it be the Bank for International Settlements, whether it be the FAO, relocated to Rome, whether it be the Benelux organisation, that of the Franco-Italian rapprochement or organisations of more lowly status known only to the technical experts, such as the organisation which is endeavouring to achieve some unification in customs nomenclature, and who knows what others there are? How many there are, already at work across the world and paving the way!

In order to advance along this road, we must take care to combine all these efforts, all these tentative steps towards the completion of some project. We shall advance, but only on condition that we accept a certain number of guiding principles. The first is to recognise the need for coordination: soon, all these disparate elements must be combined into some form of unity around a Council of Europe which will be gradually strengthened. We must keep in mind the goals that we have assigned ourselves. If we want Europe — as I have said — it will be for the countries of Europe in the first instance; but it will also be for the rest of the world. We must exclude from our ‘building’ — our Europe — any thought of self-sufficiency and narrow self-interest. We would be wrong to transpose nationalism, which is a caricature of patriotism, to the sphere of Europe after we had rid ourselves of it at the level of the nation state.

Let us not be too demanding. Let us not ask the impossible of people. Let us not be impatient. Let us not lay down distinctions which have any reality only in arguments of excessive subtlety. How many times have I heard theory set against practice! That makes no sense. Theory which is inconsistent with practice is false in some respect, or incomplete. Practice which is developed without theory is doomed to failure. When, in Europe, we decide to take the route of specialised institutions, delegation of powers, etc., is that simply empiricism? No. It is our concern to remain in contact with realities which impose themselves on us but which we reposition in an organisational framework with which we feel comfortable. We can see what we intend to achieve in the long term, and we shall achieve it little by little.

Allow me to remind you of a political principle which, to my mind, is essential: for me, authority is justified only when it is necessary; otherwise people should be left to define their own happiness and to seek it in ways that they find appropriate. Where authority is necessary, it must have the means to perform its function. In practical terms, that means: keep authority as close as possible to the wishes of those who are subject to it.

Do not set a higher authority to carry out what can be adequately achieved by an authority closer to ordinary people. Keep under the control of the nation state, the governing powers of the mother country, everything which can be done best at that level. Delegate to powers beyond the confines of the nation state only what needs to be delegated. On the other hand, do not hesitate to authorise true delegation of powers when you recognise it to be necessary. Accept the consequences, accept the fact that you are guided by your judgment and accept the need to submit, when necessary. In this way, you will have safeguarded liberty in the most effective way possible.

Finally, let us not cling to ready-made formulae. Once more in the long history of Europe, let us make an effort of creative imagination. Let us not try slavishly to mimic what has been done elsewhere or what was done in the past.

Let us remain within our tradition; let us adapt our institutions; let us march forward; let us stay true to ourselves.

If we remain true to ourselves, we shall succeed. If we succeed, have you already thought of what will follow? Have you thought how the world would be if Europe regained its strength, its power, its unity? Have you thought of your own life? How it would be transformed! Have you thought of your children's lives? Of the security that they will enjoy? Of the chances that life will offer them?

To sum up, that is the horizon which spreads out, in this year of grace 1951, before the people of Europe. Is that not enough to fill them with enthusiasm? Where would the youth of Europe be if they did not take such an ideal to their hearts, embellishing it even more!

Tomorrow, if we wish, we can give to our compatriots, along with their brothers elsewhere in Europe, the standard of living to which they are entitled, one which affords them the benefits of modern science.

Tomorrow, if we wish, we can give to the world the support, the advice, the understanding and the creative input which it was accustomed to seek from Europe.

And, as if that were not enough, we may also, in due course, pass on the keys of the Temple of Janus to safe, experienced hands which will be zealous guardians of peace.

Is it possible? Yes, I think so. Whatever the threats to peace in the world, the policy which free nations have begun to apply, that policy made of steadfastness and understanding, will lead us out of the tragic impasse in which we are trapped.

Now that the storm has passed, we must bring to a close once and for all an era in which the curtain, hardly had it been lowered on one tragedy, rose again on another tragedy more bloody and bitter still.

For that to happen, the nations of Europe must be protected from internal threats and internecine wars, and a situation must never again arise in which one country in Europe is tempted to resort to violence.

For that to happen, Europe must be shielded from outside aggression and enjoy permanent protection from barbarian invasions.

So that hope may endure, so that hope may abide in the hearts of men, so that hope may be reborn and take root in the hearts of the young, so that the certainties which generate wealth and progress may be affirmed, peace must regain its foundations and buttresses.

Let us make of Europe a gift to peace, it cannot do without it! In return, it will give us not only all the hopes but all the certainties which the future holds for strong peoples, for generations which respond to the call of their destinies when the time is right.

(Long ovation.)