

## Address given by Carlo Azeglio Ciampi on a European Constitution (Leipzig, 6 July 2000)

**Caption:** On 6 July 2000, Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, President of the Italian Republic, gives a speech at the University of Leipzig in which he declares himself in favour of a European Constitution which, in his view, will demonstrate in particular the dynamics of the Community process and will strengthen the democratic legitimacy of the European Union.

**Source:** Address by the president of the Republic Carlo Azeglio Ciampi at the honorary degree award ceremony at Leipzig university. [ON-LINE]. [Roma]: Presidenza della Repubblica, [25.07.2005]. Available on <http://www.quirinale.it/Discorsi/Discurso.asp?id=12719>.

**Copyright:** Presidenza della Repubblica

**URL:**

[http://www.cvce.eu/obj/address\\_given\\_by\\_carlo\\_azeglio\\_ciampi\\_on\\_a\\_european\\_constitution\\_leipzig\\_6\\_july\\_2000-en-cac30bda-a165-4356-b6e2-46e93cd487d2.html](http://www.cvce.eu/obj/address_given_by_carlo_azeglio_ciampi_on_a_european_constitution_leipzig_6_july_2000-en-cac30bda-a165-4356-b6e2-46e93cd487d2.html)

**Publication date:** 20/10/2012

## Address by the President of the Republic Carlo Azeglio Ciampi at the honorary degree award ceremony at Leipzig University (Leipzig, 6 July 2000)

Mr President of the Federal Republic of Germany

Mr President of Saxony

Distinguished Rector and Principal of the University of Leipzig

Mr Mayor

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The noble words with which the distinguished speakers who have preceded me have recalled my personal commitment to the process of European integration encourage me to respond immediately in order to share with you one of my most cherished convictions.

If we are genuinely persuaded that Europe has fully recovered the consciousness of what her civilization represents, the 21st century can be the century of Europe, of Europe's fundamental freedoms, in which a balance is struck between social solidarity and economic advancement, with respect for the rights and rules that apply to all, and the capacity to live in and to entrench peace after centuries of fratricidal warring.

To this day I am grateful to the University of Leipzig for having hosted me, as a young Italian student between November 1940 and July 1941, to draw on the wellsprings of the German school of Classical Philology of which Leipzig, together with Heidelberg and Königsberg, was the cradle.

Those were dramatic days. I still vividly remember the alarm in the words of a German fellow student, "We shall go on to win other battles, but we shall lose the war", which showed me that there was another Germany which was opposed to tyranny. But even then we instinctively realized that the indissoluble bond that linked German and Italian culture and classical values would survive the alliance between Nazism and fascism.

Our two cultures have once again returned to play a locomotive role in Europe, proud of their uniqueness, with outreach for dialogue.

The lands to the East, victims of horrendous devastation, in Leipzig and even worse in Dresden, hastened the demise of communism, without violence, making an immeasurable contribution to German unification.

I am particularly happy that this honorary degree is being conferred on me here in Saxony and in this city which, after having dealt a decisive death blow to totalitarianism by massive, peaceful popular street protests, has become the dynamic protagonist of the new Germany.

Germany and Italy are justly proud of the fact that over the past 50 years they have shared a strong commitment to the creation of Europe. We can now consolidate what is already a close and wide-ranging harmony between us.

I wish to pay tribute to the determination with which Germany's postwar governments have all pursued the objective of reunifying the nation, coupled with a lofty European design.

Konrad Adenauer's desire for Germany to be interlocked into the West, Willy Brandt's Ostpolitik, the transformation by Helmut Schmidt of reconciliation between France and Germany into a pillar of European construction, the skill of Helmut Kohl in promoting both the single currency and German reunification - all these drew their common inspiration on a single far-sighted vision and contributed to defining that vision.

The collapse of the Berlin Wall heralded in a new chapter in history in Germany and Europe. German

unification, supported by the whole of the West, has given a fresh impetus to the unity of our continent. And one of your great merits is the fact of having thrown wide open the eastern gate of Europe.

I am gratified not only by Italo-German cooperation, to which hundreds of thousands of hard-working Italians in Germany have made such a major contribution, but also by the role that my country has had in the process of European unity. Consistency and steadfast tenacity in the pursuit of the great European and Atlantic goals, firmly establishing the culture of stability in economic policy, committedly following up our commitments to Europe's common defence and to the international rule of law, have marked Italy's presence in the most decisive moments in the process of constructing Europe.

We have been among the most outspoken in our support for our German friends: Giuseppe Saragat, on his visit to Auschwitz in his capacity as President of the Italian Republic said "the Nazis, not the German people, did this". And how can one fail to recall the emotion with which President Pertini spoke at the Flossenburg concentration camp of the courageous efforts made by so many Germans to resist Nazism?

Together, we have come through difficult times. I recall our common firm stand and solidarity at the time of the deployment of European missiles: it was a decisive stage in the victorious resistance of the West against the communist challenge.

Together, we are labouring with such dedication in the Balkans, committed to keeping civil war at bay in Albania, jointly consolidating the peace in Bosnia and restoring peace to Kosovo. We have not shirked our responsibilities: our presence in those lands to democratize them and to combat monoethnic policies is a civilized commitment.

Italo-Germany friendship is a pillar in Europe. We are united by an uninterrupted relationship of civilization epitomized by so many examples: Classical Philology, philosophical and historical and legal scholarship, book publishing, the study of ancient civilizations, music and the figurative arts. The rebirth of the German Nation and the Italian Risorgimento drew on a common source of inspiration, and were groundbreaking events in 19th-century Europe.

We have successfully worked together to enable both the fundamental components of our culture - the Mitteleuropean and the Mediterranean components - to rediscover the impetus that has enabled us to move ahead together as European civilization has progressed.

And it is also to Italy's merit that we have created a synthesis between Central Europe and the Mediterranean in the European Union. One of the reasons that have driven Italy to pursue membership of the euro with such tenacity was the need to strike a balance between Central Europe and Southern Europe.

Carolingian Europe had a first European physiognomy, however narrow: we are more confident today witnessing the Nordic, Central European and Mediterranean dimensions becoming complementary aspects of a reality which is growing increasingly indivisible.

This is why, when I served as Treasury Minister, I wanted the image of Castel del Monte to appear on the euro that will come into circulation in Italy after January 2002, as a tribute to Frederick II, the emperor who was both German and Roman, and who embodied an ideal of supranationality, that was later to be so tarnished by too long periods of evil conflict. A few weeks ago, I stood together with President Rau before his tomb in Palermo Cathedral.

The memory of the ideals which motivated those ancient events encourages us to move on to more advanced forms of integration between the member States of the European Union in a challenge that has been present for decades in Europe's spirit.

One thrills to read the words of Benedetto Croce: "just as a Neapolitan in the ancient kingdom or a Piedmontese in the Subalpine kingdom became Italians without reneging on what they had previously been, but exalting and turning it in something new, so the French and the Germans and the Italians and all the

others will arise as Europeans and address their thoughts to Europe and their hearts will beat for Europe as they had previously beaten for their smaller fatherlands".

This is what Benedetto Croce wrote in 1931, a man who shone from the centre of the Mediterranean like a beacon, to enlighten a land that had been turned into a wilderness by dictatorship, and which was nurtured on the thoughts of the great German philosophers and German culture. The book from which I have taken this quotation opens with Croce's dedication to Thomas Mann, who in those same years was warning the world, "we do not want a Europe which only continues to retain its name in the historical sense alone".

Mr President,

The construction of Europe has now reached a decisive turning point which has to be faced with consistency, unity, pragmatism and flexibility. A number of fundamental decisions will have to be taken during this year 2000.

There is a very subtle borderline between success and failure.

There is only an apparent contradiction between safeguarding national identity and superseding sovereignty. In reality, they are complementary and both are necessary for the progress of Europe.

In my appeal to the Polish Parliament a few months ago I said that "history has entrusted to us the task of composing the unity of Europe", adding that "the uniqueness of Europe's experience, which first and foremost is having learned to coexist in diversity, is also the key to Europe's future". The unification of Europe does not require us to obliterate our beloved fatherlands; on the contrary, it protects our identity and autonomy in an increasingly globalized world.

With only eighteen months to go before the euro begins to come into circulation, this crucial milestone makes it necessary for us to step up the process of integration. The euro cannot come into being in isolation, as an orphan.

In the history of European integration progress has not always been linear. It has moved ahead in fits and starts. There have always been countries that have forged further ahead, before the others, along the path of unification.

Authoritative voices have recently been heard in numerous countries in Europe, with Germany to the fore, urging us not to delay beyond the time required to define the objectives and responsibilities of Europe towards herself and towards her neighbours. All these voices refer to a shared destiny, invigorated by the locomotive and driving force of an idea.

This is not the time to pause, but to take bold and far-reaching decisions. The strength of an idea can be unstoppable, and can transform mirages into clearly defined goals. Robert Schuman once said that, "Europe will be built up through concrete achievements, while meanwhile creating de facto solidarity".

The complex timetable for the European project - institutional reform, enlargement, creating a common legal space, a foreign and defence policy and the governance of the economy - requires very forceful convictions if it is to be implemented. First and foremost it demands the right of the countries that are willing and able to achieve closer integration to move ahead and do so, making it possible for anyone else to join them who wishes to.

I am looking further ahead with great expectation to the European Union's Fundamental Charter of Rights. Without the awareness and the pride of being European citizens, without acceptance of the Charter as an essential benchmark for governments, our commitment runs the risk of being less productive. I am encouraged by the awareness that I am speaking in a Land, and in a city that has preserved its identity intact, having survived two totalitarian régimes in just over half a century; and I am encouraged by the recent noble words of President Rau on the need to "overcome uncertainty and fear": the ideals of freedom and human

rights are indispensable if we are to place the Charter at the very heart of the European conscience.

I am sure that the desire of Europeans to embark upon reform will find the way to harmonize the indispensable need for integration with the bold courage needed to pursue enlargement.

Supranationality will be a source of progress for Europe: in a number of different fields national sovereignty has already been superseded. The operation of Europe's current institutions makes it necessary to overcome paralysing rules which are formally based on parity. This is the path along which we must move with the powerful backing of public opinion at home. All the more reason why we cannot remain insensitive to the wise appeals being sent out by the European Parliament to carry out an ambitious reform of the Treaties.

Enlargement is not only an obligation deriving from Europe's history. It is also the signal to the international community that the individuality and the authority of Europe are now a *fait accompli*. Enlargement is the capacity to ensure peaceful coexistence between the peoples of Europe. It presupposes a reform of the institutions which will strengthen the role and the efficiency of the Commission to enable it to fully performing the tasks set out clearly in the Treaties, and extend the borderlines of supranationality. Without wiping out the identity of individual nations.

European integration is now moving beyond the economic and monetary dimensions alone to become a genuine bond of democratic solidarity. This process, as I said at Bologna University in February this year, requires a European Constitution: it is necessary to demonstrate that the ultimate source of the legitimacy of the European Union's institutions lies in the citizens; it is necessary because a European identity is an impossibility without the full endorsement of values that include combating xenophobia and respecting minorities. This is necessary in order to project the fundamental values of democracy and freedom beyond the borderlines of the European Union within the ambit of the geophysical Europe.

We can already define two crucial cores: a first part which will take comprise the substance of the Charter of Fundamental Rights; and a second part which will identify the spheres of competence and responsibility not only for the governing bodies of the Union but also for the institutional parties (municipalities, regional governments and national governments) participating in the life of the European Union.

Europe is already a political entity with the capacity to act, within and without, in areas where national governments are not capable of working alone. I would like to recall a number of areas in which we can already set about decisively to develop Europe's vocation and pursue further goals:

- enhanced cooperation must be placed at the centre of the consolidation of the institutions: this can be done both utilizing and widening the possibilities provided by the Amsterdam Treaty and by envisaging bolder forms of cooperation in the areas of the common foreign and security, and defence policy;
- the Union's governance capacity, which is necessary to complete the currency, must be further consolidated by the enhancing the central governance of the economy: Euro 11 can heighten its authority through the common analyses method, indicating appropriate solutions, and verifying their autonomous but binding implementation by individual governments;
- a cultural identity which not only looks to the protection of our historical and artistic heritage, but which represents an exciting challenge, to make it more fruitful and to consolidate the sense of belonging to a common civilization.

We are facing the greatest political stabilization endeavour ever attempted in Europe, because it is no longer based upon striking a balance of power, but on the sharing of common values and institutions. This is the most radical meaning of European peace.

It must be reiterated yet again that the stages in this process do not necessarily have to be the same for all and simultaneously. What is necessary is the non-coercive and intentional stimulation of a core group of countries which are capable of transforming into an increasingly close linkage the bond that has already

been very broadly forged between national interest and European integration.

And if anyone asks which countries can take the initiative to embark on more advanced forms of integration my reply is simple: those, beginning with the founding States, which are ready and willing to do so.

Italy's commitment and stability are beyond dispute: we have always taken a responsible and steadfast stance on all the decisive European issues. We have always been in the front line in building up a European consensus. We have paid the price when this has been necessary. We are keeping to the commitments we undertook when we joined the euro: the proportion of deficit to GDP is still below 2% and will eventually fall still further to break-even. The currency stability culture has become an essential component of the Italians' mindset.

This is how we shall conduct ourselves now and in the future, with the support of the Italian Parliament, and with the backing of our people that is without equal anywhere else in Europe.

Two countries like Germany and Italy must continue to make innovative and responsible contributions to the construction of the future Europe. At our recent meeting in Sicily with President Rau we agreed that within the sphere of our functions we would contribute to the pursuit of innovative processes, encouraging the plan for a constitutional European architecture as a matter of paramount importance.

The problem of giving Europe an international personality has already been raised. What we now have to do is to give it its final shape.

We must not feel that we are tied down by rigid patterns: the concepts of Bundesstaat or Staatenbund or Staatenverband all differ, and all are viable possibilities or use in new and composite forms, both for a clearly-defined institutional configuration of Europe and to clarify the powers and responsibilities of the different parties acting within the ambit of Europe.

We began by talking about the single currency many years before we called it the euro, and well before we had created a federal institution like the European Central Bank. What is important is that we have clarified our goal to found a united and cohesive Europe. Meanwhile we must look ahead to the success of the forthcoming crucial deadlines with enthusiasm and determination, driven by the realization and pride of having a common European identity and by the sense of confidence that springs from having already achieved so many goals already.

In my youth, my generation not only knew war but, worse still, it accepted armed conflict as a recurrent and inevitable feature of European life. The fact that young people today can listen, almost with detachment and in amazement, to the reminiscences of those who knew that world that now seems so far-off in time to them, is the merit, first and foremost, of the European Union. Because the European Union has managed to translate the constituent values of the conscience and awareness of the peoples of Europe into clearly and concretely defined objectives and institutional structures.

I wish to devote the honour which this glorious University has decided to confer on me to the young men and women of the new Europe.

And to them I would like to send out a heartfelt appeal.

It is your responsibility to inject new lifeblood and youthful enthusiasm into the process of European integration. It is your responsibility to ensure that European peace spreads and becomes firmly entrenched, not only to spell the end of armed conflict once and for all, but also to wholly affirm the values which Europe has expressed through a history that dates back several millennia. Yours is the responsibility to complete a venture that will leave its mark on the history of humanity.

It is now time for the young men and women throughout the whole of Europe to look upwards and aim high. It is a time for generous commitment. It is your age.

