

Address given by Lujo Tonic-Sorinj on the objectives of the Council of Europe (Strasbourg, 29 September 1969)

Caption: On 29 September 1969, the Austrian Lujo Tonic-Sorinj, recently appointed Secretary-General of the Council of Europe, outlines to the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe the objectives of his mandate over the next few years.

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Address by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe

THE PRESIDENT (*Translation*). - I now have the very great pleasure of calling on the Secretary General you elected a month ago to address us for the first time in that capacity.

I call Mr. Toncic-Sorinj.

Mr. Lujo TONCIC-SORINJ (*Secretary General of the Council of Europe*). - At the beginning of my period as Secretary General of the Council of Europe, I should like to take the first opportunity to put to this Assembly some of the principles that are to guide me in the performance of my duties in the years to come. I therefore turn with confidence to you, my former colleagues, with whom I have worked for so many years and with whom today I still feel the closest bonds.

The problems we have discussed in committee, the desires we have expressed, our hopes, our fears, our apprehension for Europe's future, and with them, our faith that one day all difficulties will be overcome: those will all be reflected in my new duties and in the decisions which I have to take.

I remember the first time I came to the Council of Europe. It was just before 1953. Our organisation was small then, but Europe looked to us with hope and expectation. It is true that in the last twenty years the progress of European integration as a whole, and with it the Council of Europe, has disappointed many hopes. But in all objectivity and fairness it must be recognised that this was not the fault of the institutions set up to foster European integration, but rather betrayed lack of resolve on the part of some governments to overcome with courage the indubitably great difficulties.

Over the years, many of us have changed the nature of our political work. We have been, or we still are, members of our national parliaments and many of us are familiar with the work in government. This Assembly has accumulated probably a unique fund of political experience. Our task is not an easy one, but it can be done.

The Council of Europe has evolved considerably during the last two decades; at many points it has grown beyond the original provisions of the Statute. The political role of the Council is not explicitly mentioned in the Statute; it is only implicit in the wording "to achieve a greater unity between its Members". In all spheres of cultural, educational, social, legal and scientific integration, the Council has been astoundingly active, especially in the last few years. We have concluded over sixty conventions and there are more than that number of intergovernmental committees. All this work must be not merely continued but intensified in the future, although undoubtedly we shall have to concentrate our effort at certain points. But - and nowhere will this be better understood than in the Consultative Assembly - the Council in its innermost being, in its ultimate vocation, is a political body with a political function and a political objective.

What is it that we want? By political determination and by political action to achieve close, organised, institutionalised co-operation between European states. How close and intensive this co-operation is and what will be its ultimate juridical form will be dictated by the ever-increasing interdependence that European integration is bringing.

This, then, is a political aim, and we are pursuing it even while we are bringing about closer European co-operation in what we call the "technical" sphere. The Assembly, as the expression of the political will of the peoples of Europe, is at the centre of this political vocation. Therefore no European parliamentary forum is better suited than this one to discuss all the problems of European integration, with the obvious exception of defence matters: for our vocation is all-European, to embrace all lands and peoples of Europe.

I do not believe, therefore, that we need any new parliamentary assemblies in Europe, especially since we have had the honour and the pleasure over the years to welcome parliamentarians from countries on the

other side of the Atlantic. What we do need is that more importance be attached by the national governments in Europe to this Assembly and its political will and wisdom.

Especially in recent years - and this was one of the great achievements of my predecessor, whose name will always be linked with the history of this institution - the Council of Europe has extended the boundaries of its activities. We have established contacts through social, cultural and legal co-operation with non-member states ; most recently, in the field of human rights, with Latin America, the Arab world and Africa. We have constant contact with the United Nations, both with its European Office in Geneva and with New York itself, that is, through co-operation between the two Secretariats and through visits by parliamentarians to the United Nations : this contact is to be further developed in the future. Sooner or later the question will arise whether the Council of Europe will fill a position in relation to the United Nations similar to that occupied by the Organisation of American States, the Arab League or the Organisation of African Unity.

We are, then, an expanding institution. Vital living organisms do not stand still : either they grow or they shrivel up. But if we are to continue to fulfil our function in a Europe anxious to consolidate its position, to assert its place in the world and to keep pace with the other great powers, then we need the full support of governments. The governments founded the Council of Europe. Surely they must want this instrument for integration to succeed. But this can only be achieved with the governments, and not against them or without them.

It is in this that I see the great task of the Secretariat and especially of the Secretary General. The Statute provides that he serves both the Committee of Ministers and the Consultative Assembly, and this corresponds to political reality. I am convinced that the key to success for our common efforts lies in complete unity of action and close co-operation between the Consultative Assembly, the Committee of Ministers and the Secretariat.

The Committee of Ministers, the Council's executive organ, represents the political will of our member governments and thus forms the legal basis for our action. But it is this Assembly which represents the hopes and the ideals of the European people and which is the authentic guardian of the ideas and principles for which our organisation stands. Therefore, the ultimate source which justifies our endeavours is the European people as such.

With this in mind, I declared at the last meeting of the Ministers' Deputies that I intend both to bring up the problems and wishes of the Assembly in the Committee of Ministers and to express the views of the Committee of Ministers to the Assembly.

One of the means of reinforcing, in the future, contacts between the Assembly and the Secretariat, is the transmission of the Work Programme for opinion to the Assembly, before it is dealt with by the Committee of Ministers. I hope that the Committee of Ministers will consider favourably the Assembly's Opinion No. 51 to this effect.

I should also like to make a comprehensive report to the Assembly annually, taking particular account of the most important points, such as, for example, in the coming year, the results of our 20 years of activity in the field of human rights.

The burden and tasks of the Secretary General have grown considerably over the last twenty years. Since 1957 he has been given the right to place questions for consideration on the agenda of the Committee of Ministers and the Ministers' Deputies. Thus he has obtained a right of initiative, which he has notably used in the framework of the preparation and execution of the Intergovernmental Work Programme, and in that of the work of the Council for Cultural Co-operation and the Committee on Legal Co-operation (CCJ). The Secretary General has been frequently called upon by you or by the Committee of Ministers to seek information from member governments and to report thereon. A number of Conventions and recommendations impose upon the Secretary General duties in respect of the application and execution of international obligations incumbent upon our member states. I am entitled to enquire in what manner a state party to the Human Rights Convention ensures the implementation. I intend to make use of this prerogative

in the course of my mandate. Also the European Social Charter and the European Convention on Establishment empower me to obtain information on their application from member states.

The Secretary General serves as secretary to an increasing number of conferences of technical Ministers : the European Conferences of Ministers of Justice, - of Education, - of Regional Planning ; to which will be added in the future the Conferences of Ministers of Family Affairs, those responsible for Monuments and Sites and, probably, - Social Affairs. In this manner, there grows a method of intergovernmental cooperation which, without being formally a part of the Council of Europe, belongs to the "Council of Europe family".

The tasks of the Secretariat grow from year to year ; we need more resources, we need, in many fields, more expertise. But natural expansion must be accompanied by administrative reform. The purely administrative machinery must be made more economic. This task will be tackled both by experts within the Council and by recognised specialists from outside. Everything that will be done in this respect should be so done that, at a later stage, during the twenty years ahead, it can be integrated in the future structure of European co-operation, when, as a result either of the extension of the European Communities, or of a radical change in relations between Eastern and Western Europe, the system of international co-operation in Europe needs to be reconsidered.

It is well known to the Assembly, and I refer here to Assembly Resolution 188, that several governments and parliamentary delegations have expressed the wish that the number of languages which may be used in the Council of Europe should be increased. I know that opinions on this are divided. But I feel it is the Secretary General's duty to do all he can to facilitate a decision on a request which is of such political moment and at the same time based on so many good reasons. The Secretariat intends to propose ways and means - financial, administrative and legal - which will be translated into action if the governments so decide, for in the final analysis it is with them that the decision lies.

Our studies and proposals on the matter will be ready in about a month's time.

But there are two further matters which I should like to lay before this House. The Celestina Foundation, which is under the Council's patronage, owns a piece of land in Switzerland on whose use it has not so far been possible to reach agreement. We are at present studying the possibility of setting up there an academy for the training and re-training of international officials, an institution which as yet exists nowhere in this form and the need for which is becoming ever more pressing.

The second project, which we all feel to be supremely urgent - and here too I base myself on resolutions of this Assembly - is the construction of a new building for the Council of Europe. In the last few weeks we have been in constant close contact with the French Government, as was also reported in the Committee of Ministers. Although it would still be premature to speak of a final result, I can already say that we have never been so close to a positive solution as we are today. I should like to thank the French Government for its understanding and co-operative attitude and would ask the other governments, when the time comes, to help us achieve the practical result desired.

Both in general and in the matters I have referred to, we must always act in such a way that when the present difficulties are overcome, any endeavour to which the Council of Europe wishes to make its contribution is made with a view to Europe as a whole. We must be constantly aware that, while contacts with the European non-member states are often difficult and on occasion disappointing, it is nonetheless our duty not to lose sight of co-operation between all European states as a valid goal for our efforts. That does not, however, mean departing from our principles as laid down by the founding fathers of Europe's unity two decades ago. Neither do I believe that anyone expects this.

The Council of Europe must in future loom larger in the thoughts of the nations of Europe and especially of youth. Where people are aware of us there is a great deal of sympathy for our efforts. But not everyone is aware of us. Young people are impatient, revolutionary : they still believe in Europe but they are disappointed in many Europeans. But they take an interest in our efforts - criticism and resentment is at least proof that they are not indifferent. I therefore congratulate the Assembly on the initiatives it has taken in

recent years to establish contact with youth.

I should like in this context to add a personal note. I recall the tragic words spoken many years ago by our former President, Paul Henri Spaak, in his farewell address to this Assembly. He spoke of a fatal form of wisdom which stifled great impulses in a welter of sophistry and petty quibbling. No one doubts, I think, that we bring to bear infinite administrative industry, infinite subtle skill, in short infinite wisdom. But that is not enough. Only a venture to which one is committed not only intellectually but with one's heart and soul will be crowned with success. For reasoning alone will not suffice to convince the peoples of Europe. They must feel that we are prepared to do our utmost and to devote ourselves entirely to this goal. Then and only then will they believe us. You, the representatives of the European peoples in this Assembly, you, my friends, will understand this appeal. I know you will help me to carry out my task. (*Applause*)