

Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi, Europe must unite (1938)

Caption: In 1938, in the light of the rise of totalitarian regimes in Europe, the Austrian-Czech Count Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi, who founded the Paneuropean Movement in 1923, considers the implications of the Paneuropean Union and outlines the way in which the countries of the 'Old Continent' could be reunited in a single organisation.

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Europe must unite (1938)

The aim and the method

There can be no shadow of doubt that technical progress will inevitably put a term to European dismemberment before this century has expired.

On the other hand it is quite uncertain by what method and in what form this union will be consummated.

There are three possibilities:

- (i) either the joining up of Europe to the Soviet Union as a consequence of social revolution; or
- (ii) the establishment in Central Europe of the Third Reich's hegemony, which will then be extended over all Europe by war or the threat of war; or
- (iii) a voluntary union of Europe in a league of free and equal nations.

The third solution alone conforms with the aim of the Paneuropa movement. The movement rejects the conception that Europe must unite at any price — even at the price of its culture and its freedom. It equally rejects extreme pacifism, which is prepared for the sake of peace to sacrifice that culture and that freedom. It prefers to postpone European union to a later date rather than to see it realized in the near future under the sway of a Bolshevik or nationalist dictatorship.

It fights with all its power for peace, but only for a peace founded on national equality and European culture. Any other solution signifies not the salvation but the suicide of Europe.

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Therefore the victory of Great Britain and France is the condition of a Pan-European solution of the European question. This victory alone can ensure the creation of a United States of Europe.

Britain, France, and their allies would dictate the terms of peace, and found the United States of Europe in order to make a third European war impossible, and create the foundations for European reconciliation and a common economic revival after the terrible waste of war.

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In 1919 the victors missed this great opportunity. At that time the means of uniting and reconciling Europe for all time lay to their hand. They preferred to create a world-wide, but powerless League of Nations, and a Europe torn by hate, vengefulness, nationalism, and distress behind the barriers created by tariffs and currencies. We are still reaping the evil fruits which were thus sown in evil. When, in a near future, Europe finds itself in the same situation it should not fail a second time, through the shortsightedness and amateurism of its leaders, to utilize this opportunity. To this end the Paneuropa movement must already have been made strong enough to enforce with all the means which can operate on public opinion the reconciliation and unification of Europe at the decisive moment.

Had there been a strong Paneuropa movement before the World War the European league would have become a reality as early as 1919. We can do nothing to alter the sorrowful past, but we can prepare a better future, and must be morally armed for the great decisions of to-morrow.

For since 1919 Europe has been enriched by two all-important lessons — namely, that a policy of national revenge only produces new national revenge; and that a world-wide league of nations is at least a century in advance of its time.

The conclusion to be drawn from these two lessons is the reconciliation of the conquerors and the conquered within the framework of a strong European league.

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A clear conception of the fact that the 1919 League of Nations has been a failure is an essential condition of the construction of the European league. For so long as the hope exists that the League of Nations can again be made efficacious many Europeans will prefer this existing organization to one which has to be founded. Further, from a realistic political standpoint, the adherence of the Soviet Union to the League of Nations and the adherence of Britain's Dominions and India make the league appear to France and Great Britain respectively preferable to Paneuropa. Thus the present-day community of the league states lacks every ideological, geographical, cultural, or historical foundation which could lead them to convert themselves into a federal union.

Lacking all physical power, the League of Nations could rely only upon its moral authority as the highest organization of humanity. Its prestige has sunk step by step as its member states in Asia, America, and Africa conducted wars against each other which it could do nothing to stop. What remained of its moral authority was lost when three of its European members were annexed and occupied by a neighbour, and the League failed even to protest against these actions. It thereby lost its credit, like a fire insurance company that refuses to pay the insurance to an insured householder whose house has been burnt down, although he has for years punctually paid his premium.

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Thus the role of the League of Nations as a political instrument has been played out. Its system of collective security and of sanctions has collapsed. Wilson's great conception of the foundation of a world-embracing league to prevent future wars is wrecked. On the other hand it has proved useful to have a world bureau in Geneva concerned with all technical questions of an international character, such as epidemics, white-slave traffic, opium smuggling, and so on. The increase of traffic will constantly increase both the number and the significance of these intercontinental questions, so that the non-political importance of the League Secretariat will grow in future if all states, which to-day remain remote from the League for political reasons, can be articulated into this non-political world organization.

What we have to do to-day is not to disband the League of Nations but to remove it from politics and make its universality a reality. In this shape as a moral world authority without physical power it could better serve peace between continents and races than it can to-day.

The League of Nations could only be dangerous and injurious if, after its moral collapse, it set up to be the protector of European freedom and thus desired to create the belief that a closer European union was superfluous. Not only all Pan-Europeans but all human beings who value truth and European peace must combat this falsity.

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The undeniable fiasco of the League of Nations has left the way free for the United States of Europe. At the same time, however, it has made it possible for anti-Europeans to argue that the League itself has failed to establish a European system of co-operation, security and peace, and that therefore any similar plan is impossible of execution.

Such critics forget that the idea of the League of Nations has as little to do with Paneuropa as it has with Pan-America; that Europe embraces only four per cent of the world's surface and only one-fifth of its population. It is therefore inconceivable how the two terms "European" and "international" can continually be used as interchangeable.

It would occur to no American that "Pan-American" and "international" were synonymous, though the

American Continent is almost seven times as great as the European. Americans have long been used to characterising all institutions, organizations, or problems which are confined to their continent as "Pan-American" or "inter-American." Only Europe still suffers from that form of megalomania which leads it to believe that it rules the world and is more or less identical with it. This is the reason why a whole series of important European institutions, such as the International Chamber of Commerce, the International Union of Agriculture, and the Trade Union International, are simply called "international" without any European sections being organized in separation from the international institutions.

Only when seen from this false perspective can the failure of world union be advanced as an argument against the possibility of European union. In fact, the union of Europe stands on to-day's agenda, while the question of world union is an item for the distant future. It was the fundamental mistake of Wilson and his collaborators to overlook this all-important difference.

Thus the League of Nations has become a disappointment while Paneuropa remains the greatest hope of our generation — the only reasonable issue of the present war, which can compensate us for its terrible sacrifice.

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Such a union is often described with the name "the United States of Europe." This name should signify no more than that the problem is a unification of the states of Europe. It should in no way suggest an imitation of the United States of America, the political foundations of which are, and will remain, totally different from those of Europe.

Europe can learn only from a European example — from the Swiss Federation, which has for centuries furnished the laboratory and the test-tubes for the European unification experiment. In any time which we care to foresee, for example, there can be no European president on the American model, but only a European directorate with changing presidency, as in the Swiss *Bundesrat*. As in Switzerland no canton may nominate more than one of the seven members of the *Bundesrat*, so the same principle would have to apply for the states of Europe. Similarly the two chambers furnish a model, one of which, the *Ständerat*, furnishes equal representation for all cantons, large and small, and the other, the *Nationalrat*, equal representation for all Swiss citizens. We can also take as a model the division of the seven common federal offices into the Foreign Office, the Home Office, the War Office, and the Ministries of Commerce, Finance, Communications, and Justice. Further examples for imitation are the division of sovereignty and financial power between the federation and the cantons and the fundamental rights of Swiss citizens and the safeguards for their equality irrespective of differences of language or religion.

The Swiss federal constitution, adapted to the European order of magnitude and to the different historical development and constitutions of the European states, furnishes the broad lines for the constitution of Paneuropa, the aim of which cannot be achieved at a blow, but which all Europeans must keep before their eyes as a proof that the peoples of Europe can unite when they wish.

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As a first step towards this great aim we can use the services of a Pan-European union of states formed on the model of the Pan-American Union, which has for half a century included all the Republics of the New World in a common organization.

This Pan-American Union has its seat in Washington, with its executive council constituted by the diplomatic representatives of the Latin-American states under the presidency of the American Secretary of State. The council meets once a month to discuss all questions of common interest. Every five years a Pan-American Congress, which tends to the more intimate union of the continent, is held in the capital of one or other American state. It is, in fact, a kind of American League of Nations, which just in recent years, in view of the failure of the Geneva organization, has become the hope of wide circles of North and South America, and is being constantly built up.

Such a Pan-European union of states could become effective at once if Great Britain would decide to enact in it the same rôle as the United States of America in the Pan-American Union. For Great Britain is the one European great power which has no territorial ambitions on the Continent, and would therefore be suspected by no one of a desire to achieve national domination or hegemony. The part played by Great Britain, in view of its close relations with the United States, would at the same time be a guarantee that the foundation of Paneuropa was not only not directed against Pan-America, but on the contrary would and could secure eternal peace within the Atlantic world in the closest concert with that sister organization.

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Paneuropa needs no common language for its existence. Switzerland shows that with good will, but without a single language, understanding and collaboration are possible.

At the same time it would be an enormous advantage for European solidarity if Europe could agree on one speech which every European should learn within the next generation in addition to his mother tongue. In itself it is a matter of indifference which language is chosen by the European governments, but it would be in the interest of European culture that a natural, living language, and not an artificial or a dead language, should be selected. Undoubtedly the English language would be the first to deserve consideration, since it has a wider currency than any other European language, is one of the easiest to learn, and is already in practice the language understood in the world outside Europe. It would be enough to make its study obligatory at first in teaching colleges and higher schools, and only thereafter to extend this study to elementary schools. After one generation a German, a Frenchman, and an Italian could as easily understand each other in English as an educated Japanese, Chinese, and Indian can to-day. Thus, while national language and national culture would be carefully preserved the barriers of speech which to-day separate the peoples of Europe and impede reciprocal understanding would disappear.

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The question is often asked whether the unification of Europe should take its rise from politics or from economics or from a change of spirit.

In practice, preparatory labour must go forward at the same time on all three planes — in politics through regional union and a realistic peace policy, in economics by the removal of most-favoured nation treatment and the inception of a European system of preference, in spirit through the propagation of the European idea.

At the same time economic union is clearly dependent on political union and political change on a change of spirit.

It is impossible to make a customs union between states who are military threats to each other. A threatened state must have recourse to a system of autarky in order that it can produce within its own boundaries in the case of war or blockade all articles which it needs for life and warfare. For this reason it is not good sense to ask that Europe should first unify itself economically and thereafter politically on the basis of economic interdependence.

As Europe's collective security must precede an economic union, so a European spirit must precede Europe's political unification. So long as extreme nationalism prevails, every signed guarantee of freedom remains a scrap of paper that can be torn up at any time by its signatory or his successor in the alleged interest of his nation. Only a guarantee of freedom which is borne on the broad current of public opinion can become the foundation of European union.

Neither the Swiss Federal constitution nor the Swiss Customs Union could prevent the inhabitants of Tessin from seceding if they were not filled with a strong and living Swiss patriotism.

Similarly, only a strong and living European spirit can be the cement which will bind the peoples of Europe together in a lasting political and economic association.

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In this sense the Paneuropa movement is a living foundation of European unification. The measure of the success which it has yet attained is that all the nations of Europe would be ready to hail the statesman who would continue Briand's work and realize the peaceable unification of Europe.

Its next aim is to convert this passive readiness into an active demand. Peoples should not merely expect but insist upon a Pan-European attitude in their leaders. They should compel the unification of Europe by the growing pressure of public opinion. They should withhold their vote from any candidate and any party not openly subscribing to Paneuropa, and read no newspaper which does not work for the European idea. They should regard the enemies of Europe as the enemies of their nation, their family, and their person, and oppose them. They should publicly and on every occasion acknowledge themselves to be Pan-Europeans, and wherever possible recruit new supporters for the idea, the movement, and the organization. If anyone can speak for it, let him speak; if anyone can write for it, let him write; if anyone can contribute for it, let him contribute. For ideas and money have always been the raw materials required for the formation of public opinion, and without them there can be no struggle to effect a great political change.

Whoever realizes the necessity of European union and yet does nothing to make it a reality is guilty of a crime against his fellow human beings and himself, since he makes himself an accomplice in all the catastrophes, in war and revolution, and in distress, which threaten to destroy our lacerated Europe.

On this account it is the most sacred duty of all the men and women of Europe to join the Paneuropa movement, even if they are not in agreement with every point in its programme. Details and paragraphs are not the important thing. What matters is the creation of a new European will and European spirit.

This appeal is directed to all liberal groups and parties in Europe, because Paneuropa offers the only guarantee for the salvation of the conceptions of freedom and personality in the direst crisis through which they have ever passed.

It is directed to all socialist groups and parties, because the economic unification of Europe is the one and only condition for the social progress of all Europeans who vegetate to-day in misery.

It is addressed to all conservative groups and parties, because only a unified Europe can secure the finest and proudest traditions of Europe's peoples against the blood-stained deluge of a barbaric world revolution.

It is addressed to all national groups and parties who recognize that that progress of sister nations to which they are entitled is the natural complement of their own national mission.

It is addressed to all the friends and champions of peace, because after the collapse of the League of Nations Paneuropa is the one means of preventing a series of world wars of inconceivable horror.

It is addressed to the whole agrarian population of Europe, which can be secured only by union against the intolerable competition of America's spacious grain factories, and to the whole industrial population of Europe, whose future is likewise threatened by the growing competition of the humbler and cheaper hands of Asia.

It is addressed to all the merchants and business men of Europe, whose activity is continually colliding with those senseless tariff walls and currency restrictions which dismember their natural market.

It is addressed to all the artists, thinkers, writers, research workers, and scholars of Europe who see in the reconciliation of our hemisphere the essential condition for a re-blossoming of culture in the Western world.

It is addressed to all the professing Christians of Europe who identify the mortal enemy of Christianity with the mortal enemy of Europe and are determined to fight in a Christian spirit for a peaceful future for the

European family of peoples.

It is addressed to all the youth of Europe who are tired of the obsolete slogans and petty intrigues of European politics and long for a great common ideal for which it is worth while to suffer, to fight, and to conquer.

If all these spiritual, political, and economic forces stand together against European dismemberment and impoverishment, against new world wars and against world revolution, our generation will assuredly witness the birth of the United States of Europe — the re-birth of Europe as the great motherland of united nations and of free men.