

Address given by Winston Churchill at the European rally in Amsterdam (9 May 1948)

Caption: On 9 May 1948, Winston Churchill, former British Prime Minister and Honorary Chairman of the Congress of Europe in The Hague, addresses the crowd at the rally held in Amsterdam.

Source: CHURCHILL, Winston S. Europe Unite. Speeches (1947 and 1948). Londres: Cassel and Company Ltd, 1950. p. 318-321.

Copyright: (c) Cassell and Company Ltd

URL:

http://www.cvce.eu/obj/address_given_by_winston_churchill_at_the_european_rally_in_amsterdam_9_may_1948-en-19c46889-2c6d-4dba-9371-dc965cd79a6a.html



Last updated: 16/06/2016

Address given by Winston Churchill at the European rally in Amsterdam (9 May 1948)

As I look out upon this great concourse of the people of Amsterdam this fine Sunday afternoon, in days which are associated in all our minds with the joys of liberation from foul and cruel foreign tyranny, I cannot help feeling how much our two peoples of Great Britain, for whom I speak, and the Netherlands have in common. And when I look back upon the past to the days when King William III ruled England as well as Holland, and after him, when the Duke of Marlborough commanded the Dutch and British Armies through so many years of victory, I feel sure that this long and famous comradeship will be preserved and that we who share the same way of life, the same conceptions of Christian civilization, should walk forward together hand in hand and, if need be, shoulder to shoulder to face the problems of the future. I drive about this pleasant, beautiful country, so fertile, so tidy and up-to-date, with its canals and electricity, the home of a free people who have the right to choose and change their government, whose Ministers and whose revered sovereign are the servants and not the masters of the people, and as I drive I have the strong conviction that the kind of life and laws and liberty you and we, on the other side of the Channel, have established ought not to be crushed or flattened out by any form of totalitarian tyranny either the hated Nazi domination which we have cast out or by any other form of similar despotism.

For myself I am not the enemy of any race or nation in the world. Russians, Germans, Japanese, we all understand their toils and their sufferings. It is not against any race or nation that we range ourselves. It is against tyranny, in all its forms, ancient or modern, new or old, that we take our stand. Tyranny presents itself in various forms but it is always the same, whatever slogans it utters, whatever name it calls itself by, whatever liveries it wears. It is always the same and makes a demand on all free men to risk and do all in their power to withstand it. Here also we find ourselves in harmony with the great Republic of the United States, whose services to mankind in this period of tension and strain demand our gratitude and also command our faithful cooperation. Any alliance which the British, the Dutch and other free governments may make between themselves is not directed against any particular country or people but only against the powers of evil, whoever they may be and wherever they may be. You have heard it said no doubt about extremes resembling one another, certainly the North Pole and the South Pole are very far apart. But if you woke up to-morrow morning at one or the other you would not know which it was, There might be more penguins at one end of the world, and more polar bears at the other. But all around you would be ice and snow and the blast of freezing winds over vast dreary spaces.

Our idea is something different. We make another picture in our minds. We think that United Europe might be a better place to live in than either the Arctic or Antarctic. And that is why we, your visitors and guests, have come here from so many lands, speaking so many languages to accept the generous hospitalities of the Hague and Amsterdam and to try to take a step forward together in harmony with the policy of our freely-elected governments towards reviving the old glories of Europe and enabling this famous Continent to resume its place as an independent and self-supporting member of a World Organization. As a part in this World Organization we hope that there will soon be formed a Council of Europe which will comprise the governments and peoples of as many European states as hold our convictions and accept the broad freedoms of democratic life established on the freely-expressed will of the people in many places, though we make great allowances for difficulties in great populations acting through Parliamentary institutions. This is the Europe which we wish to see arise in so great a strength as to be safe from internal disruption or foreign inroads. We hope to reach again a Europe united but purged of the slavery of ancient, classical times, a Europe in which men will be proud to say, "I am a European".

We hope to see a Europe where men of every country will think as much of being a European as of belonging to their native land, and that without losing any of their love and loyalty of their birthplace. We hope wherever they go in this wide domain, to which we set no limits in the European Continent, they will truly feel "Here I am at home. I am a citizen of this country too". Let us meet together. Let us work together. Let us do our utmost—all that is in us—for the good of all. How simple it would all be, how crowned with blessings for all of us if that could ever come, especially for the children and young men and women now growing up in this tortured world. How proud we should all be if we had played any useful part in bringing that great day to come. And here I invoke the interest of the broad, proletarian masses. We see before our eyes scores of millions of humble homes in Europe and in lands outside which have been afflicted by war.

Are they never to have a chance to thrive and flourish? Is the honest, faithful, breadwinner never to be able to reap the fruits of his labour? Can he never bring up his children in health and joy and with the hopes of better days? Can he never be free from the fear of foreign invasion, the crash of the bomb and the shell, the tramp of the hostile patrol, or what is even worse, the knock upon his door by the political police to take the loved one from the protection of law and justice, when all the time by one spontaneous effort of his will he could wake from all these nightmare horrors and stand forth in his manhood, free in the broad light of day?

But if we are to achieve, this supreme reward we must lay aside every impediment; we must conquer ourselves. We must rise to a level higher than the grievous injuries we have suffered or the deep hatreds they have caused. Old feuds must die. Territorial ambitions must be set aside. National rivalries must be confined to the question as to who can render the most distinguished service to the common cause, Moreover we must take all necessary steps and particular precautions to make sure that we have the power and the time to carry out this transformation of the western world. Much of this of course belongs to the responsibilities of the chosen governments responsible in so many countries. But we have gathered together at The Hague, to proclaim here and to all the world the mission, the aim and the design of a United Europe, whose moral conceptions will win the respect and gratitude of mankind and whose physical strength will be such that none will dare molest her tranquil sway.