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Christopher Soames

On Being European

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CHRISTOPHER SOAMES

On Being European

Tragedy and Hope

The theme of Sir Winston Churchill's famous speech in Zürich, 1946, was the urgent necessity of establishing what he called a 'kind of United States of Europe'. Nearly a third of a century separates us from that September day a year after the end of the Second World War. 'I wish to speak to you of the tragedy of Europe'. These were the words with which Sir Winston began his speech on that occasion.

How long ago now seems that sombre epoch in European history, so properly described as tragic! How remote is the condition of that stricken generation which Churchill so vividly evoked—that 'vast, quivering mass of tormented, hungry, careworn and bewildered human beings' waiting everywhere in Europe, 'in the ruins of their cities and homes!'

And yet how lively was the hope that he held forth—the hope of the peoples of Europe, 'rising to the heights of the soul and of the instinct and spirit of man!' The hope that a new Europe might be created from the ruins of the old—a new Europe 'which could give a sense of enlarged patriotism and common citizenship to the distracted peoples of this mighty continent.'

We would do well today to remember both the tragedy and the hope of that time. Thirty years of recovery and of advancing material prosperity have perhaps weakened that insight which Churchill so well expressed, on behalf of a whole generation of Europeans, into the glorious hopes and terrible disappointments that are equally the fate of man. Thirty years of intricate and demanding work has been done by the founding fathers of the European Community—Monnet, Schuman, de Gasperi, Adenauer—and by the succeeding generation, towards the realisation of the hope which he expressed. We must not permit the bustle and clatter of these busy years to let us lose our vision of the plan and purpose of the whole, and of the nature of the spirit which informs it.

None of us in Europe can take for granted the success of our aspirations to European unity and for a peaceful and progressive world. The possibility of disappointment, the threat of tragedy is always with us, in the shifting

balance of forces in the world around us, and indeed within ourselves. We humans are forgetful creatures who find it all too easy to take for granted the precarious achievements of the past. Complacency and unwillingness to face hard truths are our common lot.

However impressive may be the European edifice which has been built upon the hope which Sir Winston uttered thirty years ago, its successful development is entirely dependent upon the imagination, the understanding, and the will of those millions of people who are the citizens of Europe.

European Citizenship

European citizenship was the essential idea to which Churchill addressed his appeal at Zürich. He spoke as a European to Europeans. He called for 'an act of faith in the European family', for 'an enlarged patriotism'. And he implied that we all could feel within our hearts a common loyalty to 'this noble continent', as he called it, 'the home of all the great parent races of the western world, the foundation of Christian truth and ethics, the origin of most of the culture, art, philosophy and science, both of ancient and modern times'.

Thirty years on, in the new Europe of today, it may seem unnecessary to stress these things which we Europeans have in common. But at the time when Churchill spoke, his theme of European unity stood out almost as a paradox against the background of a Europe torn and ravaged by its rivalries and divisions.

Nationalism has been one of the great motive forces in European history, and its spirit is very much alive today in Europe. And although many terrible crimes and follies have been committed in its name, it is and will remain a fundamental element in the sense of identity of our peoples. Indeed, there are many who object to Sir Winston's idea of a European patriotism because they believe that it can arise only out of the ashes of the old-established and valued national patriotisms—that it can be experienced only by those who reject the ties that bind them to their native land. For these critics of the European idea the pursuit of European unity is therefore at best a will of the wisp, at worst the subversion of that distinction of national type and personality in which they see the beginning and the end of Europe.

I cannot accept such a view. That natural patriotism which the particular land of our birth and upbringing inspires within us is not incompatible with a wider European loyalty. It is of course true that a large part of the historic achievements of the European continent stems from the differen-

tiation of its peoples among distinct cultures, languages, and societies. It was this that Sir Winston recognised when he said in his Zürich speech that 'there can be no revival of Europe without a spiritually great France, and a spiritually great Germany'.

But this does not mean that the Europeans should not seek to reconcile their divisions—divisions which have borne so much bitter fruit as well as so much good. Nor does it exclude the development of a common European patriotism which enlarges and embraces, but does not crush or supplant, the particular patriotism of the nations of which she is composed.

To deny that hope is to mistake the nature of patriotism. Patriotism, the sense of identification with a particular country or society, the sense of responsibility for it, is a state of feeling composed of many complex elements. It is above all an expression of man's search for belonging, for community with his fellow men. Its origins lie both in ancestral instinct, and in the perception of shared interests. They lie in awareness of a common language or culture, in the memory of shared past experience, and in the habit of cooperation and mutual loyalty. 'These are the ties', as Burke said, 'which, though light as air, are as strong as links of iron'.

But this instinct of patriotism is not one which operates only at the level of nationality. 'Patriotism begins as attachment to our own field of action'. The same disposition shows itself both in our attachment to our immediate circle and in our sense of belonging to human kind as a whole. The objects of our love and loyalty, of our sense of identity and belonging, are many and diverse. And our life as individuals and as communities is richer as those objects are more numerous and more diverse.

No soil is better suited to the expression of this idea than that of your country—Switzerland. Here we find and admire a vivid and animated political community, the object of great patriotic devotion, which unites in a single state members of three of Europe's greatest and most proud communities of language, and the adherents of both of Europe's great religious traditions.

Each of us knows from his daily experience of life—no one better than the Swiss—that there need be nothing exclusive in our sense of belonging to a community, in our instincts of patriotism. We can experience feelings both strong and deep at the same time towards more than one human group or association. Our love for our family does not exclude our love of our friends. Our sentiments of belonging to the parish or the city or the canton where we were born or brought up do not impede our love of our country.

Our fatherland is a country of the heart. It may be not just one great country but many. Sir Winston Churchill was above all proud to be British. But he was also proud to belong to the British Empire and Common-

wealth, to the United States of America, and to Europe. He responded with fierce loyalty and devotion to the symbols of each of these societies and to the principles which they embody. He saw that in a generous nature none of these loyalties need exclude any other—that each could find its place within the heart and mind of man.

Our European patriotism must take its rightful place among our other patriotisms. It will take time to emerge, but it is already taking shape as the movement of events deepens our sense of common origins and shared fortunes, and as our work together breeds the habit and instinct of solidarity.

Of course it will not simply be born of itself. We must consciously sustain and nourish our European patriotism, and be prepared to make sacrifices for it. In this the actions and attitudes of the European governments in their day-to-day conduct of affairs is of prime importance. Governments which have decided that membership of the European Community is in the interests of their countries must surely, by their actions and their words, make manifest to their people the advantages which they and their descendants will derive from the Community—advantages which far transcend the merely materialistic. For a living European patriotism can only arise as day by day the people of our continent see their interests and also their pride served and satisfied by the European idea.

Meanwhile, as we recognise ourselves increasingly as European, there is nothing which need make us less conscious of ourselves as British, or French, or German, or Italian. Rather, we become more and more conscious at once of our uniqueness in a wealth of diversity and of those elements in our national traditions and interests which we have in common and which point towards the deeper unity of Europe.

Our European patriotism does not exclude or override the other patriotisms we feel within ourselves. It adds to their number; it does not subtract. It enriches our identity; it does not impoverish it. In short, to be European is to share in the inheritance of each of the European peoples, not to lose the heritage of one's own.

Prosperity—Fruit of Cooperation

This European patriotism is worth having for its own sake. But let us not forget that Churchill and the other founders of the new Europe also saw it as a means to further ends beyond itself. In the immediate aftermath of war these ends were regarded as primarily political. In Churchill's phrase they were 'peace, safety, and freedom'. The founding fathers of

the Community, recognising the economic foundations and prerequisites of peace, added a further dimension—the pursuit of prosperity and of a better standard of life for all.

Now, after thirty years where does Europe stand in relation to these two great themes of peace and prosperity?

In spite of all our present difficulties, what could be a greater contrast than that which exists between the condition of the Europe which Churchill described in his speech at Zürich, and the state in which Europe finds herself today!

The national rivalries from which sprang the devastation of the two world wars have been channelled into the peaceful habits and institutions of European cooperation. Europe has overcome the danger—so evident immediately after the war—that she would become the Balkans of the latter half of the twentieth century. Where she could have been a focus of international instability and weakness, she has become a centre of coherence and organisation. Her friends have drawn comfort and reassurance from her recovery and from the resilience of her impulse towards unity. And those who would profit from her divisions have been discouraged. The European idea has thus indeed made the contribution which Churchill hoped it would to the peace of Europe and the world.

At the same time it has played a crucial part in the astonishing improvement which has occurred since 1945 in the economic well-being of the European peoples. The foundation of that prosperity has been the movement of Europe towards a single, unified and outward-looking market. Without that movement towards economic integration the great advance which has been achieved in the productivity of European industry and agriculture could not have been achieved. Without it there could not have been the same opportunities to rationalise production and distribution. There would have been less specialisation, and Europe could not have reaped the advantages of the economies of scale. The confidence necessary for large-scale investment would have been lacking. There could not have been the same spur to technological innovation, or the same incentives which the reinforcement of competition within that market has given to greater efficiency. In short, if the wider European market had not been created there would have been fewer jobs, fewer opportunities, and a lower standard of living for us all.

In the immediate present the livelihood of all our people is threatened at once by inflation and by unemployment. Things may well get worse before they get better. But to master these problems we need a joint effort. Over the past thirty years the European idea has been at the heart of the movement towards a single European market and all the benefits it has brought,

because it has provided the essential political framework within which economic integration could take place. The European governments have been deeply committed to a united Europe; and the knowledge that this was so has given Europe's businessmen and trade unionists, planners and managers, the confidence necessary for expansion, innovation and risk-taking. Similarly, if we are to overcome the difficulties and dangers of the immediate future without a collapse of the world economy like that which took place in the nineteen-thirties we must cleave to the ideal of unity as a counter-weight to the fears and resentments, the mutual suspicions and the protectionism which are the ugly offspring of difficult times.

Moreover we should never forget that the European Community is more than an ideal of unity. It is also a set of concrete institutions and procedures. A united Europe could not exist without this Community of institutions at the European level, supplementing but not supplanting the existing national and local governments. None of the benefits which the European idea has brought about, none of the benefits which it will bring about in the future, could be realised if the Governments of Europe were unwilling to share some of their powers of decision to gain the vastly greater powers of action which only their joint resolution can secure.

Sovereignty

What then of sovereignty? Sovereignty is one of those words—all too common in politics—with great emotive power but with a meaning that is not easily agreed or understood.

Let us be clear about one thing. Sovereignty is a very different concept from patriotism or national identity. Patriotism is a state of feeling. Sovereignty is a political doctrine. Sovereignty is not an attribute of a *nation*. Rather, it is something which a particular political theory—one among many—has attributed to the *state*. Our patriotism, our sense of nationality, and our national traditions are not at stake upon the question of sovereignty. Thus, for instance, the identity of France as a nation and the patriotism of Frenchmen have been in no way diminished by France's sharing of sovereignty within the Community.

Nor can it be rightly argued that democracy cannot continue where sovereignty is divided. The rule of law, the representation of the governed, the accountability of those who govern, the right to control taxation—each of these essential institutions of democracy is present in the institutions of the Community, and in each case the way is open for them to be strengthened as the Community itself grows in strength.

Sovereignty has always been concerned with power—the ability to act, and to influence the actions of others. But the history of this century has demonstrated again and again with ever increasing frequency and force that sovereignty in the operational sense of the word can no longer be effectively exercised on a purely national scale—certainly not by smaller and medium-sized states such as those of Western Europe.

Indeed, attempts to cling to the legal externals of sovereignty in the modern world can only succeed at the expense of the substance of national power. But that natural power can be enhanced by pooling it with the power of other states. Of course the existence of a united Europe—a coherent, active, effective Community—implies that its members will take many of their decisions in common. It means that they will share their power to act, their power to defend their interests, their power to work for the sort of world they want. But power is not an end in itself. It is a means to an end. And none of us should hold back anxiously from sharing our power if by so doing we find it easier to achieve our purposes as a nation, and if we are the better able to achieve by acting with others the ends we have in common.

What the national interests of each of our countries require nowadays is a philosophy of practical internationalism founded in a frank recognition of the realities of the modern world. And the attempt to oppose this philosophy by reviving a false and therefore dangerous concept of exclusive national sovereignty—false because it is obsolete—can result only in grave disservice to the national interests which it purports to serve.

Europe a Part of the World

But just as these twin purposes of peace and prosperity cannot be achieved by any European nation acting alone, so they cannot be achieved by Europe in isolation. Europe is too dependent on the outside world for her defence. She is too dependent upon the rest of the world for her supplies of essential raw materials, and for markets for her goods, to be able to give anything but the highest priority to her relations with the rest of the globe. And the rest of the world in turn cannot be safe and prosperous unless Europe is also safe and prosperous, and unless Europe's policies are compatible with the requirements of order and discipline in the world economy.

We in Europe must therefore do everything in our power to defend and develop the international trading and monetary system. Together we must resist all the protectionist pressures—both within our own countries and

outside them—that threaten to pull down the world-wide system of economic fair play on which our prosperity and our social stability and progress have been based over these past three decades.

We must continue to attach vital importance to close and confident relations of mutual friendship and alliance with the United States of America. 'Mighty America' was what Churchill called her at Zürich; and she is 'Mighty America' still—although now that we in Europe have begun to make progress together we can look forward to a time when the relationship will be a less unequal one than it was in the period after the war.

In particular our guiding principle of cooperation rather than confrontation must be applied in the multilateral trade negotiations that will begin in earnest here in Switzerland in a few weeks' time. It must apply in the consultations amongst oil consumers, and between oil consumers and oil producers. It must apply in the development of the world's monetary system to cope with the strains put on it by our present massive deficits and surpluses. And it must apply in our approach to the deeper and wider conflicts that threaten the peace of the world.

If these be Europe's interests in the wider world, what of her duties? We are not building European unity merely to become safer and richer. We are doing it so that Europe can fulfil her responsibilities and give expression to the abundant energies and idealism of her people. Our Community has a continuing responsibility and interest in the development and prosperity of the vast majority of mankind which lives in conditions so much worse than our own. And the fact that we in Europe do not hanker for a dead imperial past enables us to offer cooperation without arrogance.

Europe has much to contribute, in the way of aid, of technology, of industrial cooperation, and by providing an open and expanding market for the products of the developing world. And the sum of what the European Community can do in these fields far exceeds what can be done by its separate nation states. None of us can only look inward or live unto himself alone. Our Europe is rich in knowledge and experience. She must be able and ready to play her part on the world scene. And that is where our interests and duties as Europeans coincide.

Buoyancy and Hope

I now sum up the propositions which are before you. We cannot take for granted the achievements of the past thirty years. None of us can 'opt out' of the resolution of the grave problems which still confront mankind. In

particular, here in Europe we are bound to persevere in our efforts to overcome our divisions and to develop that larger European patriotism which Churchill had in mind when he said that he looked forward 'to the day when once more men will be glad to say *civis Romanus sum*'.

Meanwhile, in our struggle to build the unity of Europe, we need not fear that the identity and distinction of any of the European nations or cultures is incompatible with the achievement of a united Europe. The instinct of patriotism which we feel towards our native land is made of such stuff that it can co-exist with a similar instinct of European citizenship. On the other hand, a united Europe cannot be envisaged without the creation of common institutions at the European level. But this does not mean either the loss of national identity and patriotism, or the destruction of democratic institutions—which already exist, and are being strengthened, at the European level.

Our striving for European unity is a development which is necessitated by the realities of life in the modern world, both inside and outside the European Community. And it represents the triumph of a concept of government and of the state, as the servant rather than the master of free men, which is morally superior to that conception which is embodied in the classical doctrine of exclusive sovereignty.

Nor need we fear that European unity must be achieved at the expense of the world order. Rather the institutions of international economic cooperation and the principles which underlie the European union are interdependent and complementary. A united Europe will be a pillar of world order; a divided Europe must be a yawning crevasse beneath it.

And so when we echo today Churchill's thirty year-old cry 'Let Europe Arise' we do not mean—any more than he meant—to say 'Let the Nations Fall', 'Let the Globe Dissolve'. Rather, we may look with justified pride upon our handiwork. We may survey the distance we have already travelled with a sure hope that we shall accomplish the immense tasks that still lie before us. We may say with justice that Europe has already arisen: Let her now fulfil her destiny.

Ninth Winston Churchill Memorial Lecture, given in the University of Berne, 31 January 1975.