

SIR WINSTON SPENCER CHURCHILL AND THE MOVEMENT OF THE UNIFICATION OF EUROPE

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Abstract: In his paper on the history of the European Union Pascal Fontaine (professor of the Paris Institute of Political Sciences) argues that until it crystallised into a political concept and became the long term goal of the Member States of the European Community, the European ideal was unknown to all but philosophers and visionaries. The notion of a United States of Europe was part of a humanist-pacifist dream which was shattered by the conflicts which brought a lot of destruction to the European continent in the first half of the twentieth century. The vision of a new Europe which would transcend antagonistic nationalism finally emerged from the resistance movements which had sprung up to resist totalitarianism during the Second World War.¹ Professor Fontaine mentions Altiero Spinelli, the Italian federalist, and Jean Monnet, the man who provided the inspiration for the Schuman Plan which led to the European Coal and Steel Community in 1951, as the main proponents of two approaches, the federalist and the functionalist, which were to provide the impetus for European integration.

The European Union, however, has a whole pantheon of prophets and heroes, who are endowed with special foresight of the European destiny. Among them are Count Coudenhove-Kalergi (1894-1972) and Aristide Briand (1862-1932). The first two universally acknowledged Founding Fathers, however, were Jean Monnet and Walter Hallstein, who was the Commission's first president.

To succeed, these officials and dreamers needed the active support of powerful like-minded political leaders. In the immediate post-war period four such Europeanist statesmen stood out. Three of these, the active Christians Alcide de Gasperi, Robert Schuman and Konrad Adenauer, are now so venerated in Catholic memory that in 1999 the Vatican set in train the first steps towards canonising them as saints (of de Gasperi and Adenauer it could also be said that it was they who were principally responsible for setting their own countries back on their feet). The fourth, Paul-Henri Spaak, was no less deserving; he devoted much of his life to the federal cause and played a decisive part in designing the 1957 Treaty of Rome.

It is to be noted that none of the accredited European heroes is British. Winston Churchill believed in a Community led by a reconciled France and Germany, to which the United

¹ Fontaine, P. 1998, *Europe in 10 Points* published in the European Documentation Series in Luxembourg

Kingdom would be but loosely linked. It would, however, be rather unfair not to pay a tribute to his sustained efforts in campaigning for the United States of Europe for the formation of which he made a proposal as early as 1930.²

In the post-war years only months after the war ended Churchill advocated a “United States of Europe” to unify the continent “in a manner unknown since the fall of the Roman Empire.” The federation would be one of several regional units in the new United Nations. He did not believe the United Nations could prevent a future European war without a united Europe.³

Hardly had the Allies won World War II. and Churchill lost the 1945. elections when in 1946. he made two sensational speeches. Nine months after Churchill failed to be reelected as Britain's Prime Minister, he travelled with President Harry Truman to make a speech. On March 5, 1946, at the request of Westminster College in the small Missouri town of Fulton, in addition to accepting an honorary degree from the college, Churchill made one of his most famous post-war speeches. He gave his now famous “Iron Curtain” speech to a crowd of 40,000.

It was in this speech that Churchill gave the very descriptive phrase that surprised the United States and Britain, “From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the Continent.”⁴ Before this speech, the U.S. and Britain had been concerned with their own post-war economies and had remained extremely grateful for the Soviet Union's proactive role in ending World War II. It was Churchill's speech, which he titled “The Sinews of Peace,” that changed the way the democratic West viewed the Communist East.

Though many people believe that Churchill coined the phrase “the iron curtain” during this speech, the term had actually been used for decades (including in several earlier letters from Churchill to Truman). Churchill's use of the phrase gave it wider circulation and made the phrase popularly recognised as the division of Europe into East and West. When he spoke of the “Iron Curtain” that had descended from “Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic,” Winston Churchill was acknowledging and announcing a truth which so many in the West were so unwilling to admit - the onset of the Cold War. So powerful was the phrase, it cut like a thunderbolt through the public dialogue; so pronounced was the turning point marked by this speech, so wise does it seem at least in retrospect, that leaders since then return to it and quote it repeatedly to validate their own policies.

So what did Churchill really say at Fulton, Missouri? What did he mean, and how does it apply today?

² *Saturday Evening Post* 1 February, 1930.

³ Gilbert, M.: 2000 *CHURCHILL A Life* Pimlico, London 728-29.

⁴ *Ibid.*

First, as one of the architects of the Grand Alliance he, in effect, recognised the tragic reality of its dissolution. No one else of similar authority had said what he did so plainly or so publicly before. And this, too like the dangers of Germany's remilitarization before World War II, he had foreseen. At the Cairo Conference in 1943, he told Harold Macmillan of his fears about the rise of Soviet power, and the failure of the West to observe and respond to the danger.

Second, he traced the roots of the dawning conflict to Soviet territorial ambitions. As he put it, „What they desire are the fruits of war, and the indefinite expansion of their power and doctrines.”

Power and doctrine - Winston Churchill had read history and he knew that ideology was not simply or solely the reason for Soviet aggression and subversion; it was, in sinister combination, the rationalisation of conquests otherwise coveted. The Soviet commissars were fulfilling, on a grander scale, the expansionist ambitions of the Russian czars. This continuing, expansionist impulse was felt in Eastern Europe in the 1940's.

Third, he urged the West to be firm - in the form of both closer British Commonwealth - American association and a new European unity, from which, he said, “no nation should be outcast.” Already again, prophetically, he was anticipating the then - almost unimaginable rapprochement between France and Germany. Most of all, Churchill gently warned, firmness required American involvement; we cannot afford, he said, a repetition of the catastrophic American retreat from international responsibility after World War I.

He saw the emerging parallel in 1946; in less than a year, the United States Army had shrunk by nearly 90 percent.

He was looking toward a system of collective security; he was anticipating NATO by three years, each year marked by recurrent and escalating crisis with the Soviet Union. So he asked the Western powers “to stand together,” and he concluded: “There is nothing the Russians admire so much as strength, and there is nothing for which they have less respect than weakness, especially military weakness.”⁵

To the extent the “Iron Curtain” is seen and cited as a powerful and historic warning against an emerging and ruthless adversary, we can say of this interpretation: so far, so true. We can say this, even if, as frequently happens, the interpretation ignores the subtleties of Churchill's argument. But if we stop here - if that is all we see in the speech - then all we are getting is a half-truth.

There are three other points Winston Churchill made at Fulton which apply with equal force today - but which do not seem to be as clearly heard or heeded in the councils of power.

⁵ Gilbert, M.: 2000 *CHURCHILL A Life* Pimlico, London 728-29.

First, the address was a plea for peace, not conflict. It began with a reminder that “our supreme task and duty is to guard the homes of the common people from the horrors and miseries of another war.” Churchill viewed that prospect with undisguised apprehension. He spoke of future world conflict “as incomparably more rigorous than what the world has just been through. The Dark Ages may return - the Stone Age may return now on the gleaming wings of science, and what might shower unmeasurable material blessings upon mankind may even bring about its total destruction.”⁶

Half a century ago, when the West held a nuclear monopoly, Churchill was not talking of “winnable” nuclear wars; he was worried about nuclear wars in which the only winner would be death. And to him, even then, the issue was urgent: “Beware I say; time may be short. Do not let us take the course of allowing events to drift along until it is too late.”⁷

Second, the former and future Prime Minister insisted that there was a basis on which to deal with the Soviets. He had stated it before, shortly after the outbreak of the war in 1939. In another famous phrase he said: “Russia. . . is a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma; but perhaps there is a key. That key is Russian national interest.”⁸

The part about national interest is the part of the quote that is often left out. But in 1946, at Fulton, Churchill identified precisely what that interest was: The Soviets might want expansion, but they did not want war. The inevitable truth of that principle, in the atomic age, still eludes foolish and dangerous people on both sides of the Iron Curtain, who assume that on the other side, a first strike is being planned, a nuclear exchange is being actively considered, and therefore, arms control is an impossible dream or an undesirable snare. To them, Churchill replied, 40 years in advance: “What we have to consider . . . is the permanent prevention of war.” This, he believed, was in the Russian interest as surely as their own.

Third, Winston Churchill was convinced that the West should actively pursue what he called “a good understanding with the Russians. There is the solution which I would offer to you.”⁹

He was to expand on this theme again and again. At the Conservative Party Conference in North Wales in 1949, during the most frigid days of the Cold War, he called on the West to take the initiative in opening talks with the Soviets. This time, it was the hawks who assailed him. They and their ideological descendants prefer to edit Fulton, to forget the Party Conference, and to neglect the sweeping proposal of Churchill's second Prime Ministership in 1953.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

After Stalin's death in March of that year, the new Soviet regime appeared to Churchill to be signalling, in various ways - for example, in the Austrian treaty negotiations - a new readiness to reduce tensions. He believed there was at least a glimmer of light, a possibility of progress. He told President Eisenhower in a letter: "A new hope has been created in the unhappy, bewildered world." And he suggested that the West make a new approach to Moscow. He wrote in a top secret message; "If we fail to . . . seize this moment's precious chances, the judgement of future ages would be harsh and just."¹⁰ The moment, unfortunately, remained unseized. John Foster Dulles and some in his own Foreign Office accused Winston Churchill of starting down the road of appeasement.

The issue is not whether the policy surely would have worked; many of his friends conceded that at that time it might very well have failed. But Winston Churchill was steadfast in believing that it should be tried. As he said in 1955, in one of his last, great speeches to Parliament, "I have hoped for a long time for a top-level conference where these matters can be put plainly and bluntly"¹¹ - and he was talking then specifically about the issue of nuclear weapons.

He was right about the Soviet danger - and the nuclear danger. He was right to warn against appeasement - and equally right to warn against a rigid, all or nothing approach to the Russians. This is why in 1945 he again called for a "United States of Europe," a federation of European states to promote harmonious relations between nations, economic co-operation, and a sense of European identity. While in opposition, Churchill argued forcefully at home and abroad that a united Europe was the best means to heal residual hatred from the Second World War.

In spring 1946 on a visit to Holland he spoke on his favourite subject saying "I see no reason why, under the guardianship of the world organisation, there should not ultimately arise the United States of Europe, both those of the East and those of the West, which will unify this Continent in a manner never known since the fall of the Roman Empire." The cornerstone of the new organisation would be Anglo-French friendship and he wrote Prime Minister Attlee for approval to accept an invitation from the Mayor of Metz.¹²

Churchill seemed, however, to be more concerned about the future, especially the prospect of war between Russia and the Anglo-Americans. He was expressing more concern about Russia's intentions, which had become very clear to him at Potsdam. He helped prepare for any coming clash by advocating European unity. In France he recalled his visit to Paris in 1883, when his father had explained the Franco-German fight over Alsace Lorraine; and his visit to the French Army in 1907, when he "felt that by those valiant bayonets the rights of man had been gained and that by them these rights and also the liberties of Europe would be faithfully guarded. The road has been long and terrible," he reflected. "I am astonished

¹⁰ Gilbert, M.: 2000 *CHURCHILL A Life* Pimlico, London 730-35

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

to find myself here at the end of it all.” He called on the two nations to “preserve and fortify our united action. Never let us part.”¹³

His theme that “Europe must arise from her ruin and spare the world a third and possibly a fatal holocaust” was best expressed in a speech at Zurich University on 19 September 1946, which was only slightly less influential than the Iron Curtain speech earlier in the year. He began with

“I wish to speak to you today about the tragedy of Europe, [that] noble continent ... the fountain of Christian faith and Christian ethics ... and the origin of most of the culture, arts, philosophy and science both of ancient and modern times ... If Europe were once united in the sharing of its common inheritance, there would be no limit to the happiness, to the prosperity and glory which its three or four hundred million people would enjoy. Yet it is from Europe that has sprung that series of frightful nationalistic quarrels, originated by the Teutonic nations, which we have seen even in this twentieth century and in our own lifetime, wreck the peace and mar the prospects of all mankind.” To prevent a recurrence of these quarrels he called for a “United States of Europe,” beginning with a partnership between France and Germany. “There can be no revival of Europe without a spiritually great France and a spiritually great Germany.”¹⁴

He now visualised the United States of Europe as one of four UN pillars, along with the British Empire and Commonwealth, a USA-led Western Hemisphere, and a Soviet sphere. The first step would be an alliance between France and Germany. He asked General de Gaulle to “take Germany by the hand and rally her to the West and European civilisation”, but the French President insisted on British participation at the beginning stage.

In the following year his attention was focused on Europe, its rebuilding, restructuring and defence. He continued to support the concept of a United Europe and acknowledged the importance of the support of the United States, particularly the recent passage of the Truman Doctrine.

In January 1947 Churchill chaired the new organised Provisional United Europe Committee comprised of British political leaders, academics and religious leaders. He also attempted to set up a bipartisan organisation, the All Party Group, within Britain to promote a united Europe, but failed to gain the support of Prime Minister Clement Attlee.

The inspirational rhetoric of his public speeches envisioned elements of supranationalism, not just intergovernmental co-operation, though he was unwilling to jeopardise Britain's privileged relationship with other English-speaking nations by joining in a European federation. In 1947 and 1948 he sought to link the united Europe initiative in Britain with like minded continental groups. He founded the United Europe Movement in Britain,

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Gilbert, M.: 2000 *CHURCHILL A Life* Pimlico, London 730-35

served as its president and sought Labour support for it. He was now placing Britain closer to the heart of European unification than ever before.

At the Congress of the European Movement at The Hague on 7-10 May 1948 Churchill's European unity strategy paid rich dividends. He made several highly publicised speeches and in his keynote address Churchill sketched out his vision of a united Europe and Britain's place in it, emphasising that it was "impossible to separate economic and defence from the political structure." He called for a European Assembly and spoke of three world pillars in the United Nations – the USSR, the United States and Western Hemisphere – and a Council of Europe that included Britain linked to its Empire and Commonwealth. He hoped to reach a time when people would be proud to say, "I am a European," and would think of themselves as much European as of their native land. In his speech to the Congress of Europe at the Hague he said:

"We shall only save ourselves from the perils which draw near by forgetting the hatreds of the past, by letting national rancorous and revenges die, by progressively effacing frontiers and barriers which aggravate and congeal our divisions, and by rejoicing together in that glorious treasure of literature, of romance, of ethics, of thought and toleration belonging to all, which is the true inheritance of Europe, the expression of its genius and honour, but which by our quarrels, our follies by our fearful wars and the cruel and awful deeds that spring from war and tyrants, we have almost cast away."¹⁵ He later spoke in Amsterdam and Oslo.

He next faced the task of organising formal institutions for a united Europe. He hoped a Council and Assembly of Europe would provide a forum for his views while Labour was in power and would hasten the re-entry of Germany into the European family. Creating the institutions gave him a sense of purpose and combative enjoyment he had not felt since the war, but it tested his convictions versus his rhetoric. It was also like squaring a circle trying to maintain close relations with the U.S. and the Commonwealth while drawing closer to Europe. Politically, he received no support from Attlee and the fault lines within his own party were widening. Toward the end of 1948 divisions between intergovernmental and federal organisations continued to grow.

Churchill acknowledging these two visions of European unity tried not to define the organisational structure at this stage. At the opening meeting of the European Assembly in July 1949, he addressed the intergovernmental – federal debate by suggesting that all possibilities be explored. His main goal was to foster a Europeanism which would include Germany.

In August 1949, Churchill attended the first meeting of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, where he delivered a speech in French and, according to Harold Macmillan,

¹⁵ Ibid.

“with a better accent than usual.” Robert Rhodes Jones reports that Churchill's opening words, “Take heed! I am going to speak in French,” were received by the crowd “with thunderous cheers and applause.”¹⁶ In the speech, Churchill attempted to harmonise European nationalism with an overriding European unity:

“We are reunited here, in this new Assembly, not as representatives of our several countries or various political parties, but as Europeans forging ahead, hand in hand, and if necessary elbow to elbow, to restore the former glories of Europe and to permit this illustrious continent to take its place once more, in a world organisation, as an independent member sufficient unto itself.”

“That primary and sacred loyalty that one owes to one's own country is not difficult to reconcile with this larger feeling of European fellowship. On the contrary, we will establish that all legitimate interests are in harmony and that each one of us will best serve the real interests and security of his country if we enlarge at the same time both our sentiment of citizenship and of common sovereignty – if we include in this sentiment the entire continent of States and of nations who have the same way of life.”¹⁷

Churchill was still recuperating in the Autumn of 1949 from the minor stroke he had suffered while on holiday in France. At his own party conference in October he left Britain's relationship with a united Europe undefined and thus received only two dissenting votes. Kept informed by Prime Minister Clement Attlee of significant defence and foreign policy developments, Churchill privately gave advice to Attlee on these issues. On defence policy, he wrote Attlee that Britain could not help defend Europe unless it could first defend herself.

“A defenceless Britain can play no part in the defence of Europe. Her power to help in the past has arisen from an integral, insular security. If this falls, all falls. If it endures, all may be defended or regained. Mere contributions, however generous, to European schemes of defence will be useful to Europe if Britain is herself no longer a living military entity. It is certainly not isolationism to set this first objective first, On the contrary it is the only foundation upon which effective help can be given to Europe and to other parts of the Empire.”¹⁸

Churchill's vision for Europe was that no enduring peace was possible without an understanding between France and Germany. As Churchill told the House on 28 March, 1950 such a combination including Great Britain, would constitute: “the core or nucleus upon which all the other civilised democracies of Europe, bound or free, can one day rally

¹⁶ Rhodes James, Robert ed., 1974. *Winston S. Churchill: His Complete Speeches, 1897-1963* Address of 10 August 1949, Vol. VIII, p. 8326.

¹⁷ Jenkins Roy.: 2001 *CHURCHILL*, London p. 813

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

and combine...I do not wish to fall into vague generalities. Let me, therefore, express our policy as I see it in a single sentence. Britain and France united should stretch forth hands of friendship to Germany, and thus, if successful, enable Europe to live again.”¹⁹

In early August 1950, Churchill spoke at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg in favour of a European Army: “There must be created, and in the shortest possible time, a real defensive front in Europe. Great Britain and the United States must send large forces to the Continent. France must again revive her famous army. We welcome our Italian comrades. All Greece, Turkey, Holland, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Scandinavian States must bear their share and do their best.... Those who serve supreme causes must not consider what they can get but what they can give. Let that be our rivalry in these years that lie before us.”²⁰

After Churchill's motion creating a European Army – though not a supranational one – was passed by the European Assembly, he faced the problems of promoting the idea and spelling out the structure. Constructing a European Army brought Churchill back to the role of national sovereignty. Privately, he hoped for national divisions under “command with a civilian Defence Chief responsible to existing national governments acting together.”²¹ He believed that a European Army without national contingents would not have a fighting spirit. Publicly, he preferred to comment on proposals of others rather than present schemes of his own.

Later that month, he urged President Truman to guarantee West Germany's defence should it contribute troops to a European Army: “I said at Strasbourg that if the Germans threw in their lot with us, we should hold their safety and freedom as sacred as our own. Of course I have no official right to speak for anyone, yet after the firm stand you have successfully made about Berlin, I think that the deterrent should be made to apply to all countries represented in the European Army. I do not see how this would risk or cost any more than what is now morally guaranteed by the United States. Perhaps you will consider whether you can give any indication of your views. A public indication would be of the utmost value and is, in my opinion, indispensable to the conception of a European front against communism.”²² Truman's reply was noncommittal.

For his birthday on 30 November, Churchill addressed the House of Commons on the differences between the aftermaths of the two world wars: “After the First War, when the victors had disarmed the Germans and their allies, no powerful organised army remained upon the scene except the French Army. After this war, the armed might of Russia emerged steadily year by year, almost month by month, as a rock shows more and more above an ebbing tide. The second difference, which arose out of the realisation of the first, was that the United States, instead of retiring into isolation, instead of demanding full and prompt

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

repayment of debts and disinteresting herself in Europe...has come forward step by step as the knowledge of the situation has dawned upon her and has made the great counterpoise upon which the freedom and the future of our civilisation depends.”²³

Churchill's Europeanism would not have made him contemplate sacrificing the closest possible link with the United States. But, as he himself pointed out, this was not at issue. It was a settled American policy - and remained so for many decades - to encourage the drive towards European unity, and Britain's reluctance to be part of it was an exacerbating rather than a helpful factor in London's relations with Washington. Nor did Churchill's ardent Adanticism cut him off from most of the committed continental Europeans. Jean Monnet always set great store by good and close relations with America. Paul-Henri Spaak moved from being the first president of the Strasbourg Assembly and the driving force of the Treaty of Rome to becoming secretary-general of NATO. Konrad Adenauer, 'little European' and Carolingian though he was, believing romantically that the finest date in history was the year 800 when Charlemagne was crowned Frankish Emperor at Aachen, nonetheless knew that the security behind which he was rebuilding West Germany was essentially provided by the Americans; he was accordingly very respectful in the 1950s to President Eisenhower and Secretary of State Dulles.

What did differentiate Churchill from these continental Europeans was the third of his circles, that of the British Commonwealth, which in those days essentially meant the white Commonwealth, although as early as 1949 he was beginning to move towards a sympathetic respect for Jawaharlal Nehru. His views on this were set out at a European Movement rally on 28 November 1949:

“Britain is an integral pan of Europe, and we mean to play our pan in the revival of her prosperity and greatness. But Britain cannot be thought of as a single state in isolation. She is the founder and centre of a world- wide Empire and Commonwealth. We shall never do anything to weaken the ties of blood, of sentiment and tradition and common interest which unite us with the other members of the British family of nations

But nobody is asking us to make such a desertion. For Britain to enter a European Union from which the Empire and Commonwealth would be excluded would not only be impossible but would, in the eyes of Europe, enormously reduce the value of our participation. The Strasbourg recommendations [that is of the first session of the Council of Europe Assembly] urged the creation of an economic system which will embrace not only the European States, but all those other States and territories elsewhere which are associated with them.”²⁴

²³ Jenkins Roy.: 2001 *CHURCHILL*, London p. 817

²⁴ Jenkins Roy.: 2001 *CHURCHILL*, London p. 818

This was undoubtedly a view which Churchill held as strongly at the time as he did the view that Britain's involvement in Europe would improve and not weaken its relations with America. The difference was that his view about America was reinforced with almost every future year which went by, whereas over this same period the economic cohesion of the Commonwealth was reduced and what remained became more difficult to meld with Europe. It may be that in the early 1950s Britain could have imported the Commonwealth, bag and baggage, and secured as favourable access for Australia or New Zealand products as France did for the exports of Senegal or the Ivory Coast. It fitted in with the view, widely based in England at any rate, that in the early post-war years Britain could have had the leadership of Europe on almost any terms which it chose. However neither the Attlee nor the second Churchill government, in which Eden was allowed to make most of the foreign policy running or - on Europe - limping, showed any desire to close on the offer, and by the time that first Macmillan and then Heath had to try to make up for lost time, harsher choices had to be faced.

It would be rash to guess what view Churchill would have taken had he still been responsible for policy decisions in the 1960s or 1970s. But what is certain is that his Europeanism of the late 1940s and very early 1950s was not superficial. It was one of his dominant political purposes of the time. Nor was it just a matter of cheering from the outside. He had a full sense of Britain's participatory European vocation. He combined this with a desire to preserve as much as possible of Britain's declining position in the triumvirate of world power. How could he not in view of the role that he had played from Dunkirk to Potsdam? The miracle is that his Europeanism was as deep-seated and far-sighted as it was.

Did Churchill manipulate the European Movement for political gain or did he sincerely accept its implications for Britain and the continent? Though he never expressed unqualified support for a federal Europe, favouring instead an intergovernmental approach, he fully exploited his status while out of power to avoid making hard choices. His public utterances appear closer to accepting a federal Europe than he was prepared to do in office. An enthusiastic group of younger, soon-to-be-Conservative Party ministers fully expected a new era of British leadership in Europe once Churchill returned to power. Less than two months after resuming office, Churchill crushed their hopes. In a Cabinet memorandum 29 November 1951, Churchill said unequivocally that Britain should not become an "integral part of European integration" as it would "forfeit our insular or commonwealth wide character."²⁵

What did Churchill's more than two decades of involvement in European unity ultimately mean? Was it simply political partisanship, an egotistical need to possess an international public forum a display of innovative thinking, a means of maintaining Europe's balance of power with minimum British commitments, a last-ditch attempt to preserve Britain's global status in a superpower world or some combination of the above? Historians have divided into two camps on the issue. Some do not see Churchill's statements as inconsistent with

²⁵ Ibid.

his action, since there never was a real chance, under Churchill, for Britain to participate in a supranational European organisation. Others insist that Churchill sincerely believed in the progressive merging of continental sovereignty but was unsure of Britain's membership in it in the immediate or near future.

We can, however, draw the following conclusions: Whatever his intentions, Churchill's words inspired and energised continental sentiment for a solution to Europe's post-war weakness and lack of recovery. Providing legitimacy with his prestige, Churchill gave continental proponents of a united Europe political cover and helped them create forums to convert public sentiment into governmental policy. Churchill's rhetoric also began debate, which continues to this day within Britain, about its future as a world power and the role Europe could play in that endeavour. Though in guarding Britain's independence Churchill may have looked to the Victorian past to solve the problems of the present, it would not be the first time in history that ideas and goals from the past propelled a nation, and a continent, into the future.

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