

**Address by the President of the Republic of Poland
Mr Aleksander Kwaśniewski at the 9th Churchill's Europe Symposium
Dinner „The New Challenges” in Zurich (16.09.2004)**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you very much for the invitation to attend the Symposium. The meetings in Zunfthaus zur Meisen commemorating Churchill's famous speech *Let Europe arise* already have their illustrious tradition. Visiting in person the same places and finding oneself in the same circumstances in which the prophetic words about the United States of Europe were uttered, one can more readily fathom their profound meaning and the message they conveyed.

Zurich is one of the cities where one can convincingly experience the diversity of Europe. Its University is associated with many exquisite scholars who made our continent famous and contributed to mankind's repository of knowledge. Wilhelm Röntgen, eminent physicists, such as Albert Einstein or Erwin Schrödinger, the famous historian Theodor Mommsen – are just a few among the Nobel Prize winners whose scholarly achievements were connected with this outstanding university. Also great artists, such as Richard Wagner, and spiritual leaders, such as Ulrich Zwingli lived and worked in Zurich. Today, as I am speaking before you, I am recalled of yet another prominent person. In the early 20th century, there was a Polish scientist lecturing at the Zurich Technical University Gabriel Narutowicz who became the first President of the Republic of Poland after the country regained independence from partitions. And thus we have a European mosaic of cultures, religions, languages and customs which gives the European continent its unique identity and which opens before it a fascinating future.

Allow me to use a metaphor to describe how after World War II, the wise idea of confederation set forth from the happy Switzerland and spread across a divided war-torn Europe. And at that time, the combined strength of nationalisms was not enough to prevail over the idea of co-operation. A Europe has been constructed which offers a place for everyone. Brussels has emerged as a new Bern. We are facing new challenges – no gainsaying it, but unlike before the war, we are trying to shoulder these challenges together.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In 1946, as Winston Churchill was making his famous speech in Zurich, Europe was still in ruins. The debris that the war unleashed by Hitler's criminal dictatorship had left behind, seemingly left no place any understanding, for any agreement. Speaking about the United States of Europe, about the Franco-

German co-operation was back then a sign of great courage. It testified to the great stature of a politician who managed to go beyond the *status quo* and to think ahead, reaching out into a distant future. Though his words sounded then more like a *political fiction*, this vision has come true.

We do not have to reinvent Europe the way Churchill did. The European Union is an enterprise which does stand the test. Certainly, it is not a completed project. Indeed, it may never be one: and this is how the collective wisdom of the era of globalization expresses itself. But our continent no longer is a scene of destruction. It is, rather, a building site with work incessantly going on, an ever-expanding construction. People of various nations, cultures and languages meet together and seek agreement as to the shape of this construction. Nobody comes with ready-made solutions but rather with suggestions providing starting points for a dialogue. This is why all may refer to this house under construction as their own.

Although Churchill's idea has come true, in one respect history has taken a different course from what he expected. No United States of Europe emerged on our continent. The form of relations as exemplified by the European Union is a constant challenge to political scientists: this is neither a federation nor an international organization nor a super-state. The European Union is a new quality in itself, a true innovation.

This minor discrepancy between the vision of a great man and the subsequent reality should be a learning experience to us. Churchill made a reference to an existing tried-and-tested model provided by the United States. Today we can see that we are prone to mistakenly consider the new European community through the prism of existing entities. We are trying to squeeze new contents into old forms. Whereas the EU needs new categories designed for the future, new concepts which anticipate future realities. If we are short of visionaries, then at the very heart of the European project we can hear the old, familiar tune of the "Concert of Europe". And this would be tantamount to erosion. Europe should learn from the United States how to be open to the future, how to courageously sail on new waters to discover new lands.

The enlargement of the European Union to include new states from the former Eastern bloc is a great opportunity to make an open and courageous Europe happen. The wisdom and experience of the community's old members combined with the ambitions, the "fresh blood" of the newcomers will provide, as I trust, a powerful injection of energy to the uniting continent. But this is by no means the end. After the "iron curtain" has fallen, we should not forget that there are still many barriers and walls in existence, also invisible ones. A time will come when they are all consigned to the past as the era of globalization is

an era of falling walls. In our local perspective, this should mean: Europe must remain open. This is the most pressing challenge in store for our continent. The countries which meet membership criteria cannot be left in waiting rooms due to allegedly insurmountable cultural or religious barriers.

Even before its accession to the European Union, Poland had resolutely advocated a continuation of an open door policy. This has likewise been our position on the point of enlargement of the Atlantic Alliance. Admission of Bulgaria and Romania, and in a longer time perspective, of Croatia, Turkey, Ukraine and other applicant countries to the European Union will obviously require much work and patience. But the alternative to this is a vision of a Europe which is an exclusive club surrounded by buffer zones, of a Europe which *de facto* approving of inequality of opportunities available to various societies. European solidarity requires that we lend a hand to countries which seek EU membership. We should not be saying to candidates and to potential candidates: you must develop higher democratic standards, respect human rights, build a free market economy, and then we will see what we can do for you. We should rather come up with a positive signal: we are ready to welcome you provided that you meet a set of clear-cut criteria.

Though the European Union that has become a dominating integration mechanism, it is noteworthy that the unification of our continent is a much broader process. Integration is accomplished through inter-state relations which overlap with bridges built amongst young people from many countries, among the academia and artists. Also states which remain outside the EU, such as Switzerland or Norway, make their valuable and unique contribution to the integration in that sense. The variety of integration forms is not a weakness but a strength in the unification of the continent; it makes it more stable and predictable.

Ladies and Gentleman,

European philosophers and political scientists often emphasise that we should forge our identity independently of the United States. They say that Europe is in many ways different from America: in terms of history, culture and mentality. Apart from the *American dream*, as they say, there is also a *European dream*. A slightly different lifestyle, other priorities in coping with social and economic dilemmas. There is no harm in such professions. This is a pluralist world we are living in and nobody has a monopoly to have the best remedies. A friendly and wise difference between Europe and America, as any other debate, may produce many positive results. That being said, we should not forget a beautiful maxim of an ancient philosopher, attributed to Aristotle: *when awake, we have our common world, when asleep, each of us has his own world*. And in this shared

world we must work together. Let us remember that what we have in common are beliefs such as this fundamental one that everyone has the right to dream one's own dream, one's own dream of freedom, and of a prosperous future. And this is why we must jointly oppose all of them who want to deprive us of our dreams: equally those European ones and those American. We must oppose the people to whom the world is not shared but inevitably divided into conflicting religions, nations or races. It is essential that we realize that when countering terror, evil and destruction, we stand up for a *common* world belonging to *various* peoples and cultures.

When Churchill pointed out to Europe the example of the United States, he not only called upon her to put an end to eternal conflicts. He also called upon her to believe in the power of dreams. We should not forget about it either in the present day. In the past, Europe's sin was often her passiveness, the conviction that the world is playing by its own rules and that ordinary decent people have no impact whatsoever. And this seemingly prudent historical fatalism led to actions and attitudes which then proved disgraceful to whole generations. This is why we have to rely on the strength of our own activity. Religious and ethnic conflicts in the Balkans, the democratic deficit in Belarus, support to Turkish or Ukrainian democracy and modernisation: these are the tasks for Europe. Let us not wait for the Americans. Let us be genuine partners: let us shoulder a sizeable part of responsibility. Our continent must move from rational reactions to wise actions. This is an important challenge in store for us.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the time of globalization, if we wanted to draw a vision of the world, one to match up the courage of Churchill's speech, we would have to start talking about a global co-operation network. It should be founded on the basis of the United Nations. Through reforms helping to streamline its operations, we could reach a higher level of co-operation in tackling world's most important problems. Natural partners to engage in such a co-operation would be the United States, the integrated Europe, Russia, China or Japan. What is a crucial challenge is not to ensure a multilateral balance of powers on our globe, that being the case. The point is to make sure that the emerging centres do not transform themselves into antagonist structures, driven by arms-race and rivalry. This would be great historical irony if we were but to repeat the Cold War drama on a different level, making the exercise even more dangerous given the involvement of a greater number of actors. This is not what the world pressed by so many transfrontier threats needs: the world plagued by international terrorism, organised crime, penury among vast numbers of people or various forms of environmental pollution resulting in a growing number of civilisation-related diseases. All these challenges call for constantly improving co-operation

among world's greatest hubs and for their concerted actions for sustainable growth in the spirit of solidarity.

The world does not need any "super-state". Such an idea would even be dangerous. But that being said, the European Union has proved that it can build structures of enhanced co-operation without diluting nation states and cultural identity.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The realisation of the vision which I have sketched may nowadays seem extremely difficult. Especially in the context of developments such as the recent terrorist attack targeting innocent children at school in Beslan which prompt a pessimist view of the world. But let us pose ourselves a few fundamental questions: is it not the lack of adequate visions, and consequently the lack of a serious debate about the most desirable course of world's development that is a source of our problems? Is it not our responsibility as politicians to develop scenarios, preferably many alternative scenarios, which would act as a beacon to secure mankind's survival, development and prosperous future? Is it possible to resolve international problems without gradually developing a close-knit network of international co-operation?

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In line with the rule: think globally – act locally, my country is trying to develop such a network of co-operation and trust, primarily in its immediate neighbourhood. After 1989, good neighbourhood became our by-word. Forging new friendly relations with Germany was a great achievement. The Polish-German reconciliation and the Polish-German-French co-operation within the Weimar Triangle are an output to build upon: it adds strength to the enlarged European Union and serves the cause of securing a good common future for the continent.

There are more such achievements to boast. Among them, there is undoubtedly the Polish-Ukrainian reconciliation, the co-operation within the Visegrad Group or in the Council of the Baltic Sea States, efforts to give new quality to our relations with Russia. When Poland declares nowadays its will to actively shape the "Eastern dimension" of the EU it is not done out of self-interest alone. This is our modest but very meaningful contribution to the building of solidarity and stability in the world.

Solidarity which is held so close to Polish hearts is not with detriment to diversity and does not take away one's identity. In the common world made up

of different peoples and cultures, it emerges as a fundamental link and attitude. It combines the respect for that which is different and a readiness to offer a helping hand. It does not allow one to turn a blind eye on the people in need or distress, it does not allow one to turn them out of doors, it promotes people's most noble instincts and sentiments.

Never before has the world needed as much solidarity and co-operation as it does now. So let me complement the words of Churchill: *Let Europe arise!* with my own appeal : *Let the World unite!*