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## THE EUROPEAN ROUND TABLE

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Fifth Meeting

### The political implications of the historical and cultural unity of Europeans

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I do not propose in the space of this talk to attempt an analytical study, which in any case has already been carried out, but rather to state a practical objective. Our aim is two-fold:

1. With the spiritual unity of which we are all conscious as our starting-point, to take concerted action for the establishment of common European institutions;

2. Conversely, to strengthen European unity by placing the co-operation of European peoples on a permanent basis.

I. This discussion is limited to the historical and cultural fields, neglecting for the moment the political and economic aspects.

We have not therefore gone into the question whether unity in fact exists, or in what degree it can and should be sought, in the conception, structure and working methods of the State and the public services, nor in economic activities. The feeling of spiritual unity will, of course, find expression in certain common lines of political and economic activity, which in fact should be in sympathy with spiritual aspirations and cultural needs.

II. All peoples who feel they have sufficient in common may play their part in spiritual unification, without any obligation to subscribe to international or supra-national institutions. How

far their contribution is effective will, of course, depend on the extent of their practical participation. What we desire is something more than lip-service.

III. The accent will shift from one aspect of unity to another according to circumstance.

The theme of common defence has long predominated over questions of political structure, since Governments were conscious of real and imminent danger; while at other times the emphasis has been on economic problems.

The same is true of the cultural questions under consideration. We have no pretension of laying down a hard and fast programme. We each have our personal preferences; but in our progress towards unity we shall be guided by experience; that is to say that we shall proceed in the light of the needs which arise and our opportunities of fulfilling them; our approach will be practical and empirical. What we should do at the present stage is to draw up, as it were, a list of the possibilities open to us.

The desire for unity must find fulfilment in a community of institutions and activities. That is the only way in which it can find practical expression. The important thing is to infuse into present-day Europe the living spirit of unity, underlying the dry historical facts and the abstract conceptions, to give Europe the power to fulfil its present and future tasks.

IV. The institutions which are to be the outward expression and the agency of our will may be national, international or supra-national.

At the national level our task will be:

1. To disseminate the idea of unity and community, to cultivate the European spirit, while respecting specific national interests;
2. To pave the way for future concerted action by the European countries;
3. To put common decisions into effect.

In the international sphere the sovereign nations will be associated in fields of common activity, each taking its decisions independently, subject to none but the common will, itself restricted by each country's right of veto.

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In addition to this horizontal structure, which has hitherto been the customary framework for parallel activity by different nations, there is now the supra-national organisation, setting up a new hierarchy of authorities in the vertical sense. National authorities freely agree to become subordinate to a new authority with its specific responsibilities, which acts independently with or without the unanimous agreement of its member States. The signatories agree under the charter to delegate once and for all, for the duration of the union, some aspect of their sovereignty to an independent agency, governed only by the democratic principle of the separation of powers. This new conception has been exemplified by the Coal and Steel Community and the proposed Defence and Political Communities.

V. This delegation of national authority is feasible in the economic and political spheres, but with our present-day outlook and given the nature of our present institutions it does not seem practicable in cultural matters. The cultural unity of Europe can only be brought about by freely concluded agreements; it cannot be dictated by a supra-national authority.

In other words, even if there were a European Confederation, we could not conceive of a central Ministry controlling cultural affairs, which would remain the exclusive concern of each confederated State. Only in a single centralised State could these matters be handled by a single Ministry, under the direction of a common Parliament.

In support of this view, we can refer to the constitution of the German Empire, the Weimar Republic, the German Federal Republic, the Confederation of Helvetic States, and the United States of America. Hitler took the final step towards complete unification, characterised by totalitarianism and race discrimination.

In a Federation or Confederation of European States, the cultural individuality of each member would be respected. This aspect of their autonomy will be all the more firmly maintained, since as yet there exists no European super-State, and the existing communities concern only the specific fields of economy, politics and defence. No nation will be asked to surrender its freedom of action in the national and in the international sense.

We are led to this conclusion not only by the study of history. A knowledge of psychology teaches us that in intellectual matters, co-operation and rapprochement are accepted and achieved all the more readily when they are freely chosen, due care being taken to adapt them to the special characteristics of each nation.

VI. Having thus established these principles, and having assumed that we can determine and recognise the broad outlines and basic values of the spiritual and cultural unity of Europe, we may now give some thought to the various practical ways and means at the disposal of public authorities.

1. An essential preliminary condition for unity is the free circulation of men and ideas between the countries of Europe. We shall need to examine the temporary provisions and precautions which might be required with regard to:

- security (passports and visas),
- equivalence of diplomas,
- unemployment among artists and writers,
- professional secrecy.

In other words, how far can protectionism be justified, based on a desire to give precedence to national interests, to the detriment of that free exchange of ideas, which encourages emulation, natural selection, and that spirit of mutual trust which ought to inspire relations between European countries in every field.

However that may be, it will not be enough simply to abolish existing barriers, we shall have to organise effective co-operation between these countries.

2. Such co-operation implies a multiplicity of contacts, thanks to the organisation of:

- exchanges and courses for students, professors, scholars, technicians, trade unionists;
- congresses and travelling studentships;
- exhibitions, circulating folklore and art exhibitions;
- gatherings of young intellectuals and manual workers;
- inter-family exchanges.

The main obstacle is constituted by lack of resources and by currency restrictions (would it be possible to establish a special clearing system?).

3. Literary, artistic and scientific publications would have to be rendered more easily available everywhere; their price is sometimes prohibitive.

4. All these measures should be co-ordinated, in order to avoid duplication and waste:

in the selection of dates (we have the precedent of the big so-called "universal" exhibitions, and that of some musical festivals);

in the use of public and private libraries.

5. Some forms of scientific research should be jointly organised and financed, where national resources are inadequate, or might be wastefully expended. A good example is provided by the creation of the Nuclear Institute which is planned for Geneva (it was originally due to a suggestion by the European Cultural Centre and to assistance provided by UNESCO). In the field of military defence, such co-operation would imply a military alliance, not an ad hoc one but a permanent one; if it were possible to have a single common army, common research work would follow as a perfectly natural consequence.

6. The revision of school history texts is a prime necessity. This would in no way interfere either with the freedom of thought and expression of adults, or with the genuine patriotism which should be taught to young people.

On the grounds that national feeling and the cult of a glorious past must be catered for, the duty to truth and impartiality is often neglected; a systematic apologia seems to be considered necessary for what was in fact the perfidious and cynical exploitation of force and terrorism; the rival nation is put in the wrong on every count.

What should be taught, on the contrary, are the deep-rooted causes of those antagonisms which have torn humanity asunder; the absurdity of such sacrifices as have been wrung from the peoples, who have had to foot the bill for frivolous ambitions or fanatical beliefs, in many a dynastic or ideological war:

bloody internal strife which has always been, even when indirectly, their final outcome;

hatreds which these needless disasters have engendered between the peoples, and which the nationalistic spirit has subsequently diligently fostered;

all the false calculations based on policies of prestige and overlordship, and which sooner or later have shown themselves to be so pitifully wrong.

On the other hand, what should be brought out is the real community of ideas and ideals which has always existed between the nations, at various stages of development, and which has been stifled by passions deliberately aroused and exploited, but which must now be brought to the surface once more.

Though, when we go back over history in this way, we must leave some space for national ideals and values, for legitimate national aspirations, desires for national unification, for example, we must learn to see in history something more than a squabble over political frontiers or inter-racial rivalries; for if we narrow down the meaning of history to these two concepts, we shall wind up in nationalism or racial discrimination. Over and above these concerns and these rivalries, which have moulded the course of history, there dwell affinities and a community of interest which it is our special task to point to in the past as being capable of bearing rich fruit in the future. Without wishing to write a corrected version of history after the event, we must reject that fatalistic spirit which bows its head to the inevitability of alternating trials of strength. It is the duty of education to encourage the pupil to take a less pessimistic, a more constructive view of the future.

7. The rôle of the Council of Europe lies in urging upon governments and national parliaments measures such as those I have recommended here. It must concern itself with the winning over of public opinion to these objectives, and with the preparation throughout Europe of a flow of ideas propitious to such reforms.

It would be vain to hide the fact from ourselves that such ideas can defeat prejudice and routine only by a gigantic mobilisation of all our intellectual resources and all our will for peace.