

Mr. Secretary General, Your Excellences, Honorable Members of the Council of Europe, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am honored to be here today, giving a presentation on European identity. It is a commendable initiative and I thank you for hosting it. I also thank you for extending the warm hospitality linked to it.

The topic before us is wide in scope and deep in complexity. It is a topic replete with questions, and very much a work in progress.

My approach today will be: first, to look at some recent attempts to define the European identity; second, to highlight how Europeans may have perceived of themselves in the past; and third, to consider how this narrative relates to present European challenges.

Roots of European Identity – Challenges and Threats

By Karsten Alnæs

What is identity, and what is European identity? Lyumila Nurse, a British sociologist at Oxford University, has made me aware of the connection between the concept of identity and the concept of belonging. Belonging, says Nurse, is key to understanding what identity is. Belonging means being a member of a community, feeling that you are a part of it; you belong to it and it belongs to you. You are accepted in a particular place or environment, be it a society, a group, or a community, and you feel solidarity with the other members within it. You also feel comfortable and content with it.

Another factor intrinsic to the concept of identity is confidence. The presence of confidence means that you can trust, believe in, and be assured by the capabilities of the community to which you belong.

The American scholar, Benedict Anderson, has referred to communities of this kind as “imagined.” They are pictures or images formed in the mind, something unreal, as it were. Nations, regions, cities can be experienced in this way.

Anderson suggests that community is *imagined* in the sense that most of its members will never meet. They will not know one another, or even hear about one another, yet, in the mind of each, there lives an image of “their communion,” as Anderson calls it. Slightly restated, I suppose we could speak of a mental kinship conjured up by the imagination.

When it comes to defining a nation, Anderson calls it a “fraternal entity” which is “conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship.” In the case of Europe, this would imply, I think, that its identity is something invented. It is a product of the mind, an abstraction. One might consider it a way of conjuring something fictive—devoid of concrete parameters. It is an idea seeking unity and taking on ideological aspects.

So do we recognize European culture in these formulations? Is Europe as a continent conceived as “a deep, horizontal comradeship?”

In spite of the current economic crisis haunting the continent, the perception of a European identity remains vividly present. Whether the current crisis has weakened or strengthened the feeling of cohesiveness and of belonging to a European community, we will discuss later. Let us agree that a sense of European identity is there in some sort of imagined community. This sense of identity can be ascribed, in part, to the close co-operation among states in the areas of economics, agriculture, commerce, media, and law. This coordinated, unified activity is conducted and regulated mostly within the European Union, which currently consists of 27 countries.

But even amid the ongoing process of unification, it appears unlikely that various national characteristics will be mutually assimilated. On the contrary, national sentiments are manifesting themselves more fervently today than thirty years ago; people of different nationalities are more conscious of their distinctiveness than ever before. In some countries, a strong sense of nationalism and chauvinism has returned.

We also have to recognize that historically, the identity of Europe may well be

associated with intolerance, persecution, political dictatorship, and genocide. Nevertheless we are working hard to advance an ideal of European identity founded on the principles of the universal rights of man. It is central to this ideal that all governments and all national assemblies accept these human rights, and practice them in daily life. Many politicians, and some philosophers, consider this commitment to be the most vital and valuable hallmark of European identity. That is why new member states in the European Union have to implement democracy, freedom of speech, and freedom of the press. All citizens are to be given the same opportunities; protection is to be extended to religious, linguistic, and cultural minorities; and discrimination is to be fought against. So is corruption and organized crime. Latitude for commerce, industry, and economic affairs are also expected to rise to the fore in this context.

An important goal of this European identity is a functioning and vital democracy, with free elections and a national legislative assembly, which, in turn, is contingent upon the wellbeing of its citizens and the absence of war and distress.

It is evident that new members of the European Union, such as Croatia, Romania, and Bulgaria, associate European identity with these ideals, which encourage a common stand against those, be they people or nations, who do not abide by the rules. A manifestation of this commitment is a common international tribunal that tries political and military criminals as well as others, who violate human rights. The war in the Balkans is a case in point, strongly reinforcing, as it did, a common European will and capability to implement human rights and democratic rule—and to counteract organized crime in every corner of Europe.

In order to define European identity it may be useful to ask how, throughout history, Europeans have perceived the typical European persona. This question is of importance because the answer to it can reveal how attitudes toward other cultures shape the Europeans' perception of themselves.

Let us start at the beginning, with the Greek myth about *Europa*. The myth tells us that Europa was a princess from the area now known as Lebanon. One day, the princess was playing with some young maidens in the sunshine by the ocean. They were having a good time—laughing and chatting. Zeus, the ancient father of the gods, strolling along the shore, noticed Europa, and fell head over heels in love with her. In keeping with his powers—and perhaps his desires—Zeus transformed himself into a beautiful white bull. Kneeling down playfully, Zeus, in his new form, let the maidens stroke his neck and decorate his back with flowers. Delighted with the big animal, Europa eventually climbed onto his back, and Zeus nimbly seized the opportunity to dash into the sea, swimming westwards with the captive girl on his back. At long last, the pair reached the island of Crete, where Europa later married a king and gave birth to three children. As for Zeus, who knows where his amorous path next led.

The tale of Europa and the bull was much-revered in the art and legend of classical antiquity. At that time, the Romans and the Athenians had begun using the term *Europa* or *Europe* as a geographic concept, encompassing an area of islands west of the Greek mainland and some regions north of Greece. By contrast, the territory east of Greece was called Asia. It covered the area from Byzantium to the river Nile, including what we today call the Middle East. At the Nile, a new continent, Africa, began.

Originally, the concept of Europe may have meant “the land in the west” or “the land of the setting sun”—known in the German language as *das Abendland*, the evening land—in contrast to Asia, which means “the realm of the rising sun”, the morning land.

The etymology of the word is, however, uncertain. The Greeks viewed their country as the center of the earth. Greece was located neither in Europe nor in Asia, but outside these continents. Later the Romans also placed themselves at the hub of the world, right in the middle. As they saw it, Europe and Asia were areas of minor significance, beyond the pale of the empire.

The Roman Empire is, by some scholars, regarded as a primary cradle of European identity, providing a pattern of sorts for a future European unification. In October 2004, the twenty-five heads of state of the European Union assembled in Rome and signed a treaty to establish a consolidated constitution for Europe. It was, they said, to be adopted so “that the races of Europe might coalesce into a body of one people with one mind, one will and one government.”

When, one might ask, was the last time the continent was of one mind, one will and one government? In his book *The Dream of Rome*, Boris Johnson, the mayor of London and a scholar of note, states that such unity has not existed in Europe since the fall of the Roman Empire.

Over a period of two to three hundred years, the Romans assembled an empire that would come to include the entire realm of ancient civilization. In the east, Egypt, Greece, Asia Minor, and Syria all became Roman provinces. In the west, in what now **includes** Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Spain, Portugal, France, Switzerland, and England, the Romans acted as “civilizing agents.” In the western part of the empire, the influence was so pervasive that Latin became the dominant spoken language. In Africa, it would later be displaced by Arabic, but survives to this very day, transformed by time, in the languages of France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Romania.

The population of the empire consisted of manifold ethnic groups and cultures. Bloodlines were, however, irrelevant to the Romans. They believed that everyone could be a Roman citizen if he, “walked the walk and talked the talk;” so everywhere people tried to look and sound like Romans. Everyone should speak Latin, and most people were quite satisfied living inside the borders of the blessed empire. Boris Johnson puts it this way: “Rome was there for everyone who qualified for citizenship. It was a bit like America, in the sense that it didn’t matter what your religion was, or where your parents came from, or what your color

was. All that mattered was that you were prepared to buy into the idea of Rome, to show loyalty to the imperial cult and you were in.”

Roman law held that no custom is necessarily right. Romans affirmed a higher or universal law by which fair decisions may be made; a law that is understandable or acceptable to all since it arises from human nature and reason. They also held that law derives its power from being enacted by the proper authority. This law-making authority, called sovereign power, was attributed to the emperor. Law was something to be formed by an enlightened intelligence and associated with the solemn action of official power. Roman law favored the state or the public interest, as seen by the government, rather than the interest of individuals. These principles—together with more specific ideas on property, debt, marriage, wills, and so forth— would have a great impact on Europe in centuries to come.

In the early Middle Ages, the term *Europe* occurs in some letters, works, and monographs, but it was rarely used. Its meaning was vague and uncertain, and its boundaries were unidentified. In some books from this time period, Europe is understood to be an area located between the Baltic Sea and the Mediterranean. Scandinavia and Britain are often excluded.

This was a time when European culture was in flux. With its bishops, priests, monks, nuns, and other religious adherents, the Christian Church succeeded in building a new society through written laws. The church came to occupy a key position in creating a law-abiding society with courts of justice, a society in which all feuds among lords and vassals were banned. In this society, it became obligatory for the authorities to take care of the weak and the poor in towns and villages throughout the realm. It was, in fact, their responsibility. Hospitals and charitable institutions were erected, and help was extended to the poor and vulnerable.

Much of the humane spirit that is forming European identity today is rooted in this

Christian—clerical culture. Many a cornerstone of this medieval society came as a result of close collaboration between church, king, and nobility. This was a cooperative venture that gained impetus also through clerical reforms linked to the growth of monasticism in the early twelfth century. At the same time, European kings and parliaments made it clear that their culture owed a debt to classical antiquity—that is, to Greek philosophy with its emphasis on individualism and humanism; to Roman engineering, Roman law, order, and justice; and to the common love, in antiquity, for artistic expression.

The new movement, however, also fostered an ecclesiastical court, the Inquisition, under the direction of the Dominicans, established in 1233. As the name suggests, the Inquisition was an “inquiry” into people’s faith. It became the official voice of the Roman Catholic Church for discovering and punishing unacceptable religious beliefs. Those who worked for the Inquisition often used torture to force confessions. The actions of this court brought about less tolerance toward Christian dissenters, Jews, and Muslims.

Spain emerges as a key country in the attempt to understand the changing attitudes toward strangers and adherents of other religions. At the beginning of the thirteenth century, Muslims, Jews, and Christians lived peacefully and harmoniously throughout Spain. During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, however, Jews and Muslims were harassed, later persecuted, and from time to time massacred; finally, in 1492, they were ultimately driven from the Iberian Peninsula (present day Spain and Portugal).

The irrational and blind hatred directed toward strangers and foreigners was generated by the new ardor and intensity of Christian dogma. Occurring at the height of the medieval papacy, this fervor sought to realize the old dream of a unified Christian world. There were also huge contradictions in this world in flux. This was the time of St. Anthony and St. Francis of Assisi, but also the time of the Crusades against Muslims in the Holy Land and of the relentless persecution of heresy in Southern France. This was perhaps also the time when the seeds of a later European xenophobia were sown, forerunners of what would eventually

result in the Holocaust.

Yet another reason for the hatred against strangers was the seemingly unstoppable expansion of the Ottoman state, which aroused fear in all Christian countries. After decades of wars, the Ottoman Empire, centered in Turkey, had come to encompass the entire area of Asia Minor minus Constantinople. About 1350, the Ottomans crossed the Dardanelles, conquered Greece, and went on to defeat the Bulgarians, the Serbs and the Bosnians at Blackbird Plain on June 28 in 1389. Some six decades later, in 1453, another sultan attacked Constantinople, captured the city—the most important Christian stronghold in the East and a center for the Orthodox Church—and ended the Byzantine Empire.

After this conquest, the Ottomans took possession of an even larger part of Eastern Europe, invading the region that today consists of Macedonia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece, Albania, Croatia, Romania, and Hungary. On two separate occasions, the first time in 1529, the second and last time in 1683, the Sultan's troops camped outside the walls of Vienna, threatening Austria and Western Europe.

These events created a demand for Western unification in order to protect Christian culture. The name *Europe*, almost in disuse at this time, gained new currency, became a popular slogan, and henceforth appeared with greater and greater frequency in letters, sermons, and other documents. Its use demonstrates quite distinctly how important it was to mark the difference between the Muslim world and the Christian world by establishing a mental defense against the advancing troops of the Ottomans. The Christian leaders promoted the old dream of putting an end to conflicts between kings and lords, regions and countries inside Europe.

With the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople, these ideas assumed new urgency and currency. To many people, Constantinople had been the foremost Christian stronghold, a cradle of Greek and Roman civilization, of science and art, and the guardian of a thousand—

year-old tradition.

Two months after the loss of Constantinople, the Bishop of Siena expressed clearly the pain of the defeat. In a letter, he invites and encourages Christian states to organize a crusade against the Ottoman Empire. It will, he writes, be “the crusade of Europe” against the barbarians and the pagans. With the Turks having conquered Constantinople, the pagans are now in Europe. They are, he says, “in our native country, in our home, in our sphere.” To the Bishop of Siena, the defeat of Constantinople seemed to be the greatest tragedy in the history of Christendom. In invading the metropolis, the Muslims had captured not only an important Christian stronghold; they were also threatening Western humanistic culture in its entirety.

In Constantinople, Roman and Greek cultural heritage had been preserved and developed. It had benefited from the sympathetic disposition and goodwill of the Christian authorities. When the invaders from the East took possession of the precious and unique documents of Greek and Roman origin, the most important source material of Western culture was excluded from the kind of serious study that was required for gaining a deeper understanding of that culture.

The bishop emphasized that Europe was of Christian origin, with a Christian history linked to particular holy places and saints, and thus just as important as the Holy Land. In contrast to barbarian and heathen Asia, Europe represented charity, mercy, divine love, devotion, tolerance, harmony, and peace.

Preceded by many scholars, the Bishop of Siena filled the concept of Europe with positive connotations. In sharp contrast, the Asian spheres, in his opinion, were dominated by negative elements of cruelty, fear, intolerance, and ferocity. These characteristics were strongly evident in the torture, rape, and plundering that took place during the bloody conquest of Constantinople in 1453.

Of course, this dark vision of the East was far from accurate. As a matter of fact, the Ottoman Empire was in many respects more tolerant, more humane and more open than the Western sphere. The Ottoman Empire opened towns and villages to thousands of Jews from Spain, France, Germany, and other countries, where for nearly two centuries the authorities and the citizenry had persecuted, massacred and expelled them. Inside the boundaries of the Ottoman Empire, the Orthodox Christian Church was protected by the authorities and allowed to practice its faith. In many respects, Orthodox Christians enjoyed more liberty within the Ottoman Empire than had been the case in the Roman Catholic world. And Christian scholars were granted the right to continue their studies of the precious documents in the Ottoman capital, Constantinople, and to do so without the suspicious and inspecting eye of the Inquisition.

Of course, the picture was more complex than this. In some regions, Christians were discriminated against, persecuted, and forced to convert to Islam. Without converting, they lost their civil rights. In many areas, non-Muslims did not have the right to own land or property, and throughout the Empire they carried a heavy tax burden and frequently suffered humiliation at the hands of the Muslim overlords. For centuries, Christian families in the Balkan areas were compelled to send eight-to-ten years old sons to the Ottoman army where they were trained to become Muslim soldiers.

In some historical writings, the Ottoman Empire has been depicted as a human paradise of sorts. Although this was not literally true, neither was the rather ugly picture of the East painted by the beleaguered bishops and princes of the Western world.

This political and cultural face-off has always hovered in the background of European life and culture as it evolved in future centuries.

For instance, in the eighteenth century, Europe was fostering an intellectual elite that followed a pattern in many ways akin to one we see in today's world. The intellectuals had

much in common and considered themselves cosmopolitans, rationalists, and internationalists. Communicating in French and Latin, they attended the same universities, read the same philosophers, admired the same painters, and held the same views on church, government, and the ideas of the Enlightenment.

The French writer Voltaire asserted that Europeans were devoted to the same rules and attitudes, and that these common attitudes were distinctively different from those held by people elsewhere in the world. The Europeans are, he said, closely related and attached to one another, so that when traveling abroad, a Frenchman or an Englishman or a German might seem to be coming from the same country and cultural setting.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau went further. He maintained that the French, the Germans, the Spaniards, or the English do not really exist as such; they were all European. All people in this part of the world had the same tastes, passions, and customs for the simple reason that no government attempted to preserve national identity in politics and culture.

Napoleon also dreamt of a unified Europe and looked upon himself as the person to fulfill that dream. His mission is of special interest regarding European identity. When he landed in Egypt with the French army, he brought along linguists, biologists, zoologists, and other scholars skilled in a variety of disciplines. The aim was to gather and safeguard information of the geography, history, language and archaeology of Ancient Egypt. He was convinced that if he did not undertake this mission, all the precious knowledge of that ancient civilization would be lost to the world. His reasoning was that the indigenous population of Egypt was unable to save its own cultural heritage, and that loss would be a world disaster.

During this period, the people of Europe had begun to view themselves as a young, strong, gifted and intelligent breed of men oriented to the future. In their opinion, the people of Asia were the opposite: an aging, decadent, and decrepit culture representing an earlier

stage in the history of the human spirit. The influential German philosopher Friedrich Hegel considered Europeans to be superior to the people of Africa and Asia. Many readers found this view affirmed in the historical development of the nineteenth century, as European states kept conquering vast territories in Asia, Africa, and the Americas. The Europeans established colonies in every corner of the world and spread their material culture to the far reaches of the globe. For that reason, many Europeans gradually became convinced that *their* culture and *their* way of living were superior to what, for instance, had been achieved by the civilizations of Persia, Turkey, India, and China.

The French philosopher Montesquieu explained the inferiority of the Africans and Asians and the superiority of the Europeans in his theory of climate. In his work *De l'esprit des lois* [*On the Spirit of Laws*, 1748], he held that geographic conditions were key to the human ability to survive, to develop technology, to invent tools and weapons, and to adapt to changing situations. Oriental and warm climatic zones produce apathetic and submissive inhabitants, he believed; cold climatic zones, he was sure, produced active individualists and freedom-loving people. That is why a person from the Orient would lack initiative and the will for independence, whereas a European, by nature, would fight against all oppression.

Writers and philosophers of the Age of Enlightenment regarded Europe as being well on its way to becoming *one* cultural entity through the unifying forces of economy, language, taste, attitude, and politics. This development was, however, interrupted at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

A new wave started with a book entitled *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* (1784–1791), *Ideas on the Philosophy of History of Humankind*, by the German thinker J. G. Herder. All true culture or civilization, said Herder, must grow from native roots. It must spring from the life of the common people, not from the cosmopolitan life of the upper classes. Each people, that is, a group sharing the same language and the same past, has its own attitudes, spirit, or genius. Although a German, Herder did not find German culture to be

in any way superior to that of other peoples, nor did he feel that was the case with either French or Russian culture. Herder held that all peoples should develop their *own* genius in their *own* way, unfolding themselves with the inevitable strength of plant-like growth and avoiding sudden change or distortion by outside influence.

Herder did not believe in a common spirit of Europe, or in Europeans being similar in their attitudes and opinions, in taste, or in their way of life. He rather stressed significant differences among peoples. Earlier, the famous fathers of the French Revolution had loudly declared that there were some common laws for everyone everywhere, be it in jurisprudence, in rights, or in rules of taste for literature, art, and conduct. Not so, said Herder; appropriate laws were those that reflected local customs or national idiosyncrasies.

After the Napoleonic nationalism became a state of mind in all of Europe. In Western Europe, the notion of national unity already existed, but the liberation of Germany from Napoleonic rule and the ideas of Herder and his followers stimulated the ambitions of other peoples. Now they, too, dreamt of becoming unified nations.

As pointed out earlier, the Europeans looked at themselves through the **image** they had conceived of Muslim cultures. Consequently it is important to study neighboring Muslim nations, as well as impact of the growing Muslim enclaves within Europe in our days.

Many people fear the newcomers will destroy core elements of European self-understanding. Developments in the Middle East and other Muslim regions attest to this view. News of the worsening conditions for Christian communities in the Middle East stokes hostile attitudes in Europe. People read of discrimination toward Christians, burning of their churches, and flagrant persecutions, causing a significant shrinking in the Christian populations of Turkey, Palestine, Pakistan, Iraq, Iran, Egypt, and elsewhere.

The actions committed by small and extreme groups of terrorists in Europe, the United States, the Middle East, and now Africa, intensify this aversion to the new cultural islands in

the European enclaves of self-understanding.

Coupled with the European xenophobia of old, these factors reinforce the notion of exploitive Islamic activity and conspiracy against the European way of life. It is expressed in numerous articles, movies, books, television programs, and the ever-present social media.

Whatever the viewpoints or feelings of this kind, the Muslim presence is indubitably challenging our tolerance and our capacity to implement the human rights everywhere in the European societies without hurting religious attitudes and cultural tradition.

At the same time we have to hold up that in our sphere the articles of human rights are regarded as a set of rules to be respected without limitations, first of all in Europe, but also in other regions. As the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas has pointed out, these articles—far more than any other rules, laws, and opinions—make up the most important tenets of European identity. It is the European Convention on Human Rights, together with the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Community, that forms the basis of commonality.

It is a fact that the growth of the European Union during the last two decades of the twentieth century strengthened the sense of belonging to a European entity, even for people in countries outside the EU. At the same time, people's feelings toward their own nations were growing more intense. A wave of a new nationalism swept across the continent. People increasingly celebrated national heroes and national events, using their nation's flag more visibly and expressing national pride more openly. Several identities coexisted: a European one, a national one, a regional one, and a local one. You could not successfully set European identity against national identities, or national ones against local or regional ones. Europe has been a configurative element of local understanding, national understanding, and continental European understanding.

As mentioned earlier, the commonality of a European identity may be a fiction of

sorts, difficult to grasp, define, and measure. It is in the nature of being an imagined community. Commensurate with this notion, it is difficult to determine whether the present economic, political, and social crisis has weakened or strengthened the European glue. Is Europe falling apart? Or are the difficulties haunting the continent forging the will to stick together? In January this year, prominent writers and philosophers wrote in European newspapers that Europe is dying. The idea of Europe—the European project, the European dream—is dying. Europe as pact, symbol, and vision is dying. Europe is going to crumble before our very eyes.

The sense of crisis expressed here is primarily a mental **or** psychological one. Since the beginning of the present millennium, there has been a growing distrust among people in Europe toward the constitutional reforms arising from the Treaty of Rome (the TCE; 2004). This treaty was a charter of rights and duties, signed by all member states and ratified by 18 of them. Voters in France and the Netherlands, however, overwhelmingly rejected it. This led to a period of reflection and an agreement to amend the existing treaties, resulting in the Treaty of Lisbon of 2007. Intended for ratification by all member states by the end of 2008, the timetable was not met. The reason is that in June 2008, Ireland held a referendum, where the new treaty was rejected by a margin of 53 per cent. The following year, after some modification to the agreement, the Irish reversed that decision and ratified the treaty. But their initial rejection of it caused great consternation in Brussels and rattled many politicians.

A number of prominent Europeans have stated that this serious economic, political, and democratic crisis will undermine the sense of European social solidarity. The consciousness of a growing gap between the wealthy and the poor will, they say, cause millions of people to lose confidence in a viable European entity. The accompanying need and distress further corrodes the sense of belonging to a fraternity of equals. People have also had to recognize that the dream of the welfare state is being frittered away or may even be lost.

Critics have pointed out that the new constitution of the European Union offers no solution to the democratic deficit of the organization nor to its lack of a moral political finality. In the words of one critic, the constitution has merely managed to “cement the existing chasm between political elites and citizens” and in a market that is no longer tamed by social rules. This has led to increased inequality, and threatens to undermine a collaborative environment.

In the last six decades, peace and democracy have ruled in Europe, but the present situation undermines the prospects for presenting a platform to advance a dignified life for millions of people.

Despite these observations, I do not share the view that the economic and social crisis in Europe, and the deep disagreement between nations, will weaken or destroy the sense of a European identity. Europe is not dying; the dream is not fading. The invisible pact between people in Europe does not depend on material progress, welfare, and prosperity. Nor does it depend on the creation of a political unity. The identity will survive disagreements between politicians and people within Europe. It will endure even if the common currency is abandoned. The most important condition for the dream of Europe is the absence of war. The crisis today reminds us that the germ of the European idea was born during World War II, because of the war. Often we do not understand the values in our society until they are threatened; until work, social welfare, political freedom, and tolerance are endangered, as they are in our present crisis.

When the Nazis attacked and occupied Norway in April 1940, the Norwegians were prohibited from displaying their national flag on Constitution Day. “Not until we saw the empty flagpole on May 17th did we understand what it means to be free,” wrote a Norwegian poet on that very day. The country was subjugated and the people were oppressed. *But*—the dream of a free nation and of a peaceful life better than ever before continued to be nurtured during the Occupation in spite of oppression and adversity, or perhaps because of the absence of

everything we associated with the Norwegian dream. During the dark years of the Occupation, the Norwegians were brought closer together: they bonded. They shared in suffering and hope, as Europeans do today, and strengthened the ties that truly hold them together.

I don't think the Europeans are destroying their vision of a brighter future, nor are they abandoning their dream of being part of a great European community. *This* community, *this* sense of identity, *this* sense of belonging does not, in the final analysis, depend on the existence of the European Union, the European Council, or a single currency; nor does it depend on any future political union. It is something intrinsic to the human spirit and therefore far more difficult to understand.

Friedrich Schiller, the great poet and playwright, may well have captured the spirit of this almost mystic bond when, in 1785, during a difficult period in his life, he wrote his "Ode to Joy." Later set to music by Beethoven as the triumphant conclusion of his Ninth Symphony, the Ode is today also known as the European Anthem. In praise of joy, peace and fraternal unity, it resonates with harmony of the ages. Freely and poetically rendered, the opening lines read:

Freude, schöner Götterfunken,	Joy divine in sparkling splendor,
Tochter aus Elysium,	Daughter of Elysium,
Wir betreten feuertrunken	We your sanctum now do enter
Himmlische, dein Heiligtum.	In fervid praise of heaven above.
Deine Zauber binden wieder,	Your magic touch will reunite
Was der Mode Schwert geteilt;	What custom's sword has split;
Bettler werden Fürstenbrüder,	Beggars change to princely brothers
Wo dein sanfter Flügel weilt.	Where your wings so gently rest.

Chor

Seid umschlungen, Millionen!

Diesen Kuß der ganzen Welt!

Brüder - überm Sternenzelt

Muß ein lieber Vater wohnen.

Be embraced, oh millions!

To the world a kiss send forth!

Above the stellar sphere, o Brothers,

A loving Father has to dwell.

Thank you.

Literature and Notes

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