



The Holy See

***DISCORSO DI SUA SANTITÀ PIO PP. XII,
AI PARTECIPANTI AL CONGRESSO D'EUROPA****

Sala Regia - Giovedì, 13 giugno 1957

It gives Us great pleasure to welcome you, gentlemen, on the occasion of the Congress of Europe, which was called by the Italian Council for the European movement.

It has been your wish that your work help strengthen the spirit of cooperation between organizations and political forces in order that European unity might be established more quickly.

You have some idea how closely We have followed the progress of the European idea and how We have watched the concrete efforts being put forth to make the idea penetrate more deeply into men's minds and, under the proper circumstances, to bring about its realization. Despite some wavering between success and regression, this plan has made some headway during the past few years. Not long ago, when this plan first took shape for application to autonomous and independent governmental institutions, people thought that it was an ideal which, albeit desirable, was nonetheless unattainable.

But in 1952 the legislative bodies of six western European nations approved the formation of the European Coal and Steel Community, and the social and economic advantages of the move have been encouraging. On the other hand, the European Defense Community, which was supposed to unify efforts toward defense on a military and political basis, met with such strong resistance that it failed. At the present time, many people are of the opinion that it will be a long while before the initial enthusiasm for unification is revived.

In any case, it is not yet time to consider unity on a supra-national basis and we should fall back upon the formula of the Union of Western Europe which, aside from military aid, is intended to stimulate social, cultural, and economic cooperation. But We still cannot consider this a sufficiently strong basis for a European community, since the majority decisions of the Council of Ministers

are under strong limitations and the Assembly is unable to impose its will or use parliamentary control.

From the spring of 1955, when it was touched off, the so-called European revival grew until, on March 25, 1957, it climaxed in the signing of treaties for Euratom and the Common Market. Granted that this community is under some restrictions in the economic area, it is nevertheless able, by extending its field of activity, to make the member-states aware of their mutual interests. This awareness, naturally, will exist at first only in the material order, but, if the attempt is successful, it will extend itself to those areas where moral and spiritual values are concerned.

Your congress has kept a sharp eye on the future, and you have, before anything else, examined the decisive point upon which depends the formation of any community worthy of the name : the formation of a European political authority which will have sufficient responsibility to be felt. From this point of view, the European Economic Community is less successful than the Coal and Steel Community, whose High Authority has powers which are relatively broad and which, except in certain determined cases, do not depend upon any Council of Ministers.

Among the tasks facing you now, the first one is the ratification by the interested parliaments, of the treaties We mentioned above, which were signed at Rome on March 25. As a second step, you will have to examine means of re- enforcing the powers of the executive branches of the already existing communities, in order to come, finally, to some idea of the constitution demanded by this political unity.

You have already looked into the question of an external political community and you have learned that, for such a situation to be successful and produce results, it does not necessarily presuppose an already existing economic integration. A single external political community in Europe, though it will allow for the differences arising from varying interests, will also base itself on the common economic, spiritual, and cultural interests of its members. Such a community is becoming more and more indispensable in a world which, more and more, is splitting up into small groups.

Fortunately, interests overlap on enough points to permit such a plan for unity to be put into action among the already existing European institutions, but an instrumentality is needed which will effectively refine and apply such a plan.

Finally, you have considered the problems connected with an association between Europe and Africa, which was given special mention in the March agreements. It seems to Us that Europe must keep her influence in Africa so far as education and formation are concerned and wherever, more basically, she gives a great deal of material aid which helps to raise the standard of living of the people of Africa and enhances the value of the continent's natural resources.

In this way Europe will prove that her desire to form a community of States does not spring from

selfish motivation. She will show that she is not, after all, interested simply in a defensive arrangement which will protect her from external threats to her interests. She will prove that, more than anything else, she is working from constructive and disinterested motives.

Right now, it is abundantly clear that there is real need for union and that such a union must be built upon foundations strong enough to support it. Whether it be a painful process or a happy one, the construction of the union is going forward and, despite some unsuccessful tries, it is going forward with courage.

You have already ventured to pass beyond the realities of the present, and are beginning to select the stones necessary for tomorrow's building. We are happy to see such a spirit, persuaded that it comes from generous and upright motives. Your aim is to secure for Europe, which has so often been torn asunder and bloodstained, a lasting unity which will enable her to continue her mission in history.

If it is true that for Europe the message of Christianity was like the leaven in dough, always working and causing the whole mass to rise, it is no less true that this same message remains, today as yesterday, the most valuable of the treasures with which she has been charged. With the concept and exercise of the fundamental liberties of the human person, this message can maintain the vigor and integrity of the operations of family and national society and, in a supra-national community, can guarantee respect for cultural differences and a spirit of conciliation and cooperation, along with an acceptance of the sacrifices which it will entail and the dedication which it will demand.

No undertaking in the temporal order comes to a conclusion without giving rise to another, without generating, in its accomplishment, a whole series of other obligations, needs, and objectives. Human society always depends on the future ; it is always in search of a better organization, and cultures often survive only by dying and giving birth to richer and more brilliant cultures which in their turn yield to others.

Christianity brings an element of growth and stability to each of these cultures. Above all, it directs their forward march toward a clearly defined goal, and gives them an unchanging assurance of a homeland which is not of this world and which only knows perfect union, because it originates in the strength and light of God Himself.

It is Our most earnest wish that this ideal will always guide your work and give you strength to bear without discouragement the fatigue, bitterness, and disillusionment inherent in all such undertakings. May you be able to construct for the men of our age an earthly home which bears some resemblance to the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of truth, love, and peace, to which they aspire from the depths of their beings.

As a token of the divine favors which We ask for your work, We give to you, to your families, and to all your dear ones, Our Apostolic Benediction.

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