

'Churchill speaks in Zurich' from Le Soir (21 September 1946)

Caption: On the occasion of the address given by Winston Churchill at the University of Zurich on 19 September 1946, the Belgian daily newspaper Le Soir comments on the former British Prime Minister's support for a United States of Europe based on Franco–German reconciliation.

Source: Le Soir. 21.09.1946, n° 262; 60e année. Bruxelles: S.A. Rossel. "M. Churchill parle à Zurich", auteur:Singer, Rodolphe , p. 3.

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Churchill speaks in Zurich

Churchill advocates the creation of a United States of Europe based on Franco-German cooperation

From our special correspondent
Zurich, 19 September

A few weeks ago, Mr Churchill arrived in Switzerland accompanied by his wife and daughter, Mary. He is staying in the villa placed at his disposal in Bursinel, where he has remained out of sight, dividing his time between resting and his favourite occupation, painting. Before his departure, he nonetheless made a point of thanking the Swiss Government for its hospitality and, appearing in front of the Swiss people, he gave a lecture at the University of Zurich, addressing students world-wide. The substance of the speech confirmed the predictions of the journalists who had foreseen its political importance.

A huge crowd awaited Mr Churchill, who, in splendid form, asked to be presented to the policemen who had ensured his safety. This was done. Shaking hands, Churchill gave each of them one of his famous cigars as a souvenir.

In a specially chartered train, he then went to Bern, where the locals gave him such an enthusiastic welcome that Mr Churchill could not help but shed a few tears. After the welcome given by the President of the Confederation and the ensuing traditional banquet, Churchill, standing up in his car, was taken on a tour of the town, its inhabitants cheering him loudly. It seems that the Bernese, best known for being calm and unexcitable, abandoned these qualities for once.

Today, he was in Zurich, the high point of his stay in Switzerland, and tomorrow he will leave the country in a specially chartered aircraft bound for England.

At ten o'clock, Mr Churchill left the Hotel Dolder to go to the reception held by the Cantonal Government. From nine o'clock onwards, all the roads of the town through which he was to pass, impressively decked out with flags, were crowded with people, and on several occasions the police had to call for reinforcements to keep order. A little after ten o'clock, Mr Churchill went by in an open-topped car, standing up and waving to the crowds who threw him flowers. Once he had reached the Cantonal Government building, Mr Churchill was welcomed by the President of the Government and, after having replied and thanked him, he climbed back in his car to go to the University and make his speech. The Great Hall was full when, to frenzied acclaim, Mr Churchill made his entrance. After a welcoming speech made in German by the Dean of the University, Mr Anderes, and after having accepted an honorary degree, Mr Churchill started speaking in English.

Having thanked the Dean, he said that he wanted to speak about the tragedy of Europe.

Recognising that Europe was the cradle of Christianity, culture, philosophy and science, Mr Churchill asked the question: 'What has happened to Europe?' He answered by saying that, with the exception of a few small countries, there was hunger, poverty and devastation across most of the Continent. If Europe did not recover quickly, this devastation would eventually reach America. There was but one remedy, which was to create the European Community, and the only way to achieve this was through the United States of Europe. What had to follow was the re-education of hundreds of thousands of Europeans.

Mr Churchill went on to recall that certain steps had already been taken: he spoke of the former idea of European union, of the great Frenchman Aristide Briand, of the League of Nations, which was not flawed in its principles but was undermined by the desertion of certain countries. He declared that this disaster must not recur and that his friend, President Truman, had already shown an interest in the matter in the context of the United Nations. Speaking of Germany, he said that the crimes that country had committed could not be forgotten and that the guilty must be punished, that Germany must never again be in a position to wage an aggressive war. However, we had to look to the future. The spirit of vengeance must cease. The European Family must learn to forgive. The first step would be cooperation between France and Germany! It was the

only way for France to regain its moral and cultural authority in Europe. There must be as much room for the small nations as for the large ones.

Mr Churchill ended his speech with a warning: time may be short for the creation of the United States of Europe. Even though the war was over, the dangers were still present; the creation of the United States of Europe must start immediately. The atomic bomb, for example, was still in the hands of only one nation, which would use it only for peaceful purposes. Perhaps, however, in years to come, other nations would possess it and use it for other means. We must therefore strengthen the United Nations and recreate the European Family in its original form, with the first step being the formation of a Council of Europe, providing solid foundations for those who are able and willing. The other nations would probably join in due course. With France and Germany in partnership, Europe would 'arise'.

Rodolphe Singer