

Letter from John F. Kennedy to Jean Monnet (23 January 1963)

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Letter to Jean Monnet Commending His Achievements on Behalf of European Unity.

[Released January 23, 1963. Dated January 22, 1963]

Dear Mr. Monnet:

I am delighted to join my friends at Freedom House in doing honor to your great achievements. You come at a moment of high importance – and you come as the exemplar of disinterested service to Europe and to the Atlantic World.

For centuries, emperors, kings and dictators have sought to impose unity on Europe by force. For better or worse, they have failed. But under your inspiration, Europe has moved closer to unity in less than twenty years than it had done before in a thousand. You and your associates have built with the mortar of reason and the brick of economic and political interest. You are transforming Europe by the power of a constructive idea.

Ever since the war the reconstruction and the knitting together of Europe have been objectives of United States policy, for we have recognized with you that in unity lies strength. And we have also recognized with you that a strong Europe would be good not only for Europeans but for the world. America and a united Europe, working in full and effective partnership can find solutions to those urgent problems that confront all mankind in this crucial time.

I have been happy, therefore, to read your statement of January 16th in which you call attention to the responsibility of Europe to share with the United States in the common defense of the West. I believe, with you, that “Americans and Europeans must recognize that neither one nor the other is defending a particular country, but that the ensemble is defending a common civilization.” The United States will be true to this conviction, and we trust that it will have the support of Europeans too.

Your practical wisdom, your energy in persuasion, your tested courage, and your earned eminence in Europe are the reasons for this celebration in your honor. They are also a great resource for freedom, and I wish you many years of continued strength in your service to our cause.

Sincerely,

John F. Kennedy