


Address given by Mario Soares (Berne, 18 May 1988)

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A People's Europe *

I should first of all like to thank you for the warm welcome that you have just extended to me on behalf of the people of Switzerland.

I am very happy to be able to be here today. This is the first State visit that a President of the Portuguese Republic has ever made to the Swiss Confederation, so I am deeply honoured by this event of great historical significance.

The climate in which the visit that I am beginning today is taking place is particularly favourable. The nation I represent, one of the oldest in Europe, is really a new country which is seeking modernisation and development in freedom and in peace. I believe that Portugal has shaken off for ever the image of a country locked in time and in history that it unfortunately had throughout a dictatorship that lasted virtually five decades.

After the Carnation Revolution of 25 April 1974, my country gave back freedom to five African countries which a reactionary policy had insisted on subordinating to the colonial regime, institutionalised a pluralist democracy while simultaneously frustrating totalitarian attempts to corrupt the revolution, overcame two serious financial emergencies following the two oil crises, took in almost one million returnees from the former colonies without serious problems and restored financial balance; it is now pursuing a policy of modernisation and development. By joining the European Community, Portugal has reacquainted itself with its historical, geographical and cultural roots and has found the means to achieve the economic resurgence and social balance that is one of the major objectives of the young democracy that it is.

My visit to Switzerland therefore represents the meeting of a Portugal that has regained the highest principles of civic coexistence with a country in which the supreme values of freedom, social peace, economic progress and respect for human rights have long been cultivated and which fully entitle it to be cited as a prime example in the modern world.

Mr President: As I have already said, Portugal is now enjoying a period of political stability and social progress that allows us to face the future with optimism. The most recent economic indicators are very encouraging, and unprecedented conditions are in place to allow economic cooperation between Portugal and Switzerland to develop and expand into new areas and new dimensions.

Swiss investment in Portugal, which is currently significant, will continue to be warmly welcomed, giving the Swiss Confederation the opportunity to take part in Portugal's development and modernisation.

We also look forward with renewed interest to prolonging the development of the technological and scientific cooperation and exchanges — a tradition between us — that will allow Switzerland to continue to play a leading role in training the new generations of technicians and scientists that Portugal needs in order to meet the challenges of new technology.

Portugal and Switzerland were founder members of EFTA, the economic organisation in which Portugal developed its economic activity and diversified and expanded its trading contacts. Our membership of EFTA provided many of our young executives with valuable contact with broad economic areas and liberal theories and rules of conduct.

I therefore wish to pay homage to an organisation — EFTA — to which Portugal owes a great deal, and which allowed a generation of Portuguese technicians and public figures to gain experience that proved to be very useful during the protracted and exhaustive negotiations that preceded the signature, in 1985, of Portugal's Treaty of Accession to the European Community.

Nowadays, too, the modernisation and development of industry in Portugal, a Community country, continues to benefit from the support of the EFTA Fund. That is something that we cannot ignore and for which I must express my appreciation and gratitude.

Portugal is aware that Europe represents more than the European Economic Community. On the contrary, the Europe that we wish to construct must be enlarged to include countries that share values of freedom with the Community, that accept pluralist democracy and that defend human rights. This will be the People's Europe, marked by forms of coexistence, relations and dialogue that we hope will be exemplary and by the free movement of persons and ideas. The Europe of technologies, which non-Community countries are now helping to construct, is clear proof of the desire that encourages the European Community not to confine its action to the geographical boundaries of its Member States.

Europe will also have to pursue a broader and more generous political agenda and must not be seen solely through the prism of a narrow continental perspective in the strict geographical or economic sense. It must be seen by the countries of the Third World as an area of solidarity.

It is this view that leads us not to forget countries on other continents to which we are linked by special historical and cultural ties.

European unity, rather than being incompatible with the maintenance and development of such links, must instead be seen as a factor for their reinforcement.

Portugal, which shares with nations on several continents a cultural tradition and a language which is now spoken by over 170 million people, is well aware of the need for Europe not to neglect the problems affecting those nations that continue to wage a daily war against hunger, disease and various forms of human and material misery.

Solidarity with such countries is a moral and political imperative that will help them to rid themselves of political and social instability, violence and lack of respect for human rights.

We must acknowledge, however, that the solution for many of these countries does not lie solely in cooperation and economic or humanitarian solidarity. This applies to the nations of southern Africa, for which a global political solution must be found that will ensure that South Africa brings an end to the inhuman policy of apartheid, returning peace and stability to the people of the region.

Portugal has shown solidarity with what are known as the frontline states, particularly Angola and Mozambique, but advocates coordinated aid policies enabling global solutions to be found for such acute and dramatic problems as those which afflict that troubled area of the world.

We know that Switzerland has adopted the same position, adopting bilateral aid programmes and cooperating in international projects for funding emergency humanitarian action, for which we salute you.

While speaking of serious situations on other continents, I cannot fail to make reference to East Timor.

As we all know, Indonesia's illegal military occupation of East Timor has prevented the Timorese people from freely exercising their right to self-determination, contrary to the provisions of the United Nations Charter.

Portugal has never failed publicly to condemn this flagrant breach of one of the basic principles of international law, a breach that has been accompanied in the case of East Timor by a total lack of respect for the most elementary human rights and for the very cultural identity of the Maubere people.

Mr President: I cannot conclude without making express reference to the expectations that my country has of the new times of peace which are approaching. With realism and prudence, we welcome the Washington agreements and hope that the talks that will soon take place in Moscow will produce serious tangible measures leading to new and substantial quantitative and qualitative reductions in the nuclear weapons held by the two superpowers.

I am certain that Switzerland, a neutral country that has always been an exemplary defender of peace, will

welcome the political will, realism and good sense underlying these significant steps in defusing the international situation.

I should not like to finish without referring to the presence in Switzerland of a large Portuguese community whose work, dedication and entrepreneurship has contributed towards Portugal's positive image and towards the strengthening of the links of friendship that unite our two peoples.

I wish to pay tribute to the development of that friendship and, once again, to extend my thanks and the thanks of all my colleagues to you and to the Swiss people for your warm welcome and generous hospitality.

* Address delivered in Berne on 18 May 1988, during the official visit to Switzerland.