

VIENNA 16th November 2012

The idea of uniting the peoples of Europe within one single organisation was moulded over centuries from two contradictory ambitions.

The one repeatedly tried to impose itself with armed force, whereas the other sought to prevail through reason.

The bloodthirsty, fragmented, and impoverished Europe of 1918 had itself destroyed the splendour and prosperity accumulated during the previous century.

Ten years later the economic, financial and social crisis imported from the United States led it into the madness of nationalism, xenophobia, racism and anti-Semitism.

Nevertheless, as from 1922 the prophetic visions of Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi had provided it with the courage and strength of will to propose to its citizens the choice of reason.

Without underestimating the decisive role of Robert Schuman's programmatic speech on 9th May 1950 inspired by the project of Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi, it is nevertheless the latter that needs to be regarded as the founding father of what has by now become the European Union.

Europe's brightest spirits from science, literature, and the arts as well as some clear-sighted politicians understood and supported his revolutionary message even back then.

Nor is it astonishing that when the Second World War broke out exceptional men including Churchill, Adenauer and de Gaulle took it as an inspiration.

Their aim was to give the peoples of Europe the peace so painfully acquired for once and for all and to cement it through re-established democracy and shared prosperity.

On the ninetieth anniversary of this founding initiative it is now up to us to once more pay our respects to the memory of the first President of the International Paneuropean Union.

And, of course, to express our profound gratitude for the exceptional achievements of Otto von Habsburg in the service of Europe on the occasion of the one-hundredth anniversary of the birth of his successor.

One hundred years before he was born the French minister Talleyrand had issued this premonitory warning, "Beware of the destruction of Austria, it is the rampart of Europe".

The heir to an empire and a throne both perished by the destructive madness of the Europeans whose blood had mixed in the trenches Otto von Habsburg had the choice between the nostalgic cult of a glorious yet sunken past and the captivating yet risky fight for a pacified Europe still to be constructed.

And he decided to take this latter path which gave sense and direction to his life.

It was also this deliberate choice that led him to lead the Paneuropean Union over thirty-one years in a permanent fight against the infamous division of Europe originating from the ignominious Yalta accords.

Finally, it was this choice that took him to the European Parliament of which he was one of the brightest and most efficacious members for twenty years.

Certainly, the achievements of these two giants of contemporary European history must not be shut away in the museum of our memories.

Quite on the contrary, the track they set out and the direction they gave oblige us to pursue and achieve the goal they defined.

The Europe so much hoped for by Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi and Otto von Habsburg is still in its very beginnings.

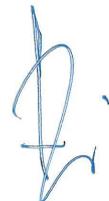
What we need to achieve, comprising all the countries supporting this project, starting with all the states of South East Europe, is Europe as a power in its own right, independent, sovereign and solidarity.

Rooted in the democratic legitimacy of its member states empowered by the new competence structures, the European Union even before the end of this century could become a power protecting the legitimate interests of its peoples and open to balanced global cooperation.

This objective can only be achieved subject to the following conditions:

- the reversal of Europe's demographic decline
- choosing immigration wherever necessary
- achieving economic, financial, budgetary, fiscal, and social harmonisation
- daring political union and all its consequences
- investing its principal common resources into education, research and innovation
- assuring through its own resources the defence of its space which it needs to delimit without delay
- privileging sustainable development and affirming alimentary sovereignty
- convincing its youth that Europe is an exciting adventure
- inspiring its peoples to turn into whole-hearted Europeans

Finally, respecting all faiths and religions, the Europeans must renew their bonds with their spiritual sources if they want Europe to again become what it once was, an exemplary beacon for all of humanity.



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