

Address by Mikhail Gorbachev to the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, July 6, 1989

Esteemed President, Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you for the invitation to take the floor here, one of the epicenters of European politics and European thought. We may assess this meeting as proof that the all-European process is a reality and that it is advancing.

Now that the twentieth century is drawing to a close and the postwar period and the Cold War are becoming things of the past, the Europeans are beginning to face the unique opportunity of playing their role in building a new world, a role that is worthy of their history and their economic and intellectual potential.

[...]

Victor Hugo said: "A day will come when you, France; you, Russia; you, Italy; you, Britain; and you, Germany — all of you, all nations of the continent will merge tightly, without losing your identities and your remarkable originality, into some higher society and form a European fraternity. (...) - A day will come when markets, open to trade, and minds, open to ideas, will become the sole battlefields."

It is not enough now merely to state the interdependence and joint destinies of the European states. The idea of European unity should be collectively rethought in the process of the concerted endeavor by all nations--large, medium, and small.

[...]

Social and political orders in one or another country have changed in the past and may change in the future. But this change is the exclusive affair of the people of that country and is their choice. Any interference in domestic affairs and any attempts to restrict the sovereignty of states--friends, allies, or any others--are inadmissible.

Differences among states are not removable. They are, as I have already said on several occasions, even favorable--provided, of course, that the competition between the different types of society is directed toward creating better material and spiritual living conditions for all people.

[...]

In the course of centuries Europe has made an indispensable contribution to world politics, economy, and culture, and to the development of the entire civilization. Its world historical role is universally recognized and praised.

Let us not forget, however, that the curse of colonial slavery spread worldwide from Europe. Fascism was born here. The most devastating wars began here. Europe may take legitimate pride in its accomplishments, but it has far from paid all its debts to humankind. This is yet to be done. This is to be done by pressing for changes in international relations in the spirit of humanism, equality, and justice and by setting an example of democracy and social achievements in their own countries.

The Helsinki process initiated this immense effort of world significance. Vienna and Stockholm have led it to fundamentally new frontiers. The documents adopted there are the most complete expression to date of the political culture and moral tradition of the European peoples.

We all, participants in the European process, are yet to use as fully as possible the prerequisites created by our common effort. This aim is served by our idea of the common European home.

Our idea of the common European home was born of the comprehension of new realities and the understanding of the fact that the linear continuation of the movement along which intra-European relations developed up to the last quarter of the twentieth century no longer matches these realities.

The idea is connected with our domestic economic and political restructuring, which was in need of new relationships primarily in that part of the world to which we, the Soviet Union, belong and with which we had been connected most of all for centuries.

We also took into account that the tremendous burden of armaments and the atmosphere of confrontation not only hindered the normal development of Europe, but at the same time prevented our country from joining in the European process economically, politically, and psychologically, and deformed our development.

These were the motives from which we decided to revitalize our European policy, which in itself, incidentally, had always been of importance to us.

Matters concerning both the architecture of a “common home” and methods for building it and even “furnishings” were touched upon during meetings with European leaders recently. Conversations with President François Mitterrand on this subject in Moscow and in Paris were also fruitful and rather wide-ranging.

I do not claim today that I have a ready-made blueprint for such a “home.” Instead I shall speak of what, in my view, is the main point--namely, the need for a restructuring of the international order in Europe to bring to the fore all European values and make it possible to replace the traditional balance of forces with a balance of interests.

But what does this involve? Let us first take security issues.

[...]

The philosophy of the “common European home” concept rules out the probability of an armed clash and the very possibility of the use of force or the threat of force--alliance against alliance, inside the alliances, wherever. This philosophy suggests that a doctrine of restraint should take the place of the doctrine of deterrence. This is not just a play on words, but the logic of European development prompted by life itself.

[...]

If security is the foundation of the common European home, multifarious cooperation is its superstructure.

An intensive interstate dialogue--bilateral and multilateral--has become a sign of the new situation in Europe and the world in recent years. The range of agreements, treaties, and other accords has been considerably extended. Official consultations on diverse issues have become a feature of life.

The first contacts have been formed between NATO and the Warsaw Treaty organization, the EC and the CMEA, not to mention many political and public organizations in both parts of Europe.

[...]

The need for a second conference of the Helsinki type is becoming increasingly topical. It is time for the present generation of leaders of the European countries, the United States, and Canada, to discuss, apart from most pressing issues, how they visualize the subsequent stages in the movement toward the European community of the twenty-first century.

As concerns the economic content of the European home, we consider the prospect for forming a vast economic space from the Atlantic to the Urals with a high degree of interdependence between its Eastern and Western parts as real, although not immediate.

The Soviet Union's transition to a more open economy is of fundamental importance in this sense. And not only for ourselves--for enhancing the efficiency of the national economy and meeting consumer requirements. This will enhance interdependence of the economies of the East and West and, consequently, have a salutary effect on the entire complex of European relations.

[...]

We have no doubt that integrational processes in Western Europe are acquiring a new quality. We do not underestimate the likelihood of the emergence of a single European market in the coming years.

The CMEA has also taken a course toward the formation of a joint market, although we lag far behind in this respect. The rate of internal transformations within the CMEA will in many respects determine what will undergo a more rapid development in the coming years--relationships between the CMEA and the EC as groupings or between individual socialist countries and the EC.

It is quite possible that from time to time this or that form will come to the fore. It is important that they both should fit into the logic of the formation of an all-European economic zone.

The next step in this process is perhaps a trade and economic agreement between our country and the EC. We also attach substantial importance to it from the viewpoint of all-European interests.

Naturally, we by no means counterpose our contacts with the BC to contacts with other associations or states. EFTA countries are our good and long-standing partners.

It would also be sensible perhaps to speak of the development of relations through CMEA and EFTA channels and to utilize this channel of multilateral cooperation in the building of a new Europe.

A common European home will need to be kept ecologically clean. Life has taught us bitter lessons. Ecological hazards in Europe have long transcended national boundaries.

To form a regional ecological security system is a matter of urgency. It is quite likely that the CSCE process will evolve most quickly in this really high-priority field.

The first step could be to elaborate a long-term continental ecological program.

[...]

The humanitarian content of the CSCE process is decisive.

A world in which military arsenals would be cut but in which human rights would be violated cannot feel secure. We, for our part, have arrived at this conclusion finally and irrevocably.

The decisions made at the Vienna meeting signify a genuine breakthrough in this sense. A whole program for joint action of European countries has been mapped out with provision for the most diverse measures. Mutual understanding was reached on many issues which until recently were a stumbling block in East-West relations.

We are convinced that a reliable legal foundation should be furnished for the CSCE process. We visualize a common European home as a legal community, and we, for our part, have begun moving in that direction.

[...]

Ladies and Gentlemen. Europeans can meet the challenges of the next century only by pooling their efforts.

We are convinced that they need one Europe-- peaceful and democratic-- a Europe that preserves all of its diversity and abides by common humane ideals, a prospering Europe that extends a hand to the rest of the world. A Europe that confidently marches into the future. We see our own future in this Europe.

Perestroika, which has as its goal the fundamental renewal of Soviet society, also predetermines our policy aimed at the development of Europe exactly in this direction.

[...]

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