

*THE MALTA COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN MOVEMENT  
CELEBRATED EUROPE DAY, MAY 5, 1968,  
BY HOLDING A BANQUET AT THE MALTA HILTON.  
THE HON. MR. JUSTICE PROF. J.J. CREMONA  
DELIVERED THE FOLLOWING AFTER-DINNER SPEECH:*

MR. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Eighteen nations, great and small, have today proudly celebrated Europe Day and, amongst them, we. We are now crowning the celebrations with the good food and good wine for which this old but discerning continent of ours has long been famous; and I wish in the first place to thank, most heartily, you Mr. Chairman, the members of the Committee and all of you here for kindly inviting my wife and myself to be your guests of honour this evening. And as a fitting token of my gratitude, I promise to be brief. Whatever properties after-dinner speeches may have – and frankly I do not know of any – they are certainly not digestive. Some are sometimes said to be sparkling. But so too are those salts which are sipped on the morning after by way of silent punishment.

I once heard a banquet defined as a plate of cold, hairy chicken and artificial-ly coloured green peas completely surrounded by dreary speeches and appeals for donations. In any case, I think you may well consider yourselves lucky. You have so far managed to escape all the unpleasant things in the definition except one, the speech. And I find it has not even really started yet.

What is Europe Day? Just as each nation has its own national day (and some have two), so as members of this international organization that is the Council of Europe we have another yearly celebration dedicated to international brotherhood, co-operation and peace. When Europe Day was born, the Chairman of the committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe stressed the fact that it was really 'the answer to a call which had come from all over Europe that, each year, all Europeans should unite in thought and in the will to spare no effort towards the creation of a peaceful, united and free world.'

The first time that Europe Day was celebrated was on 5th May 1965, and how well I remember it. Malta had just acceded to the Council of Europe. That was also the year, and fittingly enough also the day, when a delegation from the European Movement came to Strasbourg to present the Council of Europe with a bust of a great European and the Honorary President of the Movement in its early days, Sir Winston Churchill. It was also the year of the visiting Americans and we heard Senator Fulbright address the Consultative Assembly in a manner which provoked some colourful fireworks.

It was indeed a great year for us Maltese, and I had the honour and the pleasure of forming part of the Malta Government Delegation for Malta's first partici-

pation in the work of the Council of Europe. We flew to Strasbourg carrying with us not some new heraldic device but a centuries-old flag, and we permitted ourselves the pardonable weakness of a brief but unforgettable moment of sentiment when we saw it unfurl along with the flags of the other Member States against the green of the Orangerie and the blue morning sky. All those who were present will doubtless confirm that in that tense moment all hearts were truly beating in unison – a reflection of the unity for which and by which the new Europe stands.

We must remember, however, that the new Europe is not only a thing of the heart but also a thing of the mind. It represents, as I have always seen it, a sustained effort towards greater unity, a will to co-operate for the common good and a determination that peace should not be merely the temporary absence of armed conflict – but something significantly more positive and enduring.

As you know, I am closely connected with the Council of Europe. I look upon this as a cooperative workshop which is concerned not only with the production of fruitful ideas but also with their efficient practical application. You will see how true this is when you look at the impressive list of conventions and agreements which have so far been drawn up and of those on which work is currently in progress in this busy workshop. I have been working on two of them as a member of two Committees of Experts and I must say I have been truly impressed by the spirit of goodwill and co-operation which permeates the work of these Committees.

You all know that the first major convention to come out of the Council of Europe was the European Convention on Human Rights and even now after eighteen years from its signature it undoubtedly still stands out as a brilliant landmark in the long and chequered history of man's struggle for the recognition and protection of his fundamental freedoms. In the social field, the Council's aim to achieve higher social standards is significantly reflected in the European Social Charter.

The Council's intergovernmental activities extend into many other fields and this great workshop is ever busy dealing with several other matters of an economic, legal, public health, environmental, educational and scientific nature. Some such activities are concerned with less high-sounding matters than human rights and in fact a Convention was recently being drawn up on the carriage of animals. But they are all both useful and important in their own sphere. It has been announced that in the next two days the Prime Minister will be signing a number of Conventions in Strasbourg.

This is only one aspect, though indeed a very significant one, of European co-operation on the international plane. An interesting illustration of the flexibility of this machinery is that some of these Conventions, like for instance the Cultural Convention, are also open to signature by non-member Governments.

The ideal of European unity is being envisaged also in the form of a huge

massive economic bloc that may eventually fuse the Common Market, which is today the world's most complete trading bloc, with the European Free Trade Association. In this respect, however, as you know, there are still difficulties in the way. The British are rather inclined to think that one such major difficulty is over six foot tall and speaks French.

But what is disturbing the more sensitive of present-day Europeans is the fear that we are lagging behind America in scientific research and technological development and that this growing imbalance may in the long run have grave repercussions on our economy and general well-being. This imbalance is also being accentuated by the fact that Europe is losing many of its top brains every year to the better-paying Americans.

The emphasis for the future ought therefore to be on greater co-operation in research and development which may eventually lead to what has recently been referred to as a new technological community in Europe. The accent thus remains today as indeed it was twenty years ago on peaceful co-operation. To this I think that present-day Europeans ought to bring a new sense of urgency. It is this common effort that we are celebrating today.

Our part of the world has for many centuries now been known as the Old World. There is undoubtedly a certain charm in that. But there is more than just charm in the idea, which should be always foremost in our minds and more so today, of turning our old world into a united new one.

Ladies and gentlemen, before I close, pray raise your glass. I give you – Europe and the European Movement.

J.J. CREMONA

*(The Hon. Mr. Justice Professor Cremona is Vice-President of H.M. Constitutional Court and of H.M. Court of Appeal, as well as Judge of the European Court of Human Rights. He is the author of numerous publications; his 'magnum opus' is the Malta Independence Constitution of 1964.)*