

The context : just one year after the beginning of the Cold War. Europe was divided by the Iron Curtain. So, the united Europe could only be a small, western Europe.ri

The Hague, 1948: Churchill at the Congress of Europe.

In 1948, Churchill was no longer in office (he had been defeated in 1945). But he was still famous. His main concern was now the power of the Soviet Union. He intended to support European unity against the USSR. And he hoped that the USA would increase its involvement in Western Europe. Since 1947, the Marshall Plan (European Recovery Plan) was underway. In 1949, NATO was going to appear.



Paul Ramadier was a French statesman, a socialist. As head of the French government, in 1947, he had fired the communist ministers, thus enabling France to join the ERP. He had two things in common with Churchill: anticommunism, and the fact that he too, was a "has been", no longer in charge of public affairs.

The Congress of Europe, involving former statesmen, lacked legitimacy.

Winston Churchill presiding at the Congress of Europe. Beside him the French statesman Paul Ramadier

Churchill was giving an inspiring speech, with lofty ideals

Then, he suddenly moved to more practical matters : economics (the Marshall Plan) and defence (the prospect of the Atlantic alliance and NATO).

Churchill saw European integration as a stepwise process: political unity was required to guarantee the defence of Europe

Churchill, in the context of the Cold War, was now putting communism in the same category as fascism and nazism : totalitarianism (like later Hannah Arendt)

"(...) The Movement for European Unity must be a positive force, deriving its strength from our sense of common spiritual values. It is a dynamic expression of democratic faith based upon moral conceptions and inspired by a sense of mission. In the centre of our movement stands the idea of a Charter of Human Rights, guarded by freedom and sustained by law. It is impossible to separate economics and defence from the general political structure. Mutual aid in the economic field and joint military defence must inevitably be accompanied step by step with a parallel policy of closer political unity. It is said with truth that this involves some sacrifice or merger of national sovereignty. But it is also possible and not less agreeable to regard it as the gradual assumption by all the nations concerned of that larger sovereignty which can alone protect (...) their national traditions all of which under totalitarian systems, whether Nazi, Fascist, or Communist, would certainly be blotted out for ever.

Some time ago I stated that it was the proud mission of the victor nations to take the Germans by the hand and lead them back into the European family, and I rejoice that some of the most eminent and powerful Frenchmen have spoken in this sense. (...)

For us the German problem is to restore the economic life of Germany (...) and revive the ancient fame of the German race without thereby exposing their neighbours and ourselves to any rebuilding or reassertion of their military power of which we still bear the scars."

Winston CHURCHILL, opening speech of the Congress of Europe, The Hague, May 7, 1948.

➤ Using the documents and your knowledge, describe the situation of Europe in 1948 and explain why Churchill supported a politically united Europe.