



TWO SPEECHES THAT CHANGED THE WORLD: FROM FULTON TO ZURICH

Dos discursos que cambiaron el mundo: de Fulton a Zurich

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In this extract from his new book *Churchill's Legacy: Two Speeches to Save the World* (Watson, 2016), Lord Watson of Richmond draws on his own experience of post war British politics, as a television presenter and media commentator and then as a Liberal Peer and Chairman of the English-Speaking Union, to analyse the significance of Churchill's Zurich speech of 19 September 1946. He argues that, building on Churchill's earlier speech at Fulton, Missouri, it helped change the perceptions of the West and alter their response to the emerging Cold War and the future of Europe.



Abstract

Sir Winston Churchill; General George C. Marshall; Joseph Stalin; President Harry S. Truman; Cold War; Soviet Union; European unity; Marshall Plan; speeches.

Sir Winston Churchill; General George C. Marshall; Joseph Stalin; Presidente Harry S. Truman; Guerra Fría; Unión Soviética; unidad europea; Plan Marshall; discursos.



Key words

En este extracto de su nuevo libro, Churchill's Legacy: Two Speeches to Save the World (El Legado de Churchill: Dos Discursos para Salvar el Mundo), Lord Watson de Richmond aprovecha su experiencia en la política británica de la posguerra, en la televisión como presentador y en el análisis de los medios de comunicación, así como en sus cargos en el Partido Liberal y la presidencia de la English-Speaking Union (Unión Angloparlante), para analizar la importancia del discurso de Churchill en Zurich el 19 de septiembre de 1946. Lord Watson defiende que, junto con el discurso anterior de Churchill en Fulton (Missouri), contribuyó a cambiar las percepciones de Occidente y a alterar su respuesta ante la Guerra Fría y el futuro de Europa.



Resumen

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Fechas

In 1946 Winston Churchill made two speeches which he believed to be as important as those he made in 1940. Then he had given “the lion’s roar” of Britain’s lonely defiance of Adolf Hitler. Six years later he perceived a threat almost as great – Stalin’s occupation of Eastern Europe and his threat to Western Europe. He was gripped by a sense of urgency and danger.

There were two imperatives – to persuade the United States to commit its resources to the defence of Europe and to invest in the economic recovery of Europe. The former challenge would require America to provide the shield of its temporary monopoly of the atomic bombs. The latter challenge meant reversing the disastrous impact of the cessation of Lend Lease by agreeing a Europe wide programme of loans and investment.

Two immense barriers confronted Churchill. Americans wanted their armed forces to come home and they didn’t see Europe as worthy of their treasure. His speech at Fulton on March 5th 1946 described Stalin not as “good old Uncle Joe” but as a tyrant who had already established an Iron Curtain across Europe and whose ambition entranced everything he could gain without nuclear war. It caused immense controversy but it worked. The second he wanted to deliver in Zurich on the 19th September. It proved even more controversial. At Fulton he hinted at what was to come. His words were carefully chosen, as we have seen multiple times: “The safety of the world requires a new unity in Europe, from which *no* nation should be permanently outcast.”

The policy he would call for next would be an almost unthinkable partnership between the pariah of Europe – Germany – and its implacable foe, France. Churchill’s business for 1946 was thus far from over. After Fulton the platform would be Zurich. He had certainly determined not to retire from politics and his political activities would not be limited to Westminster. His agenda was to inspire a new Western alliance and a rejuvenated Europe was essential if the USA was to commit to its construction. It is the relationship between the Fulton speech and the one he was now about to deliver in Zurich that reveals his brilliance in that bleak year of 1946. The connection that he was to fashion illuminated world politics at the decisive moment forcing people to see their problems in a new light.

The sheer originality and force of what he intended he expressed exactly in an article he wrote for the *Daily Telegraph* at the close of the year. Europe’s predicament, as he saw it, was in some ways even clearer than it had been immediately before the war. In that war the European peoples tore each other to pieces with more ferocity on a larger scale and with more deadly weapons than ever before. But have they found stable and lasting peace? Is the brotherhood of mankind any nearer? Has the Reign of Law returned? Alas, although the resources and vitality of nearly all the European countries are woefully diminished many of their old hatreds burn on with an undying flame (Dockter, 2015, p. 184-185).

Churchill then conjures up an extraordinary image. He asks “is there ever going to be an end?” He answers his own question:

There is an old story of the Spanish prisoner pining for years in his dungeon and planning to escape. One day he pushes the door. It is open. It has always been open. He walks out free. Something like this opportunity lies before the peoples of Europe today.

Churchill had seen something no one else had seen. His vision stemmed from cardinal aspects of his character – his experience of dark depression, his courage, his compassion, and his extraordinary grasp of history and how apparent reality can be transformed if the motors of change are understood. He concluded his article “the only worthwhile prize of Victory is the power to

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forgive and to guide and this is the price which glitters and shines beyond the French people". It was the prize he offered them at Zurich.

In this speech he challenged the French to overcome their hatred of the Germans. His profound grasp of political realities was what ensured that this speech was not an overture in wishful thinking. Its bedrock was his insight into the motivation of his second country, the United States, and his sense of urgency because of the Soviet threat. Herein lies the link between these two speeches which together aimed to save the world. At Fulton he was confident that he could initiate the process of committing the USA to the defence of Western Europe. This was possible because of America's temporary monopoly of the atomic bomb. But Western Europe had to be revived economically, psychologically, spiritually. This could only happen with the reconciliation of France and Germany, impossible though that seemed. Any why was this so essential? Because without it the USA would never pour its treasure into Europe's recovery. He understood the pre-condition of US generosity.

He also understood what he was up against. The French showed an almost Russian desire for revenge based on fear. They wanted reparations to cripple Germany and prevent any chance of it ever threatening France again. They demanded a permanent Allied occupation of the Ruhr – one in which, of course, the Soviet Union would have been delighted to participate. Britain and America saw this as a route to catastrophe. There could be no European recovery and no chance ultimately of safeguarding democracy in Western Europe without a healthy and vigorous West German economy. The French were bitterly opposed as de Gaulle was to make clear after the Zurich speech.

However, Churchill knew something else. George C. Marshall had been recalled by President Truman from his negotiations in China and it seemed clear that his focus would now be Europe and the Atlantic Alliance. He also knew from Marshall's opposition to Soviet proposals that the United States was moving to its own initiative on the restoration of the shattered economies of Europe. He was aware that there were powerful minds in Congress who questioned the brutal ending on Lend-Lease to Britain and France. But to move American political opinion towards the grand ambition of what became the Marshall Plan would require a change of vision by the French. He could not have foreseen how events would conjoin to break through the impasse. He could not know as he approached his Zurich speech in September 1946 that Jean Monnet would persuade de Gaulle that without this plan for France's economic modernisation, France could never recover her greatness. Nor could he foresee that in Monnet's economic plan for France, George C. Marshall would recognise the outline of a "much larger scale" programme "involving several countries" (Reynold). Nor could he foresee that Monnet and France's foreign minister, Robert Schuman, would succeed within a year in persuading the French government to propose a merger of the coal and steel industries of Germany and France, thus meeting America's demand for a quite evolutionary level of European co-operation. Churchill could not have predicted this remarkable sequence of changing interests and perceptions. Neither could he have known that Marshall's plan would save Monnet's plan and this would mitigate de Gaulle's initial rejection of all he would say at Zurich. But what Churchill's instinct told him on the eve of Zurich was enough. He knew that once again he could grasp the mantle of history and, by doing so, demonstrate that democracies did not need to be imprisoned by the past. Like the Spanish prisoner they could find the dungeon door open.

In his Zurich speech, Churchill led the prisoner to the dungeon door he imagined locked for ever and urged him to push it open: France – defeated, occupied, liberated. France, exhausted

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and embittered, could “exercise the only worthwhile prize of Victory ... the power to forgive”. In understanding this potential for transformation and initiating the process through his words, Churchill demonstrated the power of his maxim “In Victory, Magnanimity”.

So it is now to Churchill’s Zurich speech that we must turn and to the extraordinary reversal of US policy towards Europe instigated by the arrival of George C. Marshall as the US secretary of state. Churchill’s two 1946 speeches – Fulton and Zurich – constitute a vital prelude to America’s change of heart, and of mind.

“I am now going to say something that will astonish you ...”

As with his Fulton speech, Churchill’s second great intervention of 1946 was activated by an academic invitation facilitated by a holiday. There was a conjunction of platform, pleasure and the hinge of fate. To put it another way, Churchill believed in seizing the hem of history and in September 1946 he did not doubt he held it in his grip. He was not the dispirited man who in the previous year had spotted the opportunity provided by Truman’s footnote on the invitation from Westminster College in Missouri. He was newly invigorated and confident. Thus the invitation now before him, to accept an honorary degree from the University of Zurich, represented an opportunity he grasped without hesitation. It was made all the more attractive by the Swiss government’s offer of an excellent holiday in their country, as their guest.

In August, accompanied by his wife, Clementine, and his daughter, Mary, he arrived in Switzerland to savour Swiss hospitality. Churchill rejoiced in its undamaged beauty, an oasis at the heart of war-torn Europe, and received endless tributes to his statesmanship and Britain’s wartime courage. He returned the flattery with his own. On arriving in Zurich at the Town Hall, showered with flowers and the cheers of the crowd, he said to the Swiss:

You have solved many of the difficulties which have led other countries into suffering and misfortune. You have thus managed to be united in spite of the differences of language and race and there is no reason why your example should not be followed throughout the whole of this wrecked continent of Europe. (CHPC 24)

His purpose was not to advocate the neutrality that had kept Switzerland out of the war. The last thing he wanted was a neutral Western Europe, helpless before Stalin. His wish, fervently held, was for Western Europe to unite, economically, politically, spiritually – overcoming the “differences of language and race”. The idea of a restored Europe would motivate and justify the commitment of the USA. It would be helped by Britain and the Commonwealth. It could turn the tide in what would soon be recognised as the Cold War.

For this to happen, however, Churchill would once again, as at Fulton, have to startle and indeed “astonish” the world. He knew he had the power to provoke and inspire and, since Fulton, he also knew that he had the authority to do so. This time was different in that he did not need the backing of the British Foreign Office, which he neither requested nor received. This was *his* moment and he would fulfil his mission by articulating a vision of European reconciliation so bold that Europe’s self-awareness would be reshaped for ever.

To the crowds around the Town Hall, who cheered him to the echo every time he waived his famous “V for Victory” hand-sign, Churchill paused to explain that this, his most defiant and famous gesture, now had a different meaning. It no longer “stood for the victory of one group of nations over another, but for the victory of personal liberty over tyranny everywhere” (CHPC 24). In a single sentence and a simple gesture, he had spelt out his leitmotiv with the

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commanding clarity that occurs at productions of Wagner in Bayreuth. There a trumpet plays the leitmotiv of the opera before the audience enters the theatre. With his gesture and single sentence before his speech at Zurich, Churchill had sounded the note he needed and set the tone for what was to follow. The “V” sign was no longer about defiance but about reconciliation.

In victory, there needed to be more than magnanimity. There had to be, in the words of Gladstone, which he would borrow in his speech, “a blessed act of oblivion”. His call would be for “an end to retribution”. There was, in Churchill the warrior, a dimension of forgiveness and the realism of a statesman who understood that without forgiveness reconciliation would be impossible and that without reconciliation no restoration of Europe would be feasible. This perception was at the heart of what he was about to say to his audience in the Great Hall at Zurich University. Inside the hall was an audience somewhat smaller than that in Fulton but no less attentive. As at Fulton, there was also a global audience for media interest and the speech would be broadcast. Again, as at Fulton, there was academic formality. He was welcomed by the rector who was effusive in his praise of Churchill and of Britain, presenting him with an illuminated address of thanks. The rostrum was decked with flowers, the banners of all the student corporations were displayed. The scene was set.

The speech challenged the status quo as robustly as Fulton, and the response was just as divided. Churchill’s oratorical skill at Zurich matches that of Fulton, but the speech was shorter, less embellished and less Victorian, yet it depicts danger as graphically and advocates a response with greater simplicity and directness. In writing his Fulton speech, Churchill had grappled with a surfeit of themes – the two great “marauders” menacing free men, namely war and tyranny; the affinity of values and language binding together Britain, the Commonwealth and the USA in an alliance that had to be made militarily effective; and the reality of the Iron Curtain.

At Zurich he focused exclusively on a message he presaged at Fulton – “the awful ruin of Europe”, “a new unity” in Europe needed for the “safety of the world”, and how to initiate its creation. In both speeches the atomic bomb is both a window of opportunity and the harbinger of doom.

The power of the speech is its moral insight and the realism of its reading of relevant history. Its boldness lies in its call for Franco-German partnership – an idea made more shocking, even repugnant, by the daily revelations of German atrocities and war crimes emerging from the Nuremberg trials then under way. It pays tribute to the idealism of Count Coudenhove-Kalergi and Astride Briand and their advocacy of a “kind of United States of Europe” – a phrase that he uses while remaining clear about Britain’s relationship with their initiative. In examining the reactions to the speech, we will return to the impact the Nuremberg trials and the seeds of ambiguity sown on Britain’s view of what eventually emerged in the Treaty of Rome as “ever closer Union”.

This was a speech that was careful to stress the compatibility of what he was proposing with other features of the emerging and established international order. It did not threaten the world organisation of the United Nations. It was important to emphasise this given Roosevelt’s urgent advocacy of the UN, which overrode all his other concerns during his last conversations with Stalin. Churchill had, as ever, a close eye on US public opinion. He had shocked many Americans by what he had said at Fulton, a negative reaction influenced, and to an extent, led by, the Roosevelt family. For the same reason he stressed specifically that he was “very glad” that two days earlier his “friend President Truman had expressed his interest with this great project”.

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Nor did his call for European unity, based on the reconciliation of France and Germany and indeed *led* by them, conflict with Britain's unique alliance with the USA and its ties with the Empire and Commonwealth. Indeed, all was not only compatible but inter-related, even inter-dependent. Yet no matter how emollient Churchill wished to sound, there was no disguising and no wish to disguise the salient features of the speech that determined the reactions to it both then and since then.

He had proposed that Germany be re-admitted to the family of the European nations despite all the German atrocities and crimes being reported afresh every day. He had proposed that all the hatred engendered by the barbarous behaviour of the Nazis be consigned to "oblivion" once the conspicuously guilty on trial at Nuremberg and elsewhere had been punished. He had proposed a "kind of United States of Europe" but not that Britain should be a member of it. Britain's posture would be supportive, not participatory. Above all else he clearly did not see Russia or its satellite states as members. He was urging an alliance capable of containing Soviet ambition.

Churchill's vision was shaped by two of his most powerful intellectual and emotional instincts. Having witnessed the utter devastation of Berlin in 1945, he confessed that his hatred of the Germans had died within him. But he also knew that the European tragedy had happened because the democracies, including the USA, had appeased evil. His Zurich speech was born of his own emotional accommodation with Germany and the Germans after their defeat, and his intellectual determination to ensure that tyranny not be appeased a second time.

Reactions to Churchill's Zurich speech were both immediate and long lasting. One of the first, however, proved less enduring than others. It was the fear that his words were, as *The Times* put it the next day, based "on the assumption that Europe is already irrevocably divided between East and West". In its editorial opinion it saw this as "the peril of his argument and of its enunciation at this moment" (CHPC 23).

This concern was exacerbated by the conviction that Churchill must be speaking on behalf of the British government although, as we have already seen, he neither requested nor received any endorsement from either the Foreign Office or Number 10. The *Manchester Guardian's* diplomatic correspondent writing from Paris was disapproving:

Great importance is attached here to the speech of the British Opposition Leader. Far too many people seriously believe that the Opposition Leader is expressing the views held by the Government, but which for diplomatic reasons, members of the Cabinet are unwilling to express ... it seems unfortunate that Mr. Churchill did not take this common misconception into account in drafting his Zurich speech. (CHPC 23)

In an echo of Lord Halifax's dismay after the Fulton speech – that Stalin would be so offended that any hope of maintaining or reviving the wartime alliance would be lost – some commentators deplored its likely effect. The *Manchester Guardian* was particularly distressed. It wrote: 'It would seem impossible to convince representatives to the Eastern bloc that members of the opposition [Churchill] play any other function than that of mouthpieces of 'British Imperial Policy'! (Churchill Centre Archives & Churchill Press Cuttings).

Churchill's Zurich speech coincided with a series of international conferences attempting to keep the diplomatic interchange of the wartime alliance alive. The last of these was to occur in 1947 in Moscow, attended for the first time by America's new secretary of state, George C. Marshall. It would set the seal on the rejection by both him and Britain's foreign

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secretary, Ernest Bevin, of Moscow's intransigence over Germany. But Churchill's initiative in September 1946 was the first clear call for a united Western response to Stalin based on the return of Germany to the European family. To Western commentators committed to the purity of the wartime alliance between the West and the USSR, this was anathema and they declared it so. Ironically they were right in one regard. Churchill was indeed, at that time, only speaking for himself.

Thus this editorial in Britain's *Reynolds News* on 22 September 1946, entitled 'Churchillism':

Mr. Churchill, in his Fulton speech, called for an Anglo-American alliance. In his speech at Zurich on Thursday he called for a new European alliance, headed by France and Germany, under the sponsorship of the Anglo-American alliance, and with the atomic bomb as its 'shield and protection'.

Mr. Churchill does not say so in so many words, but the whole tenor of his Fulton and Zurich speeches makes it clear that he wants this fabric of alliances as a means of isolating the Soviet Union. Between Russia and the West there are many differences still to be settled and a dismal chapter of mutual irritations to be forgotten. Mr. Churchill's plan will do neither. His persistent peddling of the idea of an American-West European Power Bloc can only deepen Soviet suspicions and make more difficult the task of reconciliation.

The British Government should make it clear that when Mr. Churchill hawks around his new version of the *cordon sanitaire* he is speaking for himself – and nobody else. (CHPC 23)

The reason the rejection of Churchill's approach so trenchantly explained above did not last long was that it was overtaken by events. Stalin's obduracy and Molotov's negativity proved beyond doubt to Britain and the USA at governmental level by 1947 that there was no deal available with Moscow on the future of Germany and that the reconstruction of Western Europe was the unavoidable imperative.

Far more problematic, in September 1946, was the French reaction. *The Times* raised the right questions after Churchill's Zurich speech. It stated that while the speech demonstrated his "familiar characteristics ... of courage and imagination", it prescribed a remedy "which Europe, 'in its present condition'; showed few signs of accepting". Why? Its reasoning was clear: "Germany today is in no position to offer partnership to anyone" and "it remains to be seen whether French opinion will be prepared to tolerate, even from Mr. Churchill, the suggestion that the first step in the recreation of the European family must be a partnership between France and Germany". Indeed Churchill's speech "dumb founded French opinion" in the judgement of both politicians and the press (CHPC 23). Indeed as Churchill had predicted, the French were astonished but, more than that, they were appalled.

A powerful reason for this was the confirmation from the trials at Nuremberg and from many other emerging sources of just how horrendous the atrocities perpetrated by the Third Reich had been, including those committed on French soil.

The French had recently executed Pierre Laval, the former foreign minister who had collaborated with the Nazis after the German occupation. He was shot on 15 October 1945. The International Military Tribunal set up by the four wartime allies, by then including France, met the same month. There was no precedent for what they decided. They would put on trial the

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leaders of the Third Reich who they had in custody including Goering, Ribbentrop, Keitel, Streicher and Speer, among others. The trial was held in one of the few large buildings still standing in what had been Hitler's showpiece city for the Nazi movement – Nuremberg. It was an appropriate location as Nuremberg had hosted vast Nazi rallies. Had Hitler won the war it would have been turned into a marble and granite complex of buildings glorifying the Führer and his intended 1000-year Reich. Work had started before the war using Jewish prisoners from nearby concentration camps. Nuremberg had also been the place where the anti-Semitic legislation known as the Nuremberg Laws had been proclaimed – formalising the legal framework which would lead to the mass murder of the Jews, first deprived of all rights, and then of life itself.

Prominent Nazis who had not already committed suicide like Hitler, Himmler and Goebbels, or who had disappeared like Bormann, faced four indictments summarised by the pre-eminent historian of the Holocaust, Martin Gilbert. First, “a common plan or conspiracy to seize power and establish a totalitarian regime to prepare and wage a war of aggression”; second “waging a war of aggression”; third, “Violation of the laws of war”; and fourth, “Crimes against humanity, persecution, and extermination” (Gilbert, 1994, p. 364).

The charges were not only unprecedented, they were also controversial. The notorious president of the German Red Cross, the chief surgeon to the SS, shouted on the scaffold, “This is nothing but political revenge!” (Gilbert, 1994, p. 731). He fully deserved his death but of the four indictments only the fourth escaped any criticism. Even Churchill remarked to General Ismay at the time, “you and I must take care not to lose the next war”, an observation described wryly by A. J. P. Taylor as “a wise verdict on the proceedings at Nuremberg”.

It was their crimes against humanity, including extermination, that utterly revolted the world and turned Germany into a pariah nation. Yet it was this shamed and shameful people that Churchill now proposed should join with France. To the French, shamed by their capitulation and occupation, the concept was profoundly shocking and must have seemed extremely hazardous. Their wish was that Germany remain excluded and occupied in its turn. Their fear was that Germany was inherently stronger than France, larger by population, and once economically recovered, far more powerful.

As we have seen, France, in part, mirrored the Soviet attitude towards Germany. Both feared Germany and both were determined to prevent any restoration of its economic power. No one expressed this view more trenchantly than General de Gaulle. After Churchill had delivered his Zurich speech he penned a letter to de Gaulle seeking to explain why he believed France and Germany had to become reconciled. He entrusted the letter to Duncan Sandys, his son-in-law, who took it to his home in Colombey. What transpired must have been extremely upsetting to Sandys. Indeed, he went on to found the European Movement and to play a leading role in advocating the cause. What de Gaulle had to say to him at Colombey was the opposite of what he wished to hear. Martin Gilbert and others have recorded Sandys' account. The General said:

that the reference in Mr. Churchill's Zurich speech to a Franco-German partnership had been badly received in France. Germany as a state no longer existed. The French were violently opposed to recreating any kind of unified, centralised Reich and were gravely suspicious of the policy of the American and British governments.

If this was not clear enough, de Gaulle shared his deadliest fears. He believed that “unless steps were taken to reinvent the resuscitation of German power, there was the danger that a United

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Europe would become nothing else than an enlarged Germany". General de Gaulle's solution was brutal – the permanent allocation to France of all coal produced by the Ruhr, the long-term occupation by French forces of North Rhineland, which should be at once incorporated into France's Zone of Occupation, and the establishment of international control of all the industries of the Ruhr under certain conditions to be agreed by France. In conclusion, de Gaulle threw open his arms, saying "Voilà, mes conditions!" (Blake & Louis, 1993).

How was this French attitude changed? The impact of US aid to all Western Europe under the aegis of the Marshall Plan transformed the economic situation in both France and Germany. And at the heart of that strategy of transformation would lie the unique contribution of the remarkable French.

In 1946, Jean Monnet was little known to the public in France, Britain or Germany. But he was known to the architects of the emerging Atlantic Alliance – to Churchill with whom he had drawn up plans for a union of France and the UK in the terrible weeks in 1940 before the French surrender made them redundant. Of Churchill, he believed that he was a man with the courage and imagination to create new worlds. In his view, the French owed him an immense debt.

Monnet was also known to de Gaulle for whom he worked in wartime London. After the Liberation, de Gaulle turned to Monnet to develop and implement "Le Plan", the programme of investment and direction that began by early 1947 to modernise the French economy. "I told de Gaulle," he said, "you speak of French strength, of French power, but we have none until our economy is rebuilt as one that is modern and competitive".

To achieve this, Monnet would depend critically on the other people who knew him well, the power brokers in the USA. Monnet had worked in New York and Washington between the wars, winning the attention of both Roosevelt and George C. Marshall. Of the Americans, Monnet was impressed by "their energy, their instinct for a solution, and their optimism". But the quality he most admired was "their generosity ... whatever people may say, they did not enter the war for themselves. They did it because of their commitment to liberty". It was, of course, ultimately their commitment to liberty that drove their resistance to the threat posed by Soviet ambition. It was to that commitment to freedom that Churchill appealed at Fulton and again at Zurich. It is central to the Truman Doctrine enunciated in 1947 and the Marshall Plan's motivation.

It was Monnet along with the prime minister of France, Robert Schuman, who would together realise Churchill's vision of Franco-German leadership by proposing and successfully negotiating the European Coal and Steel Community, linking the industries of both countries and transforming "the sinews of war into the bonds of peace". There remains the longest-lasting reaction to the ideas proposed by Churchill in Zurich – the reaction of the British. Nothing was to compare to the protracted, bitter political division that had dominated so much of Britain's debate with itself and with others ever since Zurich.

In the Zurich speech, Churchill had acknowledged the earlier influence of a quixotic and formidable personality, Count Coudenhove-Kalergi. Churchill had renewed contact with the Count shortly before his Zurich speech and with the former French prime minister, Leon Blum, after the speech. At Zurich he claimed that he had "revived the ancient and glorious conception of a United Europe associated before the war with the names of M. Briand and Count Couden-

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hove-Kalergi which I had supported for many years” (Hart & Carr, 2013). In this correspondence, published in their study of “British Engagement with the Pan-European Ideal 1929-48”, the historians Richard Carr and Bradley Hart reveal how from the moment of Churchill’s public endorsement of European Union, he would find himself immersed in divisive argument. Blum’s criticism was that by championing the idea, Churchill would give the idea of European federalism “a character too narrowly Churchillian”, which would result in “the embarrassment, circumspection, and hesitation of the Labour Party and, in consequence, of international Socialism”. Churchill retorted that his support for this idea was absolutely not partisan in any political party sense.

The idea of European federalism had become a party political football in British politics, with the reoccurring pattern of British parties being sympathetic to European Union while in opposition, and hostile when in government. The reality is that even British Conservatives who recognised the imperative of European Union if future wars were to be avoided remained ambiguous about British involvement. Long before Churchill’s own reticence about the nature of British participation as opposed to membership, one of the first Tories approached by Coudenhove-Kalergi in the late 1920s rebutted him. Leo Amery wrote to him that the British “were much too far from Europe ever to enter wholeheartedly into its policies”.

I had the opportunity to examine this British reluctance with two key figures in the relationship. One was Duncan Sandys who, as we have seen, was sent to Colombey les deux Eglises to try to persuade de Gaulle to soften his attack of Churchill’s Zurich speech. Later Sandys founded the European Movement. He reminded me that as Britain emerged from the war, largely bankrupt but as a victorious power, its view of European Union would always be different from those defeated and occupied in the war, meaning France and Germany. Jean Monnet admitted to me that he had never tried too hard to persuade the British to join the Coal and Steel Community. Nor was he too dismayed by the UK’s refusal to engage in the Messina Conference which led to the establishment of the Common Market. He knew that it was not “natural” for nations to unite and that they would only do so when such a step became inevitable. That moment did arrive, for Harold Macmillan and Harold Wilson and subsequently Edward Heath sealed the deal with the French. On the way to that moment in 1973 and ever since, Churchill has been hijacked by Europhiles and Europhobes. For the latter, Churchill epitomises defiance of Europe. For Europhiles, he was the enthusiastic advocate of European union.

So he was, but critically he never advocated British membership. He had not succeeded in saving the Empire but he had saved a global role for Britain. It was based on the alliance with the USA, on the British Commonwealth, and it desperately needed a restored Europe. His two 1946 speeches addressed these themes – acting as a clarion call only just in time to enable the West to counter the Soviet threat.

Returning to London by plane with his wife and daughter, Churchill already knew that his speech at Zurich University would have profound influence. The short flight to Hendon did not match the excitement of his journey back to Washington in the president’s train after his speech at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri. On the flight there was no non-family member to whom he could declare, as he had on returning from Fulton, that this was “the most important” speech of his life. Yet he deserved to feel that it was undoubtedly the second most important speech he had given in that critical year of 1946. In little more than six months, he had changed perceptions and altered the horizons of the West.

In the Zurich speech, Churchill had acknowledged the earlier influence of a quixotic and formidable personality, Count Coudenhove-Kalergi

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