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The situation of today's Europe is not rosy. The Europe of economic interests, the Europe of Maastricht, keeps dissolving in a frightening way. On the way to unity there appear obstacles on all sides which seem to be insurmountable. At the same time, economy gets weaker and we – in the richest countries of the continent – tend towards a direction in which there are no new places of work, and in which one cannot see any noticeable improvement in employment.

While the Europe of the rich is tottering forward, the Europe of the poor is tainted with the tragedy in Bosnia. The fall of the enforced balance – the result of Yalta – has made it so that Europe, to a greater extent, has reverted to the times of the treaty of Versailles. Such a situation contains in itself a lot of data for a new conflict among the nations in the heart of Europe. In the Balkans and along the Danube history has mingled many nations, leaving them without any safe and defensible borders. It gave them no clearly geographically defined areas, which could ensure them some degree of economic independence. These nations live in a state of uncertainty and mutual suspicion; they mythologize the times in which they could lord it over other nations of the same region; they feel animosity towards one another and wish to avenge the times when they had to bear the supremacy and oppression of other nations. That which happened in Bosnia may easily be repeated elsewhere. The helplessness of the international community is conducive to violence and all forms of ethical and national egoism.

In such a situation as this, there is a need for a great political initiative. John Paul II once wrote that when one wants to achieve a good synthesis of interests and when one wishes to act for his duly understood interest, then one should also raise one's eyes to the heaven of values. This recommendation is particularly relevant in today's Europe. De Gasperi, Adenauer and Schuman, while laying foundations under European Community, had to fight against the representatives of the direct interests of their nations. They won because they saw the current problems in the light of a higher ideal; they ensured peace and enabled cooperation among the nations of Europe. Today, however, we need:

1. a grand plan which would help the economies of post-communist Europe within a sensible period of time to join in the economic process of unifying Europe; such a plan would have a beneficial impact on the economic growth of the developed countries;

2. a system of common European safety which would be able to eliminate war from Europe as an instrument of settling international conflicts, achieved through submitting conflicts among individual states to a binding arbitration, and which would allow intervention in order to conquer and punish the aggressor who abuses the rights of particular individuals or nations.

If we do not find in ourselves and in the Christian sources of European culture this power for such a great project, then perhaps history will not offer us another chance similar to that which we have today. We may learn how to think about our own good and the good of our nation while standing not in opposition to, but in unity with the good of all nations and the whole of Europe. May Mary, the Queen of Peace and Mother of European culture, help us.

Translated by *Jan Kłos*