



Przewodniczący

Dear Rector,  
Dear Vice Rector,  
Dear Professors,  
Dear Students,  
Excellencies,

It is a great personal privilege for me to be able to say a few words at the opening of this Chair, which has the name of my dear friend, and former colleague, Professor Bronislaw Geremek. A man whose life has symbolised a commitment to freedom and European values.

The College of Europe in Natolin is a fitting place to hold such a distinguished Chair of European Civilisation. This campus, opened after the efforts of the Polish government, is a symbol of the changes which occurred in Central and Eastern Europe after 1989. It is a testimony to how "European" this part of the continent has always been.

On this campus, students and Professors who come from all parts of Europe, demonstrate that there no longer are divisions on our continent and that we are finally reintegrated. Those unnatural divisions of the past belong in the past.

Today more than ever Europe has to remain open to the outside world, as it was twenty years ago to Central and Eastern Europe. I know that the specialisation of this campus is our wider neighbourhood. The experiences of transition and transformation that Central and Eastern Europe went through are the lessons which can be shared with both our Eastern and Southern neighbours. I am glad that there are students from both regions studying here today.

In Natolin, Professor Geremek held the Chair on European Civilisation for seven years. He taught students that there is such an idea as a community of shared values and that there is a European civilisation which we all belong to. This is his academic legacy which I am sure that Professor Joao Carlos Espada will be proud to continue.

I am delighted to accept the College's invitation to open a cycle of lectures on contemporary European history - from division to reunification.

Yours sincerely,

**Jerzy Buzek**