

**Speech by Mrs Ewa Ośniecka-Tamecka**

**Vice-Rector College of Europe**

**Official Opening of the Academic Year 2016-2017 - John Maynard Keynes Promotion**

**(with participation of Mrs Iwanna Orestivna, Vice Prime Minister of Ukraine).**

Madam Prime Minister,

Mr Chairman,

Excellencies,

Professors,

Honoured Guests, Dear Students,

Ladies and Gentlemen

When, twenty five years ago, the College of Europe in Natolin was being created, we were strongly convinced that Poland was a logical choice. Here, two cultural influences: of the West (the Roman and Latin traditions) and of the East (the Greek and Byzantine heritage) meet and intermingle. This geographical circumstance, coupled with Central and Eastern Europe's historical experience, has placed unique responsibilities on our College, responsibilities that we have been treating very seriously ever since.

Overcoming the post-world war two division of Europe required, at that time, not only the deep political, economic and social transformations. It required the development of new European elites: that is, a new generation of young people for whom Europe would become a real common home. It is difficult to reach this objective through a simple unification of academic programmes or introduction of the same reading lists.

In my opinion, the development of a real community requires getting to know one another better. This, in turn, can only happen through commonly shared day-to-day activities: through working together, studying together and having fun together. Also through living together – literally, under one roof – and through following the tradition of a shared table: a tradition we in Poland hold very dear.

Our academic community strives to refer to the best university traditions which we consider as one of the pillars of European culture and civilisation. Pillars that are older and stronger than any statehood ideas or political systems existing in Europe today.

The College of Europe is a university in miniature, drawing on the ancient Platonic academic ideals. Our “groves of Academe” are called the Natolin Park. There are not so many places in Europe, where one can concentrate on studying and on enhancing one’s skills, surrounded by people who share the same passion. Being able to do so is not only thanks to well-prepared lectures, workshops, seminars and study visits, but – above all – thanks to this very place. Here, you are all beginning your new adventure with Europe. And Europe as such is an adventure that never ends. I warmly invite you to make this journey.

Dear students,

Today’s official opening of the academic year also presents a good occasion to summarize your first weeks and months in Natolin. Nearly 2 months of studies are behind you. Just last Saturday, you have returned from the study visit to Ukraine. You have seen a European country that, despite many internal problems and the external aggression, consistently wants to improve its economic situation. A country that takes matters into its own hands and follows the path marked and travelled by other countries before. The history of contemporary Ukraine is becoming part of our common history.

Dear students,

You have seen the courageous and brave Ukrainian nation that has taken European declarations seriously, and is paying the highest price for its effort to achieve the fundamental European values that stem from the respect for freedom, both in the individual and social dimensions. I hope that this first-hand experience will stay in your memories for a long time to come. At this moment, I would like to thank you, Madam Prime Minister, for your presence with us today. I wish Ukraine, your country, success on your path, and may your compatriots enjoy your lives in peace.

Madam Prime Minister,

Here in Poland, the word *Solidarność* (Solidarity) denotes hope, and lets us look, together, at Europe's future with optimism. Not because we are not aware of possible threats, but because in the past, in times that we would like to forget, we never lost hope and we never lost our will to persevere.

We know that building modern state institutions and the transition from the totalitarian political system, one that runs against human nature and against the spirit of freedom and liberty, do not happen on their own. They happen thanks to actions of concrete individuals: their personal courage and consistency, the sacrifice of their health or lives, of their personal happiness and personal gains.

Dear students,

Maybe these past weeks of your stay in Natolin are too short a time to re-evaluate your way of thinking about our common European home. But maybe it has been a sufficient time to boldly look beyond the horizon of your habits and experiences to-date.

My dream is that, in June next year, when you receive (I do hope all of you) the diploma of our College, your knowledge will enable you to look at the problems of contemporary world in a way that is universal, balanced, and enriched with the unique, collegiate, "Natolinian", spirit: something you cannot acquire anywhere else.

Let me turn now to the patron of your promotion.

First of all, I would not want you to make John Maynard Keynes into your idol, or for him to determine your way of thinking about the transformations currently underway in Europe. Keynes has become the patron of promotion 2016-2017 NOT in order to send a message that "the European Union is to turn away from free market values and embrace instead ideas of state interventionism". Rather, we want to send a clear signal that there is always a need for not-so-obvious and non-conventional approaches to the changing world. It is of utmost

importance in Europe, especially after the crisis of 2008, where we have witnessed 8 years of discussions on the one hand, and stagnation on the other.

The patron of your promotion was not as disconnected from classical economics as many of his proponents believe today. He grew up in the stable, affluent and powerful United Kingdom. Through his elite family he received a solid education at King's College Cambridge. He was a child of his time. He was rooted in the old, conservative and monetarist school of thinking about global economy. He witnessed the time of great progress and unprecedented prosperity. And then he saw his whole world, almost everything he believed in, collapse in the catastrophe of the Great War and financial crisis. The fabric of existing economic links was broken like a weak spider's web.

As an academic, public servant, and citizen, Keynes rose to the challenge and met it head on: he got involved in seeking not-so-obvious solutions to the plight of the world. He left his ivory tower where he was sitting with the greatest of the capitalist world of the time. His fundamental work entitled "The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money" (published in 1936), was an attempt to find a cure for the unprecedented economic crisis that had been prompted by a global financial crash, fuelled day-in-day-out by the media. At that time, it was something new and unheard of. But today, does this situation remind you of anything?

The growing feeling of uncertainty and unpredictability on a global scale led Keynes to oppose thinking determined entirely by economics. In a sense, he became one of precursors of economic theories that took into account works of that time in the field of psychology and sociology, that is: works taking into account individual and group behaviours in economic processes. As one of the first, Keynes noticed the role in the maintaining of social order that was played by fulfilment of basic human needs.

Just like the majority of contemporary economists, Keynes worked through discussions and debates; he exchanged opinions and experiences.

It is worth mentioning at this point the name of another economist who was working, in parallel, on the issue of the impact of global demand on the volume and structure of national income. This was Michał Kalecki, a Pole who published, in 1933, "An Attempt at the Theory

of the Business Cycle". In that publication, Kalecki pointed to the critical role of investment, and he developed his assumptions – later also present in Keynes' theories – by building them into the imperfect competition model. Unfortunately for Kalecki's reputation and fame, his work at that time was not published in English, only in Polish and in French.

Someone once said that Natolin is a real laboratory of European ideas, where one can boldly experiment while searching for effective ways of solving Europe's problems. I would like this to be the case with your promotion.

Dear students,

I wish you courage to voice your personal opinions that are based on a solid foundation of your own academic research. Do not be afraid of swimming against the tide! There will be no breakthroughs if we all think in the same way. You are here to learn independent thinking, to confront existing theories with your own thoughts and ideas.

I am deeply convinced that the universal nature of the European identity is not a result of its uniformness, but – on the contrary – of its diversity. It stems from meeting of people of different cultures, different backgrounds and with different opinions who – after having gone through difficult and painful common experiences, decide voluntarily to live in peace and in mutual respect.

Dear Madam Prime Minister,

Dear Chairman

Honoured guests,

Thank you for gracing us with your presence today.

Dear students,

Have a great academic year at Natolin! Good luck in your studies and all success in your work.

Thank you very much.