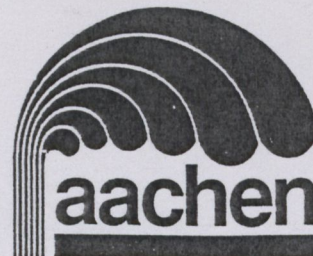


P r e s s e i n f o r m a t i o n

PRESSE- UND WERBEAMT DER STADT AACHEN



AACHEN,

13. Mai 1999

ADDRESS BY
THE PRIME MINISTER
THE R
Verleihung
des
Internationalen Karlspreises zu Aachen
1999

DELIVERED AT
Ansprache
S.E.
des
Premierministers des Vereinigten Königreichs Großbritannien und Nordirland
Tony Blair

Sperrfrist: Redebeginn; es gilt das gesprochene Wort!

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

englische Fassung

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

ADDRESS BY

THE PRIME MINISTER

THE RT HON TONY BLAIR MP

“THE NEW CHALLENGES FOR EUROPE”

DELIVERED AT

A CEREMONY TO RECEIVE THE CHARLEMAGNE PRIZE

AACHEN, GERMANY

13 MAY 1999

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

This prize is in part due to my work in Northern Ireland. That work continues the moment I return to London. Peace is so close, but there is much distrust to overcome. The struggle for peace in Northern Ireland is the struggle between reason and prejudice. It cannot be right, as we approach the 21st century, for there to be a part of Europe where whether you are Catholic or Protestant is the first thing that matters. That type of religious conflict belongs to the past and I intend to consign it there, as the vast majority of people in Northern Ireland wish. So thank you. I take this prize on behalf of all the peace-makers of Northern Ireland.

No compromise. No fudge. No half-baked deals.

Kosovo

The whole of the NATO Alliance is clear about the conditions - his troops out,

This city was devastated in the last war. Today, it stands as testimony to the power of progress, the strength of the human spirit, proof that from the ravages of war, peace and prosperity can be built.

And to those who disagree, I make two points. The first - you live in a

Today, however, just a short flight away, another war is scarring our Continent.

A just war, against the most evil form of racial genocide since my father's generation defeated the Nazis. doorstep of the European Union, our own back yard.

And though it is a grim affair, I cannot let pass without comment the great symbolism of RAF and Luftwaffe planes fighting, together, in a just cause. This too shows the power of progress.

millions of people driven from their homes.

We all tried hard to avoid this war. But even when he was talking peace, Milosevic was planning war. barbarism. No half measures about our response.

He was determined to wipe a people from the face of his country. We are determined to stop him. And we will.

With every day that passes, NATO's resolve is strengthened. With every ploy that Milosevic tries, our determination to defeat him is deepened.

There are no half measures to his brutality. There can be no half measures about how we deal with it.

No compromise. No fudge. No half-baked deals.

The whole of the NATO Alliance is clear about the conditions – his troops out, the refugees back home, and an international military force in to keep the peace. Until then, the air campaign goes on.

The Central Challenge
And to those who disagree, I make two points. The first – you live in a democracy and I defend your right to make clear your disagreement. The second is that we are talking here not about some far away place of which we know little. We are talking about the doorstep of the European Union, our own back yard.

Women raped. Children seeing their fathers dragged away to be shot.

Thousands executed. Tens of thousands beaten. 100,000 men missing. 1.5 million people driven from their homes.

No half measures about the barbarism. No half measures about our response.

We do not have TV pictures to tell us just how grim it is inside Kosovo. Do not let Milosevic's media control black out our imagination of the horror he is perpetrating there. And never tire of listening to the refugees. They are our cause. A just cause. They will go home.

And when they do, every other would-be dictator in the world will know the international community will not stand by and let them kill at will, destabilise a region, destroy a people.

We cannot allow the values of Europe to be desecrated within one part of Europe while we live comfortably in our western corner of the continent. It is only if we stand up to be counted in the cause of justice that we will live up to the ideals of our predecessors who helped to rebuild Aachen and the Europe it represents.

The Central Challenge

My argument today is this: Britain must overcome its ambivalence about Europe. Then our creativity and our practical common sense can be accepted as the contribution of a partner not an outsider. This is in Britain's interests. It is in Europe's interests too.

For Europe the central challenge is no longer simply securing internal peace inside the European Union. It is the challenge posed by the outside world, about how we make Europe strong and influential, how we make full use of the potential Europe has to be a global power for good.

To achieve this, we must accept our economy needs reform to compete; our European defence capability is nowhere near sufficient; we do not yet wield the influence in global issues that we should. We are less than the sum of our parts.

This requires us to work more closely on the big issues, and to use subsidiarity to get out of many of the small issues. Integrate where necessary. Decentralise where possible.

The European Council, the leaders of Europe, then must return to its original role, setting clear strategic direction and vision and working in partnership with the Commission to achieve it.

Britain in Europe

The first time I voted was in the referendum for Britain joining the Common Market. I voted yes. As a student in France, one of the best parts of my education, I felt liberated by the sense that here, in our common market, I could work and earn a living in another country. I want to be very frank about my feelings about Britain and Europe. I am a patriot. I love my country. The British, at their best, have two great characteristics, creativity and common sense. As history shows, we have never lacked boldness, or courage. But our sense of adventure has always been tempered by practical realism. We are pragmatic visionaries, rather than utopians.

We have sometimes found it hard to come to terms with the Europe the last 50 years has created. Maybe history would have been different had we been there at the very beginning, if we had felt we were creating it rather than joining it. But we weren't. However, my generation has a new opportunity. We have, I hope,

much to contribute to the European Union. But I know we can only give it on the basis of partnership and by playing our part fully. Half-hearted partners are rarely leading partners.

The practical part of the British character accepts we should be in Europe but worries about Europe's direction. Is the European economy efficient enough? Does the Brussels bureaucracy function well?

Many of these questions are reasonable, echoed in countries whose European commitment is never remotely questioned. My point to my own country is this: if we wish Europe to be guided by the common sense part of our character, we must also use our creative vision to see that only by participating can we shape and influence the Europe in which we live.

To be pro-British you do not have to be anti-European. We treasure our national identity, as you do. But in creating the European Union we have the chance not to suppress our national interest, but to advance it in a new way for a new world by working together.

Since our election, I believe relations between Britain and the rest of the European Union have been transformed. At the IGC in Amsterdam in June 1997, in Cardiff in 1998, in Berlin this March we have acted constructively. In our joint statement at St Malo with our French colleagues, we helped initiate a long overdue debate about the future of European defence. In February this year we published a national change-over plan for Britain to join the single currency. We have declared our support in principle for UK membership, though stressed the necessary conditions that have to be met for us to join. The intention is real. The conditions are real.

I have a bold aim: that over the next few years Britain resolves once and for all its ambivalence towards Europe. I want to end the uncertainty, the lack of confidence, the Europhobia. I want Britain to be at home with Europe because Britain is once again a leading player in Europe. And I want Europe to make itself open to reform and change too. For if I am pro-European, I am also pro-reform in Europe.

We should lay to one side the theological debates about European super-states. No-one I know wants some overblown United States of Europe. People who believe France, Germany, Spain, Italy for example do not have a clear sense of nationhood, have little understanding of them. We are proud nations and we work together.

The European ideal is best seen in terms of values rather than institutions; of a European society in which our key values of freedom, solidarity, democracy and enterprise are shared and reinforced together; in which our diversity becomes a source of strength; our cultural heritage enriches us, and where by representing those values to the outside world, we fulfil our global responsibility.

Our first phase was peace within the EU; our second phase is meeting the new global challenge.

The next era must be about how we build Europe's strength, power and responsibility vis-à-vis the outside world. The challenges are now external: in the economy; in defence; enlargement.

Now, rather than beginning with theory about structures and then asking what the structures can do, we must begin with what we want to be done and create structures to do it.

This will require fundamental reassessment of our basic objectives and the means of achieving them.

So what do I mean by reform?

Economy

We are living through an economic revolution: global finance; technological change; the Internet and e-commerce; workplace revolution, mass production ended; new consumer tastes, infinite variety and change. The European social model is about values, not rigid and fixed policy prescriptions. The values – a society combining enterprise and social justice – remain. But today the focus has to be on competing with the outside world, in a new knowledge-based economy. This means investment in education and skills; support for small businesses; active not passive welfare states; reforming tax and benefit systems to encourage work. It means less regulation, more labour market flexibility, fewer costs on labour. It may mean fewer pieces of social legislation. But it may mean also far more cooperation in areas of technology, communication and enterprise.

In the new fields of enterprise and in small businesses, we aren't competing favourably with the US. That's a fact and we must face it.

The way to deal with long-term unemployment and social exclusion is not old-style demand management. It requires targetted measures closely linked to welfare reform.

Enlargement

EMU, so far from diminishing the need for reform, makes reform essential. Economic and structural reform is the key to success for the single currency. I believe we are now moving in this direction. But it needs to be further and faster.

But I do believe we have a moral duty to offer them the hope of membership of Then in areas like the WTO and the international financial architecture, Europe should make its voice count. We should be a powerful force for free trade, an outward-looking EU and a leader in the search for sensible reform in global finance. We should be providing leadership in the easing of Third World debt and in providing effective help to Russia.

Central European and Mediterranean applicants. On the contrary we should

Defence our negotiations. Enlargement offers us the chance of a market of 500 million consumers and the inestimable advantage of political stability for the

When we began the European defence debate at Poertschach in Austria and then followed it with the St Malo Declaration, there was rightly a sense of optimism. It was a breakthrough. But it is only a start. There is much talk of structures. But we should begin with capabilities.

Then there is the challenge of crime and drugs. A half century ago the major

To put in bluntly, if Europe is to have a key defence role, it needs modern forces, strategic lift, and the necessary equipment to conduct a campaign. No nation will ever yield up its sovereign right to determine the use of its own armed forces. We do, however, need to see how we can co-operate better, complement each others capability, have the full range of defence options open to us. This also means greater integration in the defence industry and procurement.

If we were in any doubts about this before, Kosovo should have removed them.

Enlargement

Events in Kosovo also bring home to us the urgency of enlargement. The thing the front line states want from us above all else is the prospect of membership of the European Union. I do not underestimate the difficulties involved in extending enlargement to these countries, or in the necessary transition for their economies. But I do believe we have a moral duty to offer them the hope of membership of the EU and move as fast as we can to make that prospect a reality. In return for that offer, they must, with our help, build their economies and democratic structures and, above all, learn to live and work together in peace.

This does not mean slowing down the process of accession for the existing Central European and Mediterranean applicants. On the contrary we should intensify our negotiations. Enlargement offers us the chance of a market of 500 million consumers and the inestimable advantage of political stability for the continent. We must take it and make the changes necessary to secure it.

Crime, Drugs, Environment

Then there is the challenge of crime and drugs. A half century ago the major challenge of serious crime was to prevent gangs establishing networks of corruption and vice in our major cities. Today we have to tackle the threat from international drug barons who establish parastatal despotisms in countries with weak or non-existent governments, run supply lines across the globe in order to peddle their wares of self-destruction on our streets and recycle these profits of evil through banks that are beyond the reach of national financial regulators.

Is it not self-evident that a European Union acting decisively together in partnership with other countries has far more power to counteract this menace than any Member State acting on its own initiative? The issue that should primarily concern us is how we pool our efforts for the common good.

The same is true of the environment. Global warming is a threat to the prosperity, ecology and security of all mankind. At Kyoto it was Europe that took the lead – with my Deputy, John Prescott, playing a vital role. Now it is Europe's task to see that the Kyoto commitments are implemented with all that means for our approach to conservation, energy use and transport policy.

Europe acting together can achieve far more than nation states acting on their own.

Subsidiarity

In all these areas I am suggesting Europe gets greater cohesion, strength and influence and uses it. In some areas, it will need greater integration.

But it is for a purpose. To serve our own interests, by building up the European Union in order for us to engage with the outside world.

Europe should do the big things better; and it should get out of as many of the small things as possible.

Our citizens will support the EU. But the one thing they will unite on, in opposition, is where the EU appears to interfere in the minutiae of everyday life

for purposes that appear obscure. Europe could legislate less in some areas and achieve more.

As I say, integrate where necessary, decentralise where possible.

Subsidiarity is a vital part of creating the new Europe. It is making Europe work, keeping it in touch with the people of Europe.

So my case is that we need in this next era of Europe to focus on building external strength. Does this mean we avoid internal reform? No, of course not. We are at a moment of transformation in Europe. To meet the global challenge, we need reform of our own workings too.

I do not believe Europe is likely to grow into a replica of the United States of America. But no more do I think Europe will simply be a mere free trade area. It will be a new and different sort of entity. Power will be diffuse – with decisions taken at the European level when they need to be and taken at the local or national level when they can be.

In reforming our European structures, we should not imitate the constitutional theory of a sovereign state, but rather build the structures we need to achieve our objectives, recognising the unique nature of the Union.

Conclusion

We need a strong Commission able to hold off vested interests. It must, on enlargement, be streamlined, with a Commission chosen on ability. Romano Prodi has indicated he will carry through reform. After recent events, our citizens expect it. Now is the time to make it fundamental.

We need a new partnership between Commission and Council. Of course the Commission must have the right to propose. But there should be a real change in the role of the European Council. At the moment it acts as a court of appeal, arbitrating disagreements from lower Councils. We discuss omnibus concluding declarations of no legal and little political force. The European Council should return to its original conception of looking at the major strategic questions, on which it can issue clear guidelines to carry out agreed political tasks. It should set the strategy and review the Commission's progress in meeting the agreed priorities.

The European Parliament then examines detailed policies, scrutinises the Commission's effectiveness in delivering the plan the European Council has set out and holds the Commission to account.

In this way we can have effective government and democratic legitimacy, both through the Council, in which all elected governments are represented, and through the Parliament.

And we have a great opportunity on appointing Mr or Mrs CFSP. The person needs to have the weight and authority to make Europe count, make its voice heard. A serious person for a serious job.

Conclusion

So my vision of Europe is this

A Europe looking out to the world, not in on itself.

A Europe scaling the heights of ambition; not seeking the lowest common denominator.

A Europe that does what it needs to do well; and what it doesn't need to do, it doesn't do at all.

A Europe that matters – by focussing on the things that matter.

A Europe that wins the battles that matter.

We compete and win in markets abroad.

We win in the fight against drugs and crime.

We win in the fight to save our planet from environmental degradation.

We win in the battle for peace and security.

Jobs and competitiveness. Crime. Environment. Enlargement. Defence and foreign policy.

That is an agenda that matters for a Europe that counts.

Get these things right. And we win.

We build a Europe of winners.

I am honoured to receive your prize.

In return, let me say this: once Britain commits itself as a friend and ally, it is a friend for life. Of all the challenges we face, none is more important than how we develop our relations with the rest of Europe, and how Europe rises to the new challenges I have described. Get this right, and the new Britain can take its rightful place in the new Europe, and the new Europe can fulfil its potential as that global force for good.