

**Speech by
the Mayor of the City of Aachen,
Dr. Jürgen Linden,
on the Occasion of the
Presentation of the International Karlspreis
to the President of the United States of America,
William Jefferson Clinton**

Ladies and Gentlemen!

The international Karlspreis (Charlemagne Award) of Aachen has been awarded for 50 years now. It came into existence on the ruins of the Second World War and as a result of the survivors' commitment to peaceful coexistence of the peoples of Europe.

On October 21, 1944 Aachen was liberated by the Americans. Those who visit the large American military cemeteries outside the city gates can see thousands of white crosses and stars of David which are proof of the sacrifice that the American people made for Europe's and Germany's liberation from a fascist dictatorship. This sacrifice will not be forgotten.

Even during the war, the first free daily was published in the city of Aachen, trade unionists met to revive the German Trade Union Confederation, and the administration and politics were organized in accordance with democratic principles.

In Aachen, the citizens profited from the Hoover food shipments and the Care parcels, from the relaxed and friendly behavior of the American soldiers which helped many Germans to not only see them as the victors but also as the representatives of a new and better form of civilization.

At that time, the United States of America laid the foundations for an open, future-oriented society and made an exemplary contribution to the formation of a stable democracy in Germany that is being accepted by the citizens. Afterwards, with their high respect of freedom and individual responsibility, the Americans facilitated the founding of the European Union and enabled the peoples on our continent to grow together.

The European-American history of the last 50 years is based on mankind's basic principles: freedom, peace, democracy, human rights and solidarity.

The presentation of the international Karlspreis of Aachen in the year 2000 recognizes the close bonds between the United States of America and the European states and peoples. At the same time, it is meant to be an incentive to continue this road of good partnership in the new century.

I would like to extend a warm welcome to the recipient of the Karlspreis 2000 – the President of the United States of America, William Jefferson Clinton.

Dear Mr. President,

we would like to welcome you very warmly to the grounds of Charlemagne's former capital, which is the cradle of Europe.

Our hope for today is that the deep friendship between America and Europe will give new impulses towards a peaceful coexistence of man throughout the world.

At the same time, I want to greet the previous recipients of the Karlspreis:

- the 1963 Karlspreis recipient, former British Prime Minister Sir Edward Heath
- on behalf of the 1969 Karlspreis recipient, the Commission of the European Communities, former Vice-president Dr. Fritz Hellwig
- the 1977 Karlspreis recipient, the former President of the Federal Republic of Germany, Mr. Walter Scheel
- the 1979 Karlspreis recipient, the former President of the European Parliament, Mr. Emilio Colombo
- the 1981 Karlspreis recipient, the former President of the European Parliament, Mrs. Simone Veil
- the 1982 Karlspreis recipient, His Majesty, King Juan Carlos I. of Spain, who is being accompanied by Her Majesty, Queen Sofia
- the 1991 Karlspreis recipient, the President of the Czech Republic, Mr. Vaclav Havel
- the 1992 Karlspreis recipient, the former President of the Commission of the European Communities, Mr. Jacques Delors
- the 1995 Karlspreis recipient, the former Chancellor of the Republic of Austria, Dr. Franz Vranitzky.

I would like to extend a warm welcome to the President of the Federal Republic of Germany, Dr. Johannes Rau.

And we would like to welcome the President of the Republic of Finland, Mrs. Tarja Halonen.

It is a special pleasure to have the Federal German Chancellor, Gerhard Schröder, among us today. At this point, I would like to avail myself of the opportunity to thank him for honoring us by giving the laudatory speech on this year's award-winner.

It is with deep respect that we welcome among us the Secretary of State of the United States of America, Mrs. Madelaine Albright, the German Foreign Minister, Mr. Josef Fischer, as well as the German Interior Minister, Mr. Otto Schily.

It is a pleasure for me to welcome representatives of the embassies of several countries (in alphabetical order):

Belarus, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Finland, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, Ukraine, the United States of America.

I am pleased with the presence of the Minister President of the federal state of North-Rhine Westfalia, Mr. Wolfgang Clement, as well as of this state's ministers Mrs. Birgit Fischer, Dr. Michael Vesper, Mrs. Bärbel Höhn and Professor Dagmar Schipansky.

In addition, I am greeting the members of the European Commission, Mrs. Michaele Schreyer and Mr. Günther Verheugen.

We would like to extend a warm welcome to the President of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, Mr. Paul Spiegel, the President of the Evangelical Church in Germany, Mr. Manfred Kock, as well as the Bishop of Aachen, Dr. Heinrich Mussinghoff.

Furthermore, I want to welcome numerous renowned personalities whose presence today is a great honor for us. All those who participate in today's event either here in Aachen or on the radio or on TV - please receive the sincere greetings of the city of Aachen.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

Europe is in need of the strategic partnership with the United States of America in order to be able to consolidate the enlarged European Union, preserve its security abroad as well as promote its standing in world politics.

By opening its internal market, introducing the Euro and pursuing an unwavering policy of enlargement and reinforcement, the European Union sent important signals.

Political, economic and monetary cooperation forms a sound basis for the implementation of gradual enlargement, for a common foreign and security policy as well as a structured and constitutionally legitimized organization. Europe is on an arduous but promising way.

Without its cooperation with the United States of America, the EU could not have become as strong as it is today.

The American presence in Europe has stabilized peaceful coexistence of the European countries.

With its firm commitment to freedom and human rights, the United States of America contributed decisively to making the Wall come down. In the framework of the process of German unification, the United States supported our policy above all in the „Two-plus-Four Talks“ because it guaranteed internationally that the borders in Europe and the security treaties continued to be respected.

The United States made a crucial contribution to the new chapter in recent European history. We would like to express our gratitude for that.

The community of values that Americans and Europeans are sharing today are important foundations for the shaping of civilization, for a democratic world order and the solution of the social, economic and ecological problems that humankind is faced with. It is a cornerstone for the protection of human rights.

NATO's intervention in Kosovo brought about humanitarian protection for the Albanian population: The people could return to their home country. However, the entire West will still have to make more successful efforts to bring about a comprehensive peace in the Balkans.

U.S. President Bill Clinton developed a new vision for the integration of the peoples on our continent and for the partnership between the United States of America and the new Europe – rooted in security cooperation, free markets and thriving democracy.

During his nearly eight years in office, President Clinton has repeatedly been the motivating force behind the realization of this vision. Because of his being personally involved in bringing about a solution to the conflict in Northern Ireland, for the first time in a long period the hope of peace appears to be realistic. He declared the extension of the partnership with the renewing Russia to be a pressing task. He launched a North-East European Initiative in order to forge stronger bonds between the Baltic states, the Nordic countries but also Germany and Poland. He urged Turkey and Greece to settle their conflicts, including that on Cyprus.

President Clinton has committed himself personally to the reduction of trade barriers as well as to powerful economic aid for Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary. And he contributed to the quadrupling of U.S. and European investments in Central and Eastern Europe since 1990 and the doubling of trade.

In addition, he has supported the conclusion of a final peace agreement in the Middle East and thereby a reduction of the conflict potential in the Mediterranean region.

Finally, it was under President Clinton's direction - after more than a decade of talks - that agreement was reached on China's admission to the World Trade Organization, something which enabled the EU to conclude a trade agreement only a few days ago.

Mr. President, with your immense personal commitment you have brought the hope of a stabler world closer to reality. You are not only a distinguished American President, but also a great cosmopolitan.

The new century that has only just begun will present us with new radical changes and challenges. We need to fight the population explosion, poverty and malnutrition, we must come to terms with climate change and

put an end to the destruction of our environment, we have to fight against drug trafficking, terrorism, arms smuggling and many other problems.

It is the overriding responsibility of our generation to develop a model for a free, peaceful, prosperous and progressive society where everybody enjoys equal opportunities.

Let us become a model for the other peoples in the world!

The price of greatness is responsibility.

If America and Europe want to convey the noblest values and ideals to the world, their citizens need to live up to this kind of responsibility, show courage, vigour and personal engagement for this enterprise.

Above all, we should arouse the interest of young people in joint concepts, joint tasks and teach them that the feeling for what is universally possible is the key to good, successful cooperation between the Old and the New World, between Athens and Washington, between Paris and Texas.

We must bring the young people of our countries together - not just in the chat rooms on the Internet or on video-clips, but also in real life, so that they can inspire confidence, make friends, define joint horizons and share responsibility.

These are ambitious aims, but they are attainable.

The new century can become mankind's greatest success in history.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

By awarding this year's Karlspreis to the President of the United States of America, the Board of Directors in charge of the presentation of the international Karlspreis honors a politician who in tumultuous times proved to be a guarantor of the European-American community of values. At the same time, we want to thank the American people for the numerous tokens of their friendship they have given us during the last few decades.

Bill Clinton and the American people also represent the force of renewal and the willingness to pave the right way for a good 21st century.

Mr. President, congratulations on being awarded the international Karlspreis!

The text of the award certificate reads as follows:

In Aachen, the site of Charlemagne's imperial palace,
the international Karlspreis of Aachen
was awarded to the President of the United States of America,

William Jefferson Clinton,

on June 2, 2000
in recognition of his partnership and cooperation
with the European states
in promoting the enlargement and deepening of the Union,
the protection of human rights and freedom
and as a token of the Europeans' gratitude towards the American people
for the building of democracy and prosperity after 1945.

The text of the medal reads as follows:

Karlspreis 2000 of Aachen
President William Jefferson Clinton
Partnership for Freedom, Democracy and Peace