

Address given by Tony Blair to the Polish Stock Exchange (Warsaw, 6 October 2000)

Caption: In a speech delivered in Warsaw on 6 October 2000, the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, upholds the vision of a European Union which, while retaining its unique intergovernmental and supranational structure, will become a superpower comprising equal partner Nation States but not a superstate. In his opinion, in place of a European Constitution, it would be preferable to draw up a statement of principles, serving as a charter of competences, which would be a political, not a legal document.

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Speech by the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, to the Polish Stock Exchange (Warsaw, 6 October 2000)

A few weeks ago, you celebrated the twentieth anniversary of the extraordinary revolution that gave birth to a movement called Solidarity.

Poland grew to be the icebreaker for the end of communism in all of Europe and for the end of the Cold War.

As we speak, another revolution is taking place. What the people of Poland begun, the people of Serbia will finish - opening up for the first time in history the prospect of a European continent united in freedom and democracy.

Milosevic has done enough damage, for one man, in one country. Three wars. Tens of thousands dead. Millions displaced. Acts of barbarism not seen in Europe since the Second World War. Their effect felt throughout Europe.

We, and you, part of the NATO Alliance that stood up for our values against him in Kosovo last year, know what he is capable of. The sooner he is gone, the better for Serbia, the better for the whole of Europe.

Then we must stand ready, when the will of the people is finally done, to hold out the hand of partnership to a democratic Serbia, and welcome her into the European family of nations.

Poland led the wave of revolution in Europe. Since then, Poland has been critical to the great transition from communism to democracy, together with your dynamic Central European partners. I am delighted that the Czech and Slovak Prime Ministers, and the Hungarian Foreign Minister are also with us today.

Britain and Poland have marched shoulder-to-shoulder at decisive moments in Europe's history. Last month in a moving ceremony, we unveiled in London a statue of General Sikorski, a fitting monument to a great patriot.

Britain went to war in 1939 because Hitler invaded Poland. Robbed of their own homeland, the Polish people gave themselves selflessly in the liberation of Western Europe, only to see the iron curtain come down on Poland.

Winston Churchill said of the pilots who so valiantly and against such odds defended the last bastion of resistance in Europe against Hitler's air armadas that never had so many owed so much to so few.

And of those few, the Polish pilots are remembered and revered for their courage, their skill, their idealism. They laid down their lives not in defence of their own country, but in defence of an ideal, in defence of a free Europe.

As the Allied forces struggled to roll back fascism, Polish servicemen marched, fought and died for that same ideal, shoulder-to-shoulder with their British comrades; in the Battle of the Atlantic; at Tobruk and Monte Cassino; in Normandy; the unsung heroes of the Special Operations Executive and the most spectacular intelligence coup of the Second World War, Enigma.

Few countries have contributed more to the fall of fascism and Soviet dictatorship in Europe. Now we want you in the European Union.

Enlargement

The European Union is on the brink of one of the most important decisions in its history. Enlargement to the East may be the EU's greatest challenge, but I also believe it is its greatest opportunity.

Nobody who considers how the European Union has underpinned peace and democracy in the reconstruction of post-war Western Europe can doubt the benefits that enlargement will bring post-Cold War Europe and the Balkans.

Nobody who considers the role that open markets have played in generating wealth and prosperity in the European Union can doubt the benefits of creating a market of half a billion consumers.

People can always find good reasons for delay. People concerned about what these momentous changes will mean for the EU, and for them. Farmers worried about the implications for the CAP. Popular but misplaced fears that freedom of movement means massive shifts of population.

But let me be frank. Without enlargement, Western Europe will always be faced with the threat of instability, conflict and mass migration on its borders. Without enlargement, the political consensus behind economic and political reform in the weaker transition countries may splinter.

Should that happen, we would all lose. That is why supporting enlargement in principle but delaying in practice is no longer good enough.

So I am determined there should be a breakthrough on enlargement under the Swedish Presidency. I will be urging Europe's political leaders to commit themselves to a specific framework leading to an early end of the negotiations and accession. I want to see new member states participating in the European Parliamentary elections in 2004 and having a seat at the table at the next IGC.

My message to you is this: there are no guaranteed places. Reform is the only entry ticket. But we want Poland, and as many others as are ready, in the EU as soon as possible.

Britain in Europe

Britain will always be a staunch ally of all those European democracies applying to join the European Union. A staunch ally, wielding its influence at the centre of Europe.

It was not always like that. The blunt truth is that British policy towards the rest of Europe over half a century has been marked by gross misjudgements, mistaking what we wanted to be the case with what was the case; hesitation, alienation, incomprehension, with the occasional burst of enlightened brilliance which only served to underline the frustration of our partners with what was the norm. The origins of this are not complex but simple. Post-war Britain saw the issue entirely naturally as how France and Germany were kept from going back to war with each other. Britain's initial role was that of a benign, avuncular friend encouraging the two old enemies to work together. Then with gathering speed, and commensurate British alarm, Europe started not just to work together but to begin the institutional cooperation that is today the European Union. At each stage, Britain thought it won't possibly happen and held back. And at each stage it did happen and we were faced with the choice: catching up or staying out.

This was complicated by the fact that for all the other key players, there were compelling reasons for being in: reasons of history, reasons of proximity, reasons of democracy. For Britain, the victor in WWII, the main ally of the United States, a proud and independent-minded island race (though with much European blood flowing in our veins) the reasons were there, but somehow always less than absolutely compelling.

And for the rest of Europe, the reasons for Britain being in seemed less compelling too. Reading over the summer Jean Lacouture's biography of de Gaulle, I could see clearly why our French friends hesitated over Britain. There is a perception in Britain that it was because de Gaulle was anti-British. Nothing could be more misguided. He was an admirer of Britain and grateful for our support in WWII. But he had painstakingly given France back her dignity and self-esteem. He mistrusted American intentions and saw Britain as both a Trojan Horse for the United States and a brake on the necessary strengthening of Europe. So, even though, ironically, he was closer to Britain in his conception of what Europe should be than to virtually anyone else, he blocked Britain. There is something very poignant about the accounts of his

meetings in 1963 with Macmillan, a sometimes underestimated British Prime Minister, who saw only a little late the danger for Britain in isolation from Europe.

All this is history, but its effects live on. Now, the circumstances of today mean it is time to overcome the legacy of Britain's past. Two things have changed. From Europe's perspective, Britain as a key partner in Europe is now a definite plus not a minus. Britain has a powerful economy, an obvious role in defence and foreign policy and there is genuine respect for Britain's political institutions and stability. Also, in a world moving closer together, with new powers emerging, our strength with the United States is not just a British asset, it is potentially a European one. Britain can be the bridge between the EU and the US.

And for Britain, as Europe grows stronger and enlarges, there would be something truly bizarre and self-denying about standing apart from the key strategic alliance on our doorstep. None of this means criticisms of Europe are all invalid. They aren't, as I shall say later. But to conduct the case for reform in a way that leaves Britain marginalised and isolated (and that, despite the efforts of John Major, was the reality we inherited three years ago), is just plain foolish.

For Britain, as for those countries queuing up to join the European Union, being at the centre of influence in Europe is an indispensable part of influence, strength and power in the world. We can choose not to be there; but no-one should doubt the consequences of that choice and it is wildly unrealistic to pretend those consequences are not serious. In particular, there is absolutely no doubt in my mind, that our strength with the US is enhanced by our strength with the rest of Europe and vice versa.

I have said the political case for Britain being part of the single currency is strong. I don't say political or constitutional issues aren't important. They are. But to my mind, they aren't an insuperable barrier. What does have to be overcome is the economic issue. It is an economic union. Joining prematurely simply on political grounds, without the economic conditions being right, would be a mistake. Hence our position: in principle in favour; in practice, the economic tests must be met. We cannot and will not take risks with Britain's economic strength. The principle is real, the tests are real.

A word about Denmark. The Danish referendum was an important vote for the Danish people, but the rest of us should draw the correct conclusions. It will have no impact on the political support for enlargement as some fear. Nor will it affect the British Governments position on the Euro. Each country must make up its own mind on the Euro, in its own way.

But my point is this: Britain's future is and will be as a leading partner in Europe. Today I turn to the issue of Europe's political future.

A larger, stronger, democratic Europe

What sort of European Union will Poland join?

The Polish historian Joachim Lelewel famously asked Polska tak, ale jaka? Poland, yes, but what sort of Poland? Today I want to ask: Europe, yes, but what sort of Europe?

The trouble with the debate about Europe's political future is that if we do not take care, we plunge into the thicket of institutional change, without first asking the basic question of what direction Europe should take.

To those who say the need for change in Europe's institutions is driven by the impression Europe is slowing down, I must say I find that bizarre. Monetary union is currently the most ambitious economic enterprise in the world. We have just begun to fashion a common defence policy. And we are now set to reunify Europe and expand it with up to 13 new members and in the longer term more. We are hardly short of challenges.

Neither do I see any profit in pitting the European institutions against intergovernmental co-operation. We need a strong Commission able to act independently, with its power of initiative: first because that protects smaller states; and also because it allows Europe to overcome purely sectional interests. All governments

from time to time, Britain included, find the Commission's power inconvenient but, for example, the single market could never be completed without it. The European Parliament is a vital part of the checks and balances of the EU. The Commission and the Council have different but complementary roles.

The need for institutional change does not derive either from a fear that Europe is immobile or that it is time to upset the delicate balance between Commission and governments; it derives from a more fundamental question.

The most important challenge for Europe is to wake up to the new reality: Europe is widening and deepening simultaneously. There will be more of us in the future, trying to do more.

The issue is: not whether we do this, but how we reform this new Europe so that it both delivers real benefits to the people of Europe, addressing the priorities they want addressed; and does so in a way that has their consent and support.

There are two opposite models so far proposed. One is Europe as a free trade area, like NAFTA in North America. This is the model beloved by British Conservatives.

The other is the classic federalist model, in which Europe elects its Commission President and the European Parliament becomes the true legislative European body and Europe's principal democratic check.

The difficulty with the first is that it nowhere near answers what our citizens expect from Europe, besides being wholly unrealistic politically. In a Europe with a single market and single currency, there will inevitably be a need for closer economic co-ordination. In negotiations over world trade and global finance, Europe is stronger if it speaks with one voice.

In areas like the environment and organised crime, in policing our borders, Europe needs to work together. In foreign and security policy, though nations will guard jealously their own national interests, there are times when it will be of clear benefit to all that Europe acts and speaks together. What people want from Europe is more than just free trade. They want: prosperity, security and strength.

In a world with the power of the USA; with new alliances to be made with the neighbours of Europe like Russia; developing nations with vast populations like India and China; Japan, not just an economic power but a country that will rightly increase its political might too; with the world increasingly forming powerful regional blocs ASEAN, Mercosur; Europe's citizens need Europe to be strong and united. They need it to be a power in the world. Whatever its origin, Europe today is no longer just about peace. It is about projecting collective power. That is one very clear reason, quite apart from the economic reasons, why the central European nations want to join.

So a limited vision of Europe does not remotely answer the modern demands people place on Europe.

The difficulty, however, with the view of Europe as a superstate, subsuming nations into a politics dominated by supranational institutions, is that it too fails the test of the people.

There are issues of democratic accountability in Europe the so-called democratic deficit. But we can spend hours on end, trying to devise a perfect form of European democracy and get nowhere. The truth is, the primary sources of democratic accountability in Europe are the directly elected and representative institutions of the nations of Europe national parliaments and governments.

That is not to say Europe will not in future generations develop its own strong demos or polity, but it hasn't yet.

And let no-one be in any doubt: nations like Poland, who struggled so hard to achieve statehood, whose citizens shed their blood in that cause, are not going to give it up lightly. We should celebrate our diverse cultures and identities, our distinctive attributes as nations.

Europe is a Europe of free, independent sovereign nations who choose to pool that sovereignty in pursuit of their own interests and the common good, achieving more together than we can achieve alone. The EU will remain a unique combination of the intergovernmental and the supranational.

Such a Europe can, in its economic and political strength, be a superpower; a superpower, but not a superstate.

We should not therefore begin with an abstract discussion of institutional change. We begin with the practical question, what should Europe do? What do the people of Europe want and expect it to do? Then we focus Europe and its institutions around the answer.

How we complete the single market.

How we drive through necessary economic reform.

How we phase out the wasteful and inefficient aspects of the CAP.

How we restore full employment.

How we get a more coherent foreign policy.

How we develop the military capability we require without which common defence policy is a chimera.

How we fight organised crime, immigration racketeering, the drugs trade.

How we protect an environment that knows no borders.

And of course, how we stop Europe focussing on things that it doesn't need to do, the interfering part of Europe that antagonises even Europe's most ardent supporters.

The problem Europe's citizens have with Europe arises when Europe's priorities aren't theirs. No amount of institutional change most of which passes them by completely will change that.

Reforming Europe to give it direction and momentum around the peoples priorities will. The citizens of Europe must feel that they own Europe, not that Europe owns them.

So let me turn to the changes I believe are part of delivering that direction.

Proposals for political reform

First, we owe it to our citizens to let them know clearly what policies and laws are being enacted in their name. The European Council, bringing together all the Heads of Government, is the final court of appeal from other Councils of Ministers unable to reconcile national differences.

That is a vital role. But the European Council should above all be the body which sets the agenda of the Union. Indeed, formally in the Treaty of Rome, that is the task given to it. We now have European Council meetings every three months. And in truth they do, for example, in areas like the Luxembourg summit on jobs, the Lisbon summit on economic reform, the Peortschach summit on defence, develop the future political direction of Europe. I would like to propose that we do this in a far more organised and structured way.

Just as governments go before their electorates and set out their agenda for the coming years, so must the European Council do the same. We need to do it in all the crucial fields of European action: economic, foreign policy, defence, and the fight against cross-border crime. I am proposing today an annual agenda for Europe, set by the European Council.

The President of the Commission is a member of the European Council, and would play his full part in drawing up the agenda. He would then bring a proposal for Heads of Government to debate, modify and endorse. It would be a clear legislative, as well as political, programme setting the workload of individual Councils. The Commission's independence as guardians of the treaty would be unchanged. And the Commission would still bring forward additional proposals where its role as guardian of those treaties so

required. But we would have clear political direction, a programme and a timetable by which all the institutions would be guided.

We should be open too to reforming the way individual Councils work, perhaps through team presidencies that give the leadership of the Council greater continuity and weight; greater use of elected chairs of Councils and their working groups; and ensuring that the Secretary-General of the Council, Javier Solana, can play his full role in the development of foreign and defence policy. For example, when Europe is more than 25 members, can we seriously believe that a country will hold the Presidency only every 12 or 13 years? But two or three countries together, with a mix of large and small states, might make greater sense. In future we may also need a better way of overseeing and monitoring the Unions programme than the three monthly European Councils.

Second, there is an important debate about a Constitution for Europe. In practice I suspect that, given the sheer diversity and complexity of the EU, its constitution, like the British constitution, will continue to be found in a number of different treaties, laws and precedents. It is perhaps easier for the British than for others to recognise that a constitutional debate must not necessarily end with a single, legally binding document called a Constitution for an entity as dynamic as the EU.

What I think is both desirable and realistic is to draw up a statement of the principles according to which we should decide what is best done at the European level and what should be done at the national level, a kind of charter of competences. This would allow countries too, to define clearly what is then done at a regional level. This Statement of Principles would be a political, not a legal document. It could therefore be much simpler and more accessible to Europe's citizens.

I also believe that the time has now come to involve representatives of national parliaments more on such matters, by creating a second chamber of the European Parliament.

A second chamber's most important function would be to review the EU's work, in the light of this agreed Statement of Principles. It would not get involved in the day-to-day negotiation of legislation - that is properly the role of the existing European Parliament. Rather, its task would be to help implement the agreed statement of principles; so that we do what we need to do at a European level but also so that we devolve power downwards. Whereas a formal Constitution would logically require judicial review by a European constitutional court, this would be political review by a body of democratically elected politicians. It would be dynamic rather than static, allowing for change in the application of these principles without elaborate legal revisions every time.

Such a second chamber could also, I believe, help provide democratic oversight at a European level of the common foreign and security policy.

Efficient decision making, even with these changes, will be harder in an enlarged European Union. In the long run, I do not believe that a Commission of up to 30 members will be workable. The present intergovernmental conference must and will address the size of the Commission. More radical reform is not possible this time round in view of the worries of some states. I simply give my view that, in the end, we shall have to revisit this issue and streamline considerably. Reweighting votes in the Council has also become a democratic imperative which this current intergovernmental conference must resolve.

Efficient decision making in an enlarged Union will also mean more enhanced cooperation. I have no problem with greater flexibility or groups of member states going forward together. But that must not lead to a hard core; a Europe in which some Member States create their own set of shared policies and institutions from which others are in practice excluded. Such groups must at every stage be open to others who wish to join.

I agree with Guy Verhofstadt that enhanced cooperation is an instrument to strengthen the Union from within, not an instrument of exclusion. That is why enhanced cooperation must not be used to undermine the single market or other common policies. The safeguards must be stringent ones. The present treaties provide

them. Any changes must be equally stringent in avoiding a multi-tier Europe; the creation of different sets of rules; damage to the rights of those not able to participate; or erosion of the powers of the Commission as guardians of the treaties. The European Parliament should play a part in ensuring that these conditions are met, both at the time an enhanced co-operation is decided upon and during the course of its implementation.

Within a coherent framework agreed by the European Council, there is clearly much greater scope for using enhanced cooperation in the two biggest growth areas of European action: the development of a foreign and security policy and the cross border fight against crime. In the fight against international crime it should be in the interest of all Member States if particular groups of countries carry forward work in particular areas. That, after all, is what was done through the Schengen Agreement. The difference now is that we must, from the beginning, operate within the framework of the European treaties, not outside it. Italy and Germany have suggested joint police operations at the Unions external borders. That kind of cooperation between groups of countries seeking to achieve goals agreed by all, and in the interests of all, will become common place.

Conclusion

We need to get the political foundations of the European Union right. These foundations are rooted in the democratic nation state. Efficiency and democracy go together. Poland knows that. Your people have decided that the European Union is the most effective route to deliver what they want: prosperity, security and strength. We are building a Europe of equal partners served by institutions which need to be independent but responsive and accountable. We want a Europe where there are national differences, not national barriers, where we hold many of our policies in common, but keep our distinct, separate identities.

The European Union is the world's biggest single economic and political partnership of democratic states. That represents a huge opportunity for Europe and the peoples of Europe. And as a Union of democracies, it has the capacity to sustain peace in our continent, to deliver unprecedented prosperity and to be a powerful force for democratic values in the rest of the world.

Our task, with the help of the new democracies about to join the EU, is to shape a responsive European Union - in touch with the people, transparent and easier to understand, strengthened by its nations and regions - a European Union whose vision of peace is matched by its vision of prosperity.

A civilised continent united in defeating brutality and violence. A prosperous continent united in extending opportunities to all. A continent joined together in its belief in social justice.

A superpower, but not a superstate.

An economic powerhouse through the completion of the world's biggest single market, the extension of competition, an adaptable and well educated workforce, the support for businesses large and small.

A civilised continent through common defence, the strength of our values, the pursuit of social justice, the rich diversity of our cultures.

The countries represented here today have suffered more than most in the cause of freedom. I want you, as soon as possible, to share in the European Unions success, and to join as equal partners, as, amid the new reality I have outlined, a new Europe is built.