

Dinner speech by President Donald Tusk on the eve of the award of the Charlemagne Prize in Aachen

I would first like to thank sincerely Chairman Linden, Mayor Philipp and the citizens of Aachen. It is an honour to be here this evening. Aachen is, of course, a symbol of European unity. But it is also the home region of the person in whose name we gather this evening, Martin Schulz.

Dear Martin, I am delighted for you. Tomorrow, you will be a *Karlspreisträger*. Their ranks include kings and queens, presidents and prime ministers, popes... and Poles. Like you, all have dedicated their lives to the unity of Europe. You are not the first President of the European Parliament to receive the *Karlspreis*. But your personal contribution to parliamentary democracy in Europe ensures that you will not be the last. After the European elections last year, the body to which you have dedicated over 20 years entered an important new stage of its history.

Martin, I have witnessed at first hand your ferocious work-rate, your total commitment and your tireless efforts as the most vocal spokesperson for democracy in Europe today. When I report to the Parliament after each European Council, I watch with admiration as you steer, with impressive authority, great European debates involving hundreds of parliamentarians from 28 countries. Perhaps I am being too influenced by the sonata we have just heard. But it seems to me that you are like the much-feared conductor of a great democratic orchestra. Everybody who knows you knows that you are impossible to deny. You will never give up and never give in in the fight for the things you believe in, and for that, I warmly salute you.

This year, we go from Schuman to Charlemagne, as we celebrated the beginnings of European integration on May 9th and now award this prestigious honour a few days later on the feast of the Ascension. The Schuman Declaration and the birth of the Coal and Steel Community were the start of Europe's ascension out of the grim cycle of violence and vengeance that haunts its history. I was powerfully reminded of that last weekend in my hometown of Gdansk, when I attended a ceremony to mark the end of the Second World War on Westerplatte, the very place where the War started.

Today - in the first major city liberated from Nazi rule by Western forces - we sit side-by-side as the closest partners, allies and friends. But seventy years ago, our peoples faced each other on the battlefields, and just 25 years ago, they were divided from each other by an Iron Curtain. Our responsibility remains never to forget the catastrophe that happened in Europe, still within living memory: the bitter fruit of economic depression, militant nationalism, racial hatred and totalitarianism. Its' legacy is with us still.

Martin, I know you feel that responsibility heavily. It is one reason for your uncompromising belief in the primacy of democracy and the rights of the individual. Part of the beauty of European integration is that you are in fact the 9th German to receive this prize. An award, in the words of its founder, Dr Kurt Pfeiffer, dedicated to the "voluntary union of the European peoples without constraint, so that in their newfound strength they may defend the highest earthly goods - freedom, humanity and peace."

You were there too, in 2012, when - alongside my colleague Herman (here today) and the President of the European Commission - the Union received the Nobel Peace Prize. It was the ultimate recognition of the unique contribution of European integration as a project for peace and a milestone on a journey not yet complete.

Our duty to remember the past puts the challenges of the present into perspective. Let us not forget the lessons of the 1930s, which W.H. Auden called "a low dishonest decade". Then, political leaders allowed an economic malaise to linger too long. They tolerated the violation of sovereign borders in the name of peace. They dismissed the rise of extremists on the right and left as temporary phenomena.

Every generation has to struggle for Europe. The first post-war generation had to rebuild and reconcile the Western half of the continent. The second had to re-unite the West with its vast Eastern hinterland, crushed under the boot of totalitarianism for half a

century. What is then the challenge for the third generation of European unity? Nothing less than to deliver on the promise of Europe with a ruthless determination. To live its values and defend them from enemies inside and on the outside. To avoid the trap of political hypocrisy. To build a roof to protect the house of the European project.

In practice, this means action in several areas, none of which will be a surprise. First, it means doing whatever is necessary now to create a dynamic European economy that brings prosperity to its citizens on a lasting basis. That cannot be done without a satisfactory resolution of the Greek question, pro-investment policies and wide-ranging fiscal and labour market reforms. Ultimately, we must create a genuine Economic and Monetary Union, based on democratic consent, that allows Europe to be both competitive and caring.

Second, it means being aware that our credibility as a global actor was never more at stake than at the present time. To the east, there is a doubt whether Europeans have the courage to stand up to intimidation. We must leave people in no doubt. More broadly, there are those in the world that wonder whether the European Union - an economic giant - is truly aware that it can only shape the global order by having secure access to energy and also the open markets of its allies. When I consider the potential of a new transatlantic trade treaty to secure our prosperity and way of life for a generation, I am amazed that no-one is demonstrating in the streets *in favour* of the deal. The failure of TTIP would be a blow to Europe's standing in the world. We can either shape global prosperity in the Atlantic or have it decided for us in the Pacific.

Martin, I know that your favourite novel is *The Leopard* by Giuseppe di Lampedusa, whose most famous quotation is "Everything needs to change so everything can stay the same." I could not agree more. On all the issues I have just mentioned, we need to continue delivering change just to keep the *status quo*. This moment in the European Union's development is not a dress rehearsal. Citizens will not wait forever as mainstream politics fails to deliver prosperity and security. We must do what needs to be done, now, with a strong sense of purpose, or Europe goes backwards. It is as simple as that.

Sadly, the name Lampedusa evokes not just a beautiful novel of a bygone age, but now also the human tragedy unfolding every day in the Mediterranean. It is the third great challenge facing Europe, and unfortunately the one likely to remain with us the longest. We face a difficult summer ahead. In the coming months, we must respond to the crisis as humanely and responsibly as possible. It is a desperately difficult task and one in which we cannot hope to succeed fully without the assistance from the other side of the sea. No country can ignore responsibility if it can help prevent more deaths.

Let me turn aside for a moment to a related issue which absolutely affects the future of the European Union. Britain's European debate is an essential factor in almost everything we will discuss here this evening and tomorrow, whether it has to do with economics or geo-politics. History dictates that whenever Britain and the continent are estranged, the result is very bad for both. No reasonable person wishes for a Europe or a European Union devoid of British influence. We must work together to build a Union that properly serves its 500 million citizens.

It is my dearest hope that many other British names will join Winston Churchill, Roy Jenkins, Edward Heath and Tony Blair as recipients of the prize which Martin will receive tomorrow. King Alfred the Great was a uniting European monarch every bit as much as Charlemagne, his inspiration and model.

In his *Spirit of the Laws*, Montesquieu observed that every democratic system, if it is to function well, needs a clear separation of powers between the executive, legislature and judiciary. The European Union is no exception to this. But the European Parliament is exceptional: the world's only supranational, multi-lingual legislator, in conjunction with the Council. Since the passage of the Lisbon treaty, it has matured into perhaps the most remarkable expression of parliamentary power in the world, as anyone who has witnessed the process of *co-decision* can attest. If - as Spinoza said - the law is the mathematics of freedom, the European Parliament has expanded the freedoms of ordinary Europeans, using its own special calculus.

As you well know Martin, Günter Grass sadly died last month after a remarkable, sometimes controversial, life. He was your compatriot and fellow socialist, and also a Kasubian from Gdańsk, just like me. I was fortunate to have met him several times in my and his city. Grass famously said the job of the citizen is to keep one's mouth open, not shut. In this context, Günter Grass must surely have been very proud of you! I think we can confidently say that the European Parliament has been a great global citizen, often acting as the Union's conscience and remaining unapologetic about giving voice to its highest ideals. As its' most eloquent and fearless spokesperson, you can be proud of that, Martin - as I am sure your fellow parliamentarians are of you as their champion this evening.

However, let me insert one word of caution here. Despite all your efforts, we have to accept that the rise of the directly-elected Parliament has not coincided with a comparable increase in support for Europe across the continent. Populism is by no means a European, or Eurozone phenomenon; it is a political reality all over the world. But in our own backyard, just constructing and empowering institutions is no answer in itself. To maintain consent, institutions must deliver. Those that deliver just words become

footnotes of history.

Dear Martin,

I find it hard to believe that it is now five years ago since I sat where you now sit and that I return this evening as President of the European Council. I can only wish you and Mrs Schulz the same joy that my wife and I experienced then. You truly both deserve it.

Dear Martin,

We represent two different political camps. You the democratic left, and me, the moderate right. But we have understood each other in the long years of our friendship, better than believers in the same ideas maybe because life is more important than ideology, and indeed our life stories have so much in common. You matured politically as a Socialist; I was thrown in jail by the Polish Communists. But my intuition tells me, that if you were a Pole, you would have shared the same prison cell with me.

We both know what the daily hard work is all about; when you sold books, I worked for many years as a construction worker. Yes, we have both been well-educated by life.

Your wife comes from today's Polish town of Szprotawa (Sprottau), while my parents grew up in Freistadt Danzig, that is why we both know that the friendship between Poles and Germans is one of the keys to a free and secure Europe. And, last but not least, we both dreamed about the same, completely apolitical career, the career of a professional football player: you played for your beloved Rhenania 05, Würselen, while I played for Lechia Gdańsk. If not for our injuries and some deficiencies in the football technique we could have played against each other in the World Cup in Spain in 1982. Without you on the team, the Germans only won the silver medal, when Poland without me on the field, just got the bronze. Now, de facto, we are playing in the same club, and tomorrow, you will join the golden medallists.

Martin, welcome to our golden team.

Martin, herzlich Willkommen in unserer goldenen Mannschaft.

Press office - General Secretariat of the Council of the EU

Rue de la Loi 175 - B-1048 BRUSSELS - Tel.: +32 (0)2 281 6319

press@consilium.europa.eu - www.consilium.europa.eu/press