

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's speech at a conference held in memory of Helmut Kohl

16 June 2018, Budapest

Good afternoon, Ladies and Gentlemen, President Spengler, President Zoltán Balog,

I have agreed on a division of labour with Zoltán Balog: I will speak frankly and with no holds barred, while afterwards he will apologise to the audience for this.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

For my part I shall keep to the agreement. Nowadays Europe's vital signs show it to be in a state of feverish agitation. Many things are in motion at once: the warning signs of a trade war with the United States; armed conflict between Ukraine and Russia; a new form of politics in Italy on the horizon; Brexit negotiations. In other words, those who deal with European politics nowadays need composure, calm nerves, courage and a good sense of timing. As regards our meeting today, we are spoilt for choice. But we must not overcommit ourselves, because the invitation did not ask audience members to bring their own provisions for an extended stay. We simply have enough time to bow our heads in honour of the memory of Helmut Kohl, and after that to outline the Hungarian position on a few important European issues.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Honourable President Spengler,

In politics, providence is the right person in the right place at the right time. It is no exaggeration to say that Helmut Kohl was a gift from providence to Germany and Europe. For us Central Europeans, Helmut Kohl is the exemplar for the Christian European. He represented the Christian Europe to which we have always belonged, and after forty years of communism his political will paved the way for our return to the community of the peoples of Europe. Chancellor Kohl's political courage laid the foundations for the reunification of Germany and Europe, and therefore we will always remember him with respect and gratitude. May the earth rest lightly on him.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As regards the relationship of Hungary and European politics, we must first of all clarify what Hungary's role in European politics can be. Hungary is aware of its own strength, influence and mission. This is called self-knowledge. Well-founded self-knowledge is the basis and starting point for all good political action. As a Member State of the European Union, Hungary does not aspire to a European political role. For us Hungary comes first, and neither the country nor I have – or will have – any such ambition. Ten million citizens, a GDP of EUR 114 billion, fewer than twenty thousand soldiers: this is the reality. Our involvement in serious disputes on important issues with Brussels and some larger Member States has created the tempting illusion that Hungary can have a significant influence on European politics. This temptation must be resisted and, above all else, we must focus our efforts on defending Hungary's national interests. This is not altered by the fact that, as you will learn from a statement to be released this afternoon, a few minutes ago I had a telephone conversation with President Donald Trump, in which we discussed the difference between a “beautiful wall” and a “beautiful fence”.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In any case, the core of my message is that Hungary and the Hungarians are a people with self-respect and pride, but also sound self-knowledge and a realistic assessment of their situation. The area in which we have strong ambitions is Central Europe and the Visegrád Four. The Hungarian ambition is to enable Hungary to live in a strong Central European region comprised of countries which cooperate closely, and which help and encourage one another. This is where the strength represented by Hungary has influence and importance. Hungary recognises Poland's determining and leading role in the Central European region, and through its own strength it seeks to guide Central European international relations towards cooperation. A further ambition of Hungary is to promote accession to the European Union of the countries in the Western Balkans – with particular emphasis on the future membership of Serbia. It is our ambition to convince the other Member States that the European Union needs this, and that it can gain new resources through further enlargement of the EU. Helmut Kohl had a precise understanding of the meaning of equality among the Member States of the European Union. Obviously this does not mean that they have equal influence. Here the key word is *Augenhöhe*. If I understand it correctly, it means something like “eye level” – or an equal footing – which, if translated in cultural terms, is appropriate for what I am thinking about. This may suit us,

because the Hungarian mentality is one which sets things side by side – and in that respect we are perhaps unique in the whole of Europe.

Allow me to say a few words about relations between Germany and Hungary. Two years ago I went to the Chancellor Adenauer House in Rhöndorf, and saw the statues of Adenauer and de Gaulle. They are the work of Imre Varga, who also sculpted the statue of Saint Stephen of Hungary which stands outside the Chapel of Hungary at that proud cathedral of Christian Europe in Aachen. For Germans this is an understandable answer to the historical and ideological question of where Hungary belongs. Helmut Kohl understood that there is great value in Germany having friends; back then things were not particularly favourable in that department. Helmut Kohl also valued our friendship. Hungary has a memorial day to commemorate the deportation of ethnic Germans in Hungary. In Hungary Germans have a Member of Parliament in their own right. There are thirteen national and ethnic minorities living in Hungary, and this represents both ethnic diversity and civilisational and cultural homogeneity. The number of German schools and of their students is also rising.

If we speak about German-Hungarian relations, we should also remember 1989. Kohl understood the integral link between Hungarian sovereignty and German unity. Hungary knocked the first brick out of the Berlin Wall. In 1989 many people wanted to talk us out of opening the border.

In 1989 many people wanted to talk Helmut Kohl out of German unification, and a unified Germany's membership of NATO. Hungary did not fear German reunification, but there were few nations – if any – which thought like us. In 1990 support for German reunification was higher in Hungary than in Germany itself. Today I see European politicians who back then opposed German unification, but who today want to lecture us on how to be good Europeans. And then Hungary became a member of the European Union. We are grateful to Germany for this.

I should also point out at this event that German taxpayers have nothing to worry about: we have not come into the European Union to beg, and we do not want to live off German money. We are preparing for a situation in which, by 2030, Hungary will be a net contributor to the European Union budget. Furthermore, Germany's combined trade with the V4 countries is now significantly higher than its trade with, for example, France, Italy or Britain. The Germans and

the other Member States are profiting nicely from us. Neither they nor we have reason to complain.

Furthermore, an important element in German-Hungarian relations is that we are exclusively using our own resources to defend our southern border – and thereby Germany – from the arrival of some twelve thousand migrants per day. We have not let down either Germany or Europe. As we have said, we are the captains of border fortresses, and we know our duty. The lesson of German-Hungarian relations was the same in 1989 as it was in 2015: when the moment arrives one must not hesitate, but one must decide and take action; we must nail our colours to the mast. This is exactly what we did in 1989, and also in 2015.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Now for the border and the fence. We must defend the external border: this is the precondition for free movement in the interior. Defence of the border is a “compulsory homework task”: border defence is not a Europe-wide task, but a national task for Member States. There can be European assistance, but the responsibility is a national one. We have seen that Hungary’s position, which was previously condemned, is now gaining increasing acceptance. We do not expect thanks, and we are not used to that. Neither will we gloat. It brings no pleasure to see that there are those for whom the penny has only dropped after three years, when for us it did so immediately.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Can there be compromise in the migrant debate? No – and there is no need for it. There are those who imagine that each opposing side should make concessions, that they should reach out to each other and shake hands. This is a bad approach. There are questions on which there will never be agreement. That will not happen, and it is not necessary for it to happen. Immigration is one such question. There is no document that we are aware of which states that if you enter the European Union you must become an immigrant country. When we entered we made no such commitment. It is also true that the founding documents of the European Union do not declare that a Member State may not seek to transform itself into an immigrant country. This is why there are immigrant countries in the EU, where migrants are welcomed, where people want to mix with them, and where people want to integrate them. And there are countries

which do not want migrants, which do not want to mix with them, and where their integration is therefore out of the question. In such situations there is a need not for compromise, but for tolerance. We tolerate the fact that some Member States in the Schengen Area admit migrants. This has and will have consequences – including for us. Meanwhile they should tolerate the fact that we do not wish to do so. They shouldn't lecture us, they shouldn't blackmail us, they shouldn't coerce us, but they should just give us the respect that is due to Member States; and then there will be peace on the Mount of Olives.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Similarly – in addition to immigration – there is a need not for compromise and agreement, but for tolerance and respect on some other issues: the concept of the nation; the basic principles of family policy; the regulation of marriage; and social integration. These issues fall within the sphere of competence of Member States, and underlying the lack of agreement on them are cultural specificities and historical roots. Therefore it is pointless to repeatedly and unsuccessfully attempt to convince one another on questions about which we do not need to jointly decide.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would now like to say a few words about Europe's failures in the past five years. It has been a long time since the European Union had five years as unsuccessful as these past five years have been. Three grave errors weigh upon the conscience of Brussels: firstly, we have lost the United Kingdom; secondly, we have been unable to defend our continent against migrants; and thirdly, Brussels has upset the balance between East and West. The responsibility of the current European leadership is as clear as day. With the election of Jean-Claude Juncker – which the British opposed, steadfastly and to the last – we placed dynamite under the relationship between the United Kingdom and the European Union. With the exception of Hungary, everyone ignored the opposition of the British. So we have no reason to be surprised that the spark of migration lit the fuse, and the dynamite exploded.

Of course, it is also true that in the past five years there have also been positive results – even if they have been outweighed by our failures. Juncker's economic stimulus program, for example, has really helped some Member States. It is also an achievement that, even at a time

of failures, Brussels has been able to maintain the functioning of the EU. It is true that we have an ambitious digital strategy, and we have also taken important steps towards joint defence. In times of peace this achievement could justify loud acclaim. Recent years have not been years of peace, however – because we have lost Britain, because we have failed to defend ourselves against the migrant invasion, and because Brussels has opened up a conflict between the eastern and western halves of the EU. This is what I would now like to say a few words about.

Everyone can see that there is a metaphorical fault line between East and West. The tributes paid to Fidel Castro by the Commission and our joint president caused some awkwardness. We put up with them. But the eulogies for Marx stuck in our throats, and made our blood boil, because for us this is incomprehensible. Marx promulgated the abolition of private property; he promulgated the dissolution of nations; he promulgated the abolition of the family model which has been in existence for a thousand years; he promulgated the abolition of the church and of faith; and, finally, he created modern anti-Semitism, when he branded Jews as the quintessence of a doomed capitalism. How can this be praiseworthy? Who has lost their mind? What is certain is that someone has lost their mind – either they have, or we have. But we would have somehow bridged even this metaphorical East-West fault line. What has proved to be unbridgeable is that in practical disputes centred on competitiveness, the Commission exclusively represents the interests of the Western countries. In our experience, when the Western countries have some natural competitive advantage – as for example in the free flow of money and capital – Brussels fights tooth and nail to protect it, in the name of the market. I think it is right to do so. In those areas, however, in which the Eastern countries have a relatively strong competitive position – as in labour and services – Brussels immediately cries foul, declaring it to be dumping, and forces corrective measures on us; suddenly the market is a secondary consideration. This is costing us a great deal, and it is completely unfair.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Helmut Kohl was also the president of his own party, and so in a speech delivered in his memory it is perhaps appropriate to speak about relations between Hungary's governing parties and the European People's Party. Despite the mistakes made by leaders of the European People's Party at our expense, we have decided to continue standing with this European family of parties. In relation to the 2019 elections to the European Parliament, it would be easy to, say, establish a new formation from like-minded Central European parties – or, indeed, a pan-European anti-

immigration formation. There is no doubt that we would have great success in the 2019 European elections. But I suggest that we resist this temptation, and stand by Helmut Kohl's ideals and party family. Instead of desertion, we should take on the more difficult task of renewing the European People's Party, and helping it to find its way back to its Christian democratic roots. The European People's Party is the most successful party in the history of the European community. At the beginning of the 2000s, at Helmut Kohl's invitation, the Fidesz – Hungarian Civic Union joined this great community, and over the course of two decades it has become one of its strongest and most successful parties. The European People's Party has managed to achieve its outstanding European results by being a party of winners, right from the beginning. We laid the foundations for our successes not in Brussels, but within our nations. Both in home countries and in the EU, the People's Party has done the job that is fundamental for a party – indeed for every party: it has represented the people's will in the decision-making political institutions, and therefore has solid foundations on which to claim the right to mark out the directions of European integration. Our rigid left-wing and liberal political rivals have lost themselves in ideologies and have become slaves to unrealistic doctrines formulated at writing desks. For decades our popular support has been far greater than that of other formations because, in contrast to those rivals, we have always stood with both feet on the ground, have understood the people, have gained thorough knowledge of our own countries, and have always paid attention to what the citizens of Europe want. We have indeed represented them.

Even though today it remains the continent's largest party, over the past fifteen years the European People's Party has been slowly but steadily losing strength and influence. The most important development – and a number of elections in recent years testify to this – is that, step by step, our parties' influence with our voters has decreased. The response to this situation from the leadership of the People's Party has been a bad one: it has created an anti-populist people's front. Germany is a good example of this, but it is also true in the European Parliament. This anti-populist people's front seeks to oppose the emerging new parties by uniting all the traditional forces: from the communists, through the greens, social democrats and liberals, all the way to the Christian democrats. We believe that this is a mistake. It is a mistake because, firstly, it throws a lifeline to a rapidly weakening Left. Secondly, it is a mistake because of its bipolar political dynamic: instead of weakening the forces we want to defeat, it will in fact strengthen them, as the only alternative to the ruling elite.

While the leadership of the European People's Party has given a bad response, successful national models have also been formed. The other model which has been successfully tested in Austria and Hungary is taking up the challenge, is not creating such a people's front, is taking the issues raised by new parties seriously and is giving responsible answers to them. It is doing so without embracing the Left – which seeks to pull us in the wrong political direction and leech off us.

The only reason our diminishing strength is not more spectacular, Ladies and Gentlemen, is that our conventional rivals are diminishing even faster than we are. This is cold comfort, however. Our left-wing and liberal opponents want to lock us in an intellectual cage; they want to tell us – from left to right – what to do and want to think; they want to dictate what we can and cannot talk about, and who we can and cannot ally with. Most recently they have even wanted to tell us, from left to right, who can and cannot be a member of the European People's Party. This is nothing short of absurd. For us, the countries that have experienced communism, this brings back bad memories. This is eerily reminiscent of the salami tactics employed across the whole of Central Europe in the middle of the last century by communists – supported by the Soviet Union and global geopolitical deals – in order to gradually eliminate civic parties.

We are undoubtedly the CSU of the European People's Party, constituting the right-wing, Christian democratic platform of the European People's Party. We believe that the time has come for a Christian democratic renaissance, not an anti-populist people's front. Unlike liberal politics, Christian politics is able to protect people, our nations, families, our culture rooted in Christianity, and equality between men and women: in other words, our European way of life.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

After speaking about party affairs, let me say a few words about the future of the EU. The European Union is still rich, but now it is weak. It will further weaken with Brexit, while our external competitors will strengthen. We can have no goal other than a strong European Union; but a strong EU needs strong Member States. In the economy individual responsibility cannot continue to be vaporised, and it cannot be dissolved into some magical process of community formation. This is a precondition for a strong Europe: first of all, everyone must keep their own house in order, because only a strong Member State can hasten to the help of another which finds itself in trouble through no fault of its own. I would like to remind everyone that we were

the first to find ourselves in the financial safety net. But, back in 2013, we were also the first to repay the financial assistance we received – to the last cent. We believe in Mr. Schäuble's concept that major structural reforms can be carried out against the background of fiscal discipline. We know that this is possible because we have tried it, and we have been successful.

The future of the European Union depends on whether it is able to defend its external borders. This is the next question facing the future of the EU. If we defend our borders, the debate on the distribution of migrants becomes meaningless, as they won't be able to enter. If they're unable to enter, there is no one to distribute. This is a commonsense concept. And if we follow this course of action, the only question is what we should do with those who have already entered. Our answer to this question is that they should not be distributed, but should be taken back home.

And, finally, defence is also one of the main issues for the future of Europe. On this we must speak clearly: those who are unable to protect themselves with their own resources will always be at the mercy of others – even in peacetime, though then not so conspicuously. This means that, to be able to defend itself, Europe needs its own defence force. The good news is that we have made progress in this direction – albeit slowly, and perhaps more slowly than we should.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The European Union's greatest weakness is a lack of internal trust. I'd now like to say a few words about this. The Commission committed a cardinal error when it announced that it would no longer continue in its old neutral role, but would instead become a political commission. The very term is ominous. We also committed a cardinal error in not speaking out against this, and simply tolerating it. Today the situation is that the Commission is an instrument which the large states use against the smaller ones. What else could the role of a political body be? In such a situation political reality must be given due weight. This is why the Commission not only fails to protect us against the overwhelming force we're facing, but it bends the rules in favour of the large states, leads the way in the stealthy – and therefore unlawful – alteration of powers, and the Commission uses its instruments for the purpose of blackmail. Although the comparison is slightly problematic in terms of the time dimension, I could say that it is turning into Moscow. In 2019 this must be brought to an end. This Commission must go, and we will need a Commission and a Parliament that reflects the new European realities.

And so we come to the issue of the new European budget, which has just been submitted for debate. Ladies and Gentlemen, this budget is exactly like the European Commission itself: pro-immigration and pro-migrant. The essence – or, if you like, the novelty – of this budget is that it takes money from European people and gives it to migrants and NGOs. It is as if George Soros wrote it – and perhaps he did. The Italians have finally declared something that we all know: that the NGOs are in fact white-collar people smugglers. The Commission's budget seeks to finance them, meaning that it seeks to support the coalition of white-collar and blue-collar people smugglers. This is what the Italians have stated.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

If physical weakness has a spiritual cause, as is the case with EU, then treatment must begin not with the body, but with the spirit. I am convinced that the European Union has lost its former exemplary problem-solving ability because it has surrendered its own past, and has thereby discarded its decades of experience in governance. It has developed amnesia. This is what we have learnt from the writings of József Szájer. According to the EU's current official ideology, peace, progress and cooperation in Europe began with the establishment of the European community. What preceded it was petty, fragmented, nation-state and religious rivalry which was fuelled by national and sectarian impulses, and which led to bloody wars – and finally to the Holocaust itself. Therefore, the Brussels logic runs, to rely on that older practice for guidance is not only unrealistic: if you do so, you act in direct contravention of the new Europe's neutral fundamental values; to do so is exclusionary, harmful and outright criminal. Thus Europe has donned a spiritual straitjacket, and has cast aside the lessons from hundreds – or even thousands – of years of governance. We must first free ourselves from this spiritual straitjacket, because it is not only causing us spiritual problems, but also practical political problems. In something else written by József Szájer I read that those who surrender, who discard their past – or who allow their past to be taken away from them – should not be surprised if, when they seek to solve the new problems they face, they discover that they have also lost their compass. This is how it has been possible for highly-regarded statesmen to recently make assertions that can be easily refuted with a minimal knowledge of history; one such assertion being that maritime borders cannot be defended. Over the past few years the arguments they have raked together about borders, walls and fences are contradicted by the experience of humankind stretching back thousands of years. Borders, after all, are fundamental aspects of

life: without borders, existence is impossible. Something which has no borders, no contours, does not exist. And if sea borders cannot be defended, how on earth can countries with sea coasts even exist? It is obvious that what was lacking was not the possibility for defence, but the will; and this has been proved by the most recent actions of the Italian government.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

When we speak about the potential renaissance of Christian democrats and Christian democracy, for me the dominant thought is one which the Germans received in a radio message transmitted from America some time around 1945. It went like this: “Christianity is the background against which all our thoughts derive meaning. Not every European need believe in the truth of Christian faith; yet anything they say, make or do will derive its meaning from the Christian heritage.”

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today the liberal order is collapsing because it has become clear that its ideals are based not on life, not on reality and not on history, but on artificial constructs which simply cannot accommodate concepts which they see as irrational configurations, but which have shaped and determined Europe and the lives of Europeans for two thousand years: concepts such as faith, nation, community and family.

And finally I must say a few words about federalist aspirations – for which the latest pseudonym is the “rule of law mechanism”. The European Commission – but here we can include the European Parliament – is continuously dissatisfied with its own room for manoeuvre, and it seeks to expand into ever more areas. An object lesson in this is the so-called rule of law mechanism, an in-depth analysis of which is once again provided by József Szájer. In this he points out that this mechanism has hardly any legal foundations – at least not in the founding treaties of the European Union. The essence of the trick is simply this: citing the fact that certain national authorities and regulatory bodies to an extent also apply EU law, the EU demands a say in how individual national legal systems operate, what supervisory mechanisms they should have, and how the individual Member States should organise their own legislative practice. This is why we say that the rule of law mechanism is merely a code name for the federalist aspiration, seeking to put pressure on reluctant governments.

In conclusion, perhaps I should address the question of what Hungary can contribute to common European politics. With all due modesty, we can offer the following list. First of all, we can present a good example in the field of economic reform. When necessary we can offer assistance in transporting migrants back home. For a long time we have been saying that we should export help, not import problems. We can also give advice to anyone who requests it. There is one unsolicited piece of advice we can also give, because in this Hungary has historical experience: everyone should be wary of the idea of Islam being part of any European country. It is as well to know the reply of Islam. We Hungarians know what it is. If Islam is part of Germany, for instance, in Muslim terms this means that Germany is part of Islam. This is something that is worth pondering. In addition to offering an example, assistance and advice, we must also point out – gently but clearly – that we shall not give up in the future either, and we shall not allow anyone to force anything on us against our will. If we are unable to reach a satisfactory result in negotiations, if now we are unable to accept – or even tolerate – one another's views on the issues of migration and the budget, then let us wait. Let us wait for the European people to express their will in the 2019 elections to the European Parliament. Then what must be shall be.

Thank you for your attention.