



ADDRESS DELIVERED BY JACQUES CHIRAC, PRESIDENT OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC ON THE OCCASION OF THE DINNER HOSTED BY VACLAV HAVEL, PRESIDENT OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC, IN HONOUR OF THE HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT OF NATO MEMBER COUNTRIES PRAGUE CASTLE WEDNESDAY 20 NOVEMBER 2002

Prague (République Tchèque) - Mercredi 20 novembre 2002

Mr President, dear Vaclav Havel,

I am entrusted tonight with a fine, daunting mission: that of telling you on behalf of us all our deep admiration and our gratitude. Indeed, we thank you very much, you and Dagmar, for extending to us such a warm and wonderful welcome on the occasion of this Enlargement Summit. This is a moment in history when Europe – as in a few weeks' time in Copenhagen is at last gathering as one, a moment when Europe and North America affirm their common values and the indivisible nature of their security policy.

Dear Vaclav,

Of your life, which you live so fully, History will first and foremost remember the light you kept going during the darkest hours experienced by your country.

The light of the writer and the dramatist who, by the power of the pen, armed solely with courage and his faith in mankind and truth, has nurtured the hopes of the oppressed who were denied democracy. The friendly, humble, soft but vivid light of the iron man, who, in the dark depths of the jail, in the abyss of totalitarianism, never weakened. "Truth will prevail," you used to say. Indeed, it did prevail. We bear witness to this tonight.

What other message does this light deliver? What is the tale of those never-ending years of commitment and resistance? What was the message you sent us when you were jailed and with which this Castle still resounds?

First, the power of dreaming. Dreaming, to give a meaning to life and to the motion of life. Dreaming, to hold out come what may. Dreaming, you liked to say, to give "each life its necessary particle of transcendence", enabling us to "go beyond the visible horizon, to try to penetrate the human mystery, to seek the meaning of life other than in



PRESIDENCE DE LA REPUBLIQUE

the rat race for material wealth". Dear Vaclav, this lesson can apply to both mankind and nations.

The 20th century was the century of totalitarianism. It saw two world wars, the Holocaust, fifty years of absolute fear. Yet, it has left us as a legacy a demand later embodied by a handful of men and women. Were they dreamers? Undoubtedly.

Dreamers, Winston Churchill and Charles de Gaulle, who never gave up hoping for the final victory. A dreamer, Konrad Adenauer, who in the darkest days of Nazism never renounced his ideal of democracy. Dreamers, the founding fathers of Europe who held out their hand to the adversary of yesterday across the still smoking ruins. A dreamer, George Marshall, who was to change the course of European and world history. A dreamer, Gandhi, who mobilized and spurred on the Indian masses with the awesome watchword of non-violence. A dreamer, Nelson Mandela, who, from the bleakness of Robben Island, defeated racism and had dignity triumph. A dreamer, Andrei Sakharov, showered with honours, who gave up everything to fight for Human Rights, sacrificing his freedom and ultimately his life. I'm thinking also of Rigoberta Menchu, the descendant of the Mayas, and of Aung San Suu Kyi, so frail and strong, and of her fight for democracy in Burma.

Yes, this is what also tells us the terrible century that is now ended. This is what men like yourself tell us, dear Vaclav Havel, men who never wavered and never gave up, obstinate dreamers, insane humanists who rejected fatality, brute force and the immutable order of things and gave History its capital "H".

"Havel na Hrad!" people shouted in the streets of Prague virtually thirteen years ago. "Havel for President!". If you will permit me to make this personal comment, dear Vaclav, present-day cynicism would have it that dreams cannot stand the test of power and reality, nor the acid test of time. Yet, the thirteen years during which you have mapped out the future of your country do show that your dream still has the same strength, the same intensity.

Yes, this country thirsted for freedom, democracy, independence and peace, as embodied both by Europe and the North Atlantic Alliance. Entry into the Alliance and the European Union was ardently desired and brought joy and relief because it meant turning for ever the page of a dark past.

We wished, dear Vaclav, to pay homage to you for all this, of which you were both the champion and the architect, and to salute the man of peace and dialogue who, immediately on coming to power, strove to heal the wounds of the past together with his neighbours. To salute the European who gained so much for his people and all Central and Eastern European countries, such as the dissolution in this very city of the Warsaw Pact, the accession to the Atlantic Alliance and the forthcoming accession to



PRESIDENCE DE LA REPUBLIQUE

the European Union.

We want to salute here the man of letters, the thinker and statesman, the ruling philosopher according to Plato's ideal, and the novel mind, the lucidity forever filled with wonder, and the elegant, optimistic restlessness, which have earned you exceptional authority and worldwide acclaim although you never sought this. And when you appear, your words quite naturally attain a rare degree of significance, depth and vision acknowledged by all.

We also wanted to tell you our affection, at a time when you are about to retire, happy with what has been achieved, but gnawed also, I know, by a feeling of incompleteness, as all wise men are. To wish Dagmar and yourself much happiness and good health at the start of a new life brimming over with projects. And to present you, dear Vaclav, on behalf of all the Heads of State and Government and as a token of our attachment, with these two Treaties, the North Atlantic Treaty and the Treaty of Accession of the Czech Republic to the North Atlantic Alliance; a Treaty which owes so much to you and symbolizes for the future the community of destiny and the will for peace of the peoples represented here.

|