

Ansprache gehalten von Botschafter Dr. A. Weitnauer
am Abendessen auf der Schweizerischen Botschaft in Belgrad
am 5. Oktober 1977

Messieurs et chers amis,

Je suis très heureux de pouvoir vous accueillir, aussi au nom de mon ami, l'Ambassadeur Hess, dans cette belle maison qui est très typiquement une Ambassade de Suisse. Laissez-moi tout d'abord m'adresser au représentant du pays hôte, l'Ambassadeur Pešić, pour le remercier, une fois encore et de tout coeur, de la splendide hospitalité que le gouvernement yougoslave nous réserve pour ces réunions de la Conférence de Belgrade. Cette conférence passera dans l'histoire comme un des points culminants de l'activité politique de notre génération, à un moment où des tâches infiniment lourdes et difficiles marquent le virage vers la fin de notre siècle. Vous avez su créer, Monsieur l'Ambassadeur, dans votre magnifique Centre de conférence une atmosphère, une ambiance particulièrement propices à l'heureuse conclusion de nos travaux. C'est maintenant à nous - vos invités - d'y répondre et de faire de nos réunions le succès que les peuples d'Europe et d'Amérique du Nord sont en droit d'en attendre. Ce ne sera assurément pas votre faute, Monsieur l'Ambassadeur, s'il n'en devait pas être ainsi. Mais j'exclue d'emblée une telle fâcheuse éventualité, naturellement.

Et puisque je parle en français, une des langues officielles de la Suisse, permettez-moi de vous saluer spécialement, Monsieur le Ministre Bettencourt, ainsi que vous, Monsieur l'Ambassadeur de Belgique, pays dans lequel les langues française et néerlandaise ont un droit de cité égal.

Nachdem ich mich in einer der drei schweizerischen Amtssprachen geäußert habe, möchte ich mich in den beiden andern an diejenigen unserer Gäste wenden, die sie ebenfalls sprechen. Wir sind sehr froh, Herrn Günther van Well, Staatssekretär des Auswärtigen Amtes der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, unter uns zu wissen; ferner Herrn Botschafter Ernst Krabatsch als Vertreter der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, Herrn Botschafter Ludwig Steiner, Politischen Direktor des Oesterreichischen Aussenministeriums, Delegierter eines Landes, mit dem wir das Statut der immerwährenden Neutralität gemeinsam haben, und schliesslich S.D. Prinz Heinrich Liechtenstein, Botschafter seines Landes in Bern und alten Freund der Schweiz.

Mi da certamente gran piacere salutare tra di noi la presenza del Ambasciatore Alberto Cavaglieri, capo della delegazione dell' Italia, paese vicino ed amico.

And the same words of welcome go to all of you, Gentlemen and dear friends. So I have switched to English, a language which, I feel sure, all of us understand. It is no doubt regrettable that Russian should still not be taught, in the world at large, to the same extent as English, regrettable because of its importance, but also its very great beauty. So I shall try to express in English a very few ideas your presence in this hospitable house makes me feel rather strongly about.

The first has to do with the role of my own country. Switzerland has reached an important stage in the history of its foreign policy. A permanently neutral country we are and firmly intend to remain. But neutrality is for us not only a source of strength, but is increasingly becoming a means of action. As everybody knows, Switzerland is an economic and financial power of some size and has been acting accordingly for quite some time. But it came as a surprise to many, including

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ourselves, that we can play, in the political field also, a meaningful, active and sometimes successful part - as at the Helsinki, Geneva and Belgrade meetings -, not in spite of our neutrality, but because of it. I think this is owing to the fact that our firm resolve to further peace and understanding between the nations of this world cannot be questioned. Our neutral partners in Europe - who saw the light long before us - are there to confirm the truth of what I just said: A neutral country cannot possibly have another policy.

My second point concerns all of you, all the countries of Europe, the United States and Canada. It took a genius to foresee, more than a century ago - it is Alexis de Tocqueville I am referring to - that a very special responsibility would accrue to the two giants represented among us, the United States and the Soviet Union (or Russia, for that matter, as Tocqueville was used to say). You must have felt - Ambassador Goldberg, Ambassador Vorontsov - during these very first days of our meeting, the deep anxiety that pervades humanity, a feeling of real concern caused by the enormous accumulation of horrifying weapons on our continent and elsewhere. You - and you alone - can do something drastic (and something of this kind is indeed required) to do away with this intrinsic threat, and do it rather quickly. We know and highly appreciate your sense of responsibility for the whole of mankind; so we remain hopeful.

My last point has to do with European unity. A very strong feeling of belonging together, of being members of the same family, was very much present to my mind during these days. Viewed in this context, America - and Canada - are offshoots of Europe who have very visibly outgrown their size, but in outlook and mentality are sometimes more European than we are ourselves. The family spirit which I alluded to, makes us realize that, large or small, powerful or humble, we have all a right to exist according to our own way of life, to be recognized and treated as sovereign members of the "European concert",

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as it was called in the past. If there is one thing Europe has always withstood - almost instinctively - it is the hegemony of just one nation over all others. In the case of Europe variety equals strength, and it is its diversity which makes the European world so very beautiful, so immensely worth while preserving and developing further. Ever increasing cooperation, which - in the best Helsinki spirit - can only be based on ever increasing mutual trust is the indispensable means to these noble ends.

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