

Brussels Forum

March 26, 2011

Remarks by the President of the European Parliament

Craig Kennedy: So every year we like to try something just a bit different, add a slightly different twist to this event. And this year we're adding a cultural literary element to the Brussels Forum. It's my pleasure now to introduce the playwright/screenwriter Tom Stoppard.

Mr. Stoppard has written many famous plays. He has one in Broadway now, I think, "Arcadia". He's a very interesting person and he's agreed to give a few remarks to kick off this morning's session. Tom Stoppard, please.

Sir Tom Stoppard: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Believe me, I am conscious of this honor done me. I don't think I've ever in my life addressed such a distinguished audience. I'm quite used to talking to students, for example, about the theater and

I'm somewhat overawed and astonished to find myself at this microphone.

There's a point I want to make and in order to make it, it's going to be necessary for me to speak about my own life a little bit, so forgive me for that indulgence. I was born Tomas Straussler in Zlin in Moravia, present day Czech Republic, in July 1937. In my second year with the approach of the Nazis, I and my brother and my parents, my father being a Jewish doctor working for barter in Zlin, the four of us were translated, I suppose could be the word, to Singapore in good time for Pearl Harbor. And in my fourth year, my mother, my brother and I, leaving our father behind of course, women and children first, were on a boat bound for Australia. We got bombed around and the boat ended up in Bombay and I spent the war in India.

My father, having died at the hands of the Japanese, we found ourselves in India at the end of the war, my mother married a British army officer whose name I now have. And he brought us, my mother, my

brother, myself, he brought us to England and I very shortly became an English schoolboy.

Now, you may already have identified the point that I want to make. It is this: I've had a charmed life. As war and horrible things approached, I slipped away over the horizon. I slipped away from the camps where all four of my grandparents and my parents' siblings died. I remember vaguely the smell of sandbags in an air raid shelter in Singapore and that was my war. And then we were on a boat.

I had four very happy years of childhood in India and then I find myself in Arcadia in an English prep school in Derbyshire, in the country of Shakespeare and *habeas corpus*. In other words, from beginning to end of this journey, I was never in a place where freedom of assembly, freedom of expression, and all the other curtailments of liberty were the norm.

I realize I'm idealizing my early years and the places where I lived them. After all, I was in India

but I wasn't an Indian. There's various kinds of idealization.

But nevertheless, I ended up in a country where it seemed to me that the things which were wrong with the country I ended up in were deplorable but they were acknowledged to be the abuses of the ideal. And I was facing--I was getting involved in the margins of societies where such curtailments of liberty were not in fact the abuses of the system; they were the system in perfect working order. And I had a sense of English superiority, though I was an adopted Englishman.

I've always taken free expression, free assembly, free trade unions, democracy--I once heard a comedy where some character said, "It's not the voting that's democracy; it's the counting." I've always felt that I was in a place where all these things held good. And it occurs to me now that my life and the things I took for granted are kind of an embodiment of what you gentlemen and ladies might think to be the ideal European life now.

This is really impossible, you know. I've used up half my time and I'm just thinking rapidly about how to say the things I want to say.

In England, in 1956, I'm a very happy junior newspaper looking at events in Hungary from afar, fascinated not by the tanks and the Russians or the Hungarians but by the British journalists covering the event, covering the news. In '68, I'm feeling rather odd because I didn't feel personalized by the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia. It just seemed regrettable, but I looked at it through an English sensibility problem in a faraway country.

In '77 I did, with a guy from Amnesty, go to Moscow and Saint Petersburg for quite a short time where there was an involvement with visa seekers being treated as psychiatric patients by the Soviet Regime. I also went to Prague where I first met the man who really among living people is my personal hero, Mr. Hervette. And I was around in 1989 to celebrate what happened in 1989. So there you are. That was my charmed life.

I think the visits which I made to Minsk in 2005 where I went to meet an outlaw theater group--ought to now come to the foreground of the very few minutes I have left to speak to you. This is what I want to say; the kinds of things which I've been talking about, the kind of good luck I had, which in 2011 isn't supposed to be in Europe anybody's particular good luck. It's supposed to be what we have all managed to achieve for each and every one of us. I look around the map and there is this curious anomaly, isn't there.

Really closer to Brussels than some of the other European capitals, we have a place where there's this leftover. The bad old days are here and now. And I know that many people in this room have been exercising their brains as much as they can and working the way that politics and diplomacy works to do something about Belarus. I'm personally somewhat bemused, fairly depressed and probably more ineffective than anybody else here. It would be more polite to say less effective than anybody here. But quite honestly how

effective are we, if I may include myself in your number?

The whole panoply, you know, band artists of, I think, kind of restriction is reflected in Belarus. It is, to my mind, not actually, precisely leftover of habits and ways of governance in the Soviet Empire at all. It's a really rather curious hybrid. Until recently people could come and go and their whole flock on NGOs, which we're trying to support, which would not even have been on the agenda in the old days.

Nevertheless, what is the reason that Belarus is actually a problem for us? I think part of it is that our own standards have slipped. You know, when I'm with Belarusians and also with friends in this room talking about one tends to fall into a way of speaking, which suggests that everywhere in the E.U. we have Utopia except Belarus. We don't have Utopia. If I started describing a hypothetical country, which is not by any means without its corruptions, which is not without any means without its media monopolies, you'd have to just

choose which country I'm thinking of because there's more than one. I'm not excluding my own.

In other words, when I say our standards have slipped, I'm not really talking about our morality slipping. I think that our sense of what is appropriate has just shifted and shifted in the wrong direction. Until finally a place which is really bad like Belarus isn't in quite enough--isn't quite sharp enough contrast to our own countries. I think that's one thing which perhaps ought to be brought back to mind.

I don't think, and I'm not a diplomat or politician, and I've got to wind up, I'm a playwright. In other words, I deal in morality. I mean, there are all kinds of plays and I love the one which are French farces. But art artists, we deal in moralities. That's what art is. It's a matrix for the moral sensibility. If you want to change something by Tuesday you should do a television documentary. I approve of it. I admire it.



If you want to change the way we think you have to write, if you can, a great novel. You have to do art. It might be music. It might be painting. This is what we do and on--to presume on that platform.

I would say that most of the energy which gets disbursed in trying to deal with anomalies in Europe is the energy that is used in looking after self interest. Naturally, it's the game, isn't it? It's the game of foreign policy. You look after your own interests and you ameliorate other places conditions when they are in accord with your own greater, larger strategic interest.

Perhaps it's unwise. Perhaps it's impractical. Perhaps it's naive. Perhaps it's just silly to hope that people like you can throw all that away and understand what you don't need to understand because you already know it. The way life gets better is through a contest, a competition of generosity.

I'm very interested in, you know, I fell into the English language message, and one of the nice things in

the English language is the word kind or kindly, to behave kindly. It relates to kin, family. We all understand what's going here, the connections between these things.

You know, you're at dinner, there's one piece of meat left--yes, I'm stopping, don't worry, sir, and you're saying, "No you have it--you have it," because it's your son. It's your brother. It's your cousin, your uncle. "No, I want you to have the last piece of meat." This is kinship.

If one can extend that to the people living next door, you've already made some progress. If you can extend it to your fellow villagers, that is huge progress. How do you extend it to each other when you represent so many different countries? It's an impossible (inaudible). It's an impossible hope. But really our only survival as good people, rather than cattle, is to live in that hope and just fight for it and fail and fight again. Thank you so much for your attention.

Speaker: Thank you so much. That was a wonderful way to kick off this morning. Now it's my privilege to introduce the President of the European Parliament, the honorable Jerzy Buzek, a longtime Polish politician. A longtime member of the European Parliament, now is this very distinguished position as President of the Parliament. He was with us last year and gave a terrific set of remarks to kick off one of our sessions, and I would like him to do the same this year. So President Buzek, the floor is yours.

The Hon. Jerzy Buzek: Good morning everybody. I'm very glad to be here once again. We shared the same 15 minutes with Sir Tom, so probably I should finish immediately. But let me say that was very impressive. They were very impressive remarks.

What I can say--tell you that it is almost all my life being on the opposite of the iron curtain, and having all this experience we're talking about in such an impressive way. So thank you very much. It's a very good beginning for our session. And congratulations to

all of you taking part in the early bird session and maybe even night owl session. You are fantastic, maybe Americans are so brave to keep. For me it is impossible to take part in all the sessions. Thank you very much for your invitation once again.

Last March I gave a speech with the main topic The United States European Strategic Partnership of the Lisbon Treaty. One month after the speech in April last year I went to the United States on official visit. I'm met Vice President Biden, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and senior members of the U.S. congress.

My main message in the U.S. was simple; the E.U. has changed after the Lisbon Treaty, and we are ready to act on the global stage, something for you as well, together with the United States sharing responsibility and giving the basis for global governments.

Why was it easier to propose such a partnership one year ago and it being still vary today? I'm convinced that after the Lisbon Treaty, it could be important for our American friends, the E.U. will be much more united

in the future and is even more united now, which means much stronger.

At least two important reasons lead me to this conclusion. The first; I was and I am speaking on behalf of the European Parliament, a more powerful situation thanks to Lisbon Treaty. In some way similar to the House of Representatives with the Council of Ministers of the E.U. the Upper Chamber of our legislative system. This gives a broad and deep democratic accountability not only to our internal legislation but also for our external bodies. European Parliament giving deep and (inaudible) democratic accountability for our external policy.

We, as European Parliament, influence external policies through our 36 internal parliamentary delegations (inaudible) and which the most important, our transatlantic legislatures dialogue, which you know very well our friends from the American Congress.

The second reason for our stealth strategic corporation to be easier today; we had created the

European External Action service. Let me say that we-- it is our next step in our European integration, and we should also create real common foreign policy and a real common security and defense policy. It is even written in our treaty. We have it in our Lisbon Treaty. And we should not be afraid to defend our interests in the European Union in trying to manage security in foreign policy. We should not be afraid to push for the stretch of democracy for the projection of stability and good governance. It's in all our interests and we strongly believe it's also interest of our neighbors and other countries all over the world.

For Europe to continue be relevant in the 21st century, it is not just through the euro aid and humanitarian assistance. We need to be players and not just payers. This is why our next task has to be built truly European foreign policy. Let me ask, how can we affectively build a common foreign defense and security policy for the E.U.?

We have to build it on the basis of common actions where we have common laws, the most obvious example is our neighbor, of course. But let me (inaudible) it, that these regions, we also have common goals with the United States all the time. Today, we as the European union can take responsibility for decisions much more than ever before. Let us remember our European past, not going to details, we'll remember Marshall Plan, you Americans helping develop economy and also democracy. And the great effort of Americans in helping to dismantle the Iron Curtain and reunite a country as John Paul II famously said, "It allowed Europe to breathe with both of its lungs." Almost at the same time, the Civil War in the Western Balkans, where the Americans were very actively engaged in trying to stop the fighting together with Europeans, and all the tensions in the Middle East where America was, again, engaged in trying to find a peaceable solution as a main player for decades.

How do things look like today? There's some, by my opinion, some differences. In the Western Balkans, we have opened the gate for EU membership in our so-called soft power while the European Union changed the picture completely. They had to stop the war. And our basic membership criteria is to create a stable democratic system and a functioning market economy. Prussia, Montenegro, Serbia and other countries seem to be on the good path for new membership.

We also created an Eastern partnership strategy. Some of the authors are present in this hall later on in our discussion and European interparliamentary corporation. For six European countries, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, unfortunately, we have observed some backward steps in democracy building in this region, especially in Belarus and, in some ways, in Ukraine as well. But we have one very inspiring example, which is Moldova. We still should be optimistic.



But, certainly, our projects and activities--I'm thinking about Europe now--for this region will be very helpful. Our Eastern partnership continues to be important today, even if our southern neighbor who requires more attention right now, so we should not neglect in the future as well Eastern partnership.

Let me say, if you was to fall on our third big neighborhood, the countries around the Mediterranean Sea, I have just come from a five-day visit to Tunisia and Egypt. I walked through Tahrir Square, and when I told the people I was from the EU, for maybe in the hundred or two hundred of them, from point to point, there was a very positive response. I was even surprised. This is a good beginning for our future engagement, but we should know our responsibility. First of all, let's say most urgent strategy, short distance, immediate strategy to stop Qaddafi: humanitarian aid, water, food, medicine to free their assets and serious sanctions, which are working, really working. Because, if you want to build credibility, we

must be credible also in this case. Probably, the medium term strategy would be for all the countries. Why, it is important as well, let me say, without strong civic institutions and prestigious democratic institutions and positions, democracy cannot flourish. We should never forget that democracy cannot be imposed from the outside. It must be their own decision. We should stand ready to support. But it is always possible that in a few years' time, people linked to the common dictatorship could come back to power through democratic means. Well, it's happened in almost all the essential European countries after four, five, six years. Nothing wrong, nothing wrong if our democratic institutions and procedures are working in perfect way, so, as our medium term strategy, very important. But also long term strategy, next question may be in two months but at least in two years, all the citizens will be prosperity. So we must be open, accept of democracy on long term economic partnership with those countries. Liberalization, visibilization, small

and medium enterprises, smaller and building bigger projects, opening our markets step by step -- great deal of work. But in order to be successful, we must be something like democratic added value. It means prosperity should be linked to democracy, and then we can win for the long term perspective.

And what I'm saying about all of it is important. It's important because--you see, I'm trying to shorten my speech and to finish immediately in few words, but it's not easy, as you see. It's also important of our southern neighborhood because it means that we have to be both fully engaged in North Africa and the Middle East--I mean, both Americans and Europeans--for all the changes in this region. But we also have to be fully engaged, both the EU and the U.S., in the Israeli and Palestine peace process. Next step of the full engagement in changes in decision would be our peace process. So important for our community, European community because they are our neighbors along the

Mediterranean Sea, but, for decades, also the most important for Americans.

As you can see our joint EU-U.S. engagement in the EU's neighborhood has a new dimension. Europe is taking over a larger share of responsibility. I'm convinced that the presence of the United States and our joined efforts in this area is vital if we wish to achieve success. But on the example of our EU neighbors, we can see how our future strategic partnership could look like for other regions of the world.

We may have different opinions on how to solve the world's problems, Americans and Europeans. We speak often about hard versus soft power, but it's good that we may have different opinions since we sometimes need different solutions to solve problems. But we can act as equal partners because we are committed to the same values. Today, we know that only stability is not enough. Democracy's just as important as stability because it is the only way to guarantee future prosperity and future long term strategy all over the

world. It will be not easy, of course, but I am quite sure it's a new chapter in our cooperation. Thank you very much.