

Speech by Viktor Orbán at the World Jewish Congress

Budapest, 5th May 2013

President Lauder, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Good evening. May I just welcome you whole-heartedly here in Budapest. Shalom. It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to Budapest in the name of Hungary and the people of Hungary. I greet the representatives of the Jewish community, and a warm welcome to our guests in our country. It is with special pleasure and friendship that I greet those who have in fact come home, because they have their family roots here. Hungary has a deep-rooted tradition of welcoming and respecting guests. Here, all who knock on our door have a right to hospitality. And so I wish that you all have an enjoyable stay and take pleasure in our wonderful capital! Hungary is a free country, and so the right to hospitality includes mentioning the things that may bother you and that you may find wrong. Your leaders justified your visit by the fact that they wished to draw the world's attention to increasing anti-Semitism in Hungary. If this is the way they feel, then it is good that you have come to us, because we need everyone's help and cooperation to successfully act against the spread of hate.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I know that Jewish leaders have come here from all over the world. Including from places where anti-Semitism sometimes claims the lives of schoolchildren. And from places where following the anti-Semitic murder of children, there is no consensus on whether a minute's silence in memory of the victims may be ordered in state schools. From places where bomb attacks that claim lives are launched against synagogues. Nothing of this nature has so far occurred in Hungary. We do not want Hungary to become a country of that kind, and so I ask you to share your experiences so that hate cannot degenerate to this level here in Hungary.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

History has taught the Hungarians that anti-Semitism must be recognised in time. Hungary lived through and is intimately aware of the inhumane destruction that anti-Semitism caused

to the Jewish people, Hungary and the whole of Europe. It is with a broken heart that we bow our heads in memory of the victims. And at the same time we thank God that despite the Nazi and Arrow Cross destruction an authentic Jewish community, one of Europe's most significant and ancient Jewish communities, managed to survive here in Hungary. We thank God that he has enriched all of Hungary as a result. We have also learned that anti-Semitism isn't a natural disaster but the work of men. And as a result we must all feel and accept our own, personal responsibility. We are all aware of the growth of anti-Semitism throughout Europe, including Hungary. The situation is a difficult one. The economic crisis is shaking Europe to the core, and the unsuccessful crisis management of European leaders is causing increasingly deep frustration, and consuming people's hope. Let's talk straight. Disillusionment, anger and hatred are on the increase. In a situation such as this it is especially important that we make it clear: anti-Semitism is unacceptable and intolerable.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today's difficult situation requires an answer to the question, where did we go wrong in Europe during the past twenty years. We finally destroyed communism. We put an end to the Cold War. Europe was given the chance to once again be the continent of peace, cohabitation, understanding and tolerance. And here we are twenty years later and are searching for a cure for increasing intolerance and anti-Semitism. What happened to us? This is a question that is asked by many and we hear many arguments. We Hungarians provided our own answer two years ago when we set down our first, democratic Constitution. We Hungarians think that it was a mistake to believe that a community with a weak national and religious identity would give us a better chance of peaceful cohabitation. Today, it seems that a strong identity provides better bedrock for mutual acknowledgement and respect. Today, it seems that all of us, Jews and non-Jews alike, benefit most if we strive to be good patriots and the good children of God. Each according to their own laws, but all standing firm on the bedrock of unconditional respect for human dignity.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the end, things always become simplified. They are simplified into good and bad. You know perhaps better than anybody else that in the final analysis, the world is governed by two types of human intent and actions: good and bad. When the will of good people was at the

fore here in Hungary, then Hungarians and Jews lived together in peace and prosperity, and if needed the State of Hungary protected its citizens. Anti-Semitism is a state of mind in which evil takes control of people's thoughts and actions, and this danger also threatens us, Christians. We are aware that during the course of history there were bad Christians and bad Hungarians, who committed grievous sins. In the light of all this, our answer to increasing anti-Semitism in Europe and in Hungary is not the giving up of our religious and moral roots, but exactly the opposite: to recall and reinforce the examples and tradition of good Christians. Accordingly, the current Constitution provides true protection, true security, real and full human dignity, personal and community dignity to the Jewish people, and of course to all minorities, who live side-by-side with us.

Today's Hungarian Christian Democrat government politics felt that it was its moral duty to introduce a remembrance day for victims of the holocaust in schools. It felt that it was its moral obligation to establish Holocaust Memorial Day. It felt morally bound to stand with heads bowed and listen to the Kaddish in the same houses of parliament in which the anti-Jewish laws were once passed. It felt that it was its moral duty to organise a memorial year in respect of Raoul Wallenberg. It felt it was its moral obligation to ban the operations of paramilitary organisations. It felt it was it was morally bound to set up the Holocaust 2014 memorial Committee. It felt that it was its moral duty to ban symbols of dictatorship. And it felt and feels it to be its moral obligation to declare a policy of zero tolerance against anti-Semitism.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We still hear in our ears and feel in our hearts the teachings of our first Christian king, with the wisdom we know well from the Talmud. The Talmud teaches: "Hate, evil tendencies and vanity drive men from this world". Our King, Saint Stephen, wrote to his son: "Always bear in mind that all men are born in a similar state, and it is only humility that lifts him up, and only arrogance and hatred that topples him".

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our generation is the generation of peace and revolutions. In our youth we toppled communism and regained our country's independence so that we could all live here in

freedom. We know that there is no freedom without human dignity. And so our generation will not tolerate the wounding of the human dignity of anybody in our country because of their ancestry or religion, because that would be an affront to the freedom that we have struggled together to achieve.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In closing, please let me thank the Jewish people of Hungary and the world for repeatedly standing up for Hungary and the national objectives of the people of Hungary in recent years. I recall the memory of Tom Lapid, who spoke out against the assaulting of Hungarians in the Vojvodina. It is here that I remember those Jewish communities who stood up for the rights of Hungarians living beyond our borders and for the dual nationality of Hungarians. It is here that I must mention the loud and open support expressed by Chief Rabbi of Israel Yona Metzger during the course of international debate on our Constitution. Their support is living reassurance and encouragement of the fact that our work is not in vain. There is hope that our children may live in an era in which anti-Semitism is just as inconceivable as the past ages in which the world suffered from the plague. This is not just a dream, it is a possibility, and one that I feel is only up to us. We know that the triumph of evil requires only that good people remain inactive. We Hungarians are not and shall not be inactive. I would ask you all to take this message with you to the Jewish people of the world.

Welcome to Hungary.