

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the Jean Monnet Foundation for Europe I am pleased to welcome you this evening to this award ceremony. We are the repository of the personal archives of Jean Monnet, marking our foundation as a centre of European heritage, a place of scientific research and collaboration and a meeting place for sharing ideas. The living legacy of the spirit of Jean Monnet continues to find expression through the occasional award of the Foundations' gold medal.

Today our focus is on Ukraine, an EU candidate state, a country defending its sovereignty and territory against a brutal war of aggression by Russia. This year's nominated laureate is an institution whose continuity, courage, and commitment commended itself to our attention. I am speaking of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine.

I wish especially to welcome our distinguished friends from Ukraine – in particular the Speaker of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, Ruslan Stefanchuk, and his wife Maryna, her excellency Iryna Venediktova, Ukraine's ambassador to Switzerland, the Secretary General of the Secretariat of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, Vyacheslav Shtuchnyi, and from Switzerland his excellency Félix Baumann, Ambassador of Switzerland to Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova.

It makes no sense to try to overstretch historical analogies across time and space but permit me to recall for our Ukrainian visitors that Jean Monnet was a man much of whose life's work was marked by war and peace – the first world war and the Anglo French Purchasing Commission – Deputy Secretary General of the post war League of Nations – a frustrated attempt to form an Anglo French Union in 1940 – followed by becoming Churchill's envoy to Washington DC. His mission was to convince the Americans to help France and the UK acquire more weapons, even as the USA then was neutral prior to the bombing of Pearl harbour in December 1941, an echo of Ukraine's needs today. In 1943 with a strong transatlantic supply chain of bombers, arms and munitions established, Monnet left DC and in Algiers became a member of the French Committee of National Liberation, the de facto French government in exile.

It was there he first revealed to a group of confidantes his vision for a post war Europe based on a supranational pooling of sovereignty in the coal and steel sectors. Monnet inspired and drafted the Schuman Declaration of May 9 1950, the foundational document of post war European integration, which began with the relevant and ringing phrase "*World peace cannot be safeguarded without the making of creative efforts proportionate to the dangers which threaten it*" a

sentiment that prefigures and encapsulates President Zelensky's peace plan.

Monnet led the French post war reconstruction and recovery programme, the Commissariat général du Plan, from 1946 to 1952, a similar effort still awaits its hour of fulfilment in Ukraine. He then became President of the High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community, the first act of post war European integration, which brought member state coal and steel under a supranational authority, converting the resources that had fashioned the weapons of war into an institution to sustain the peace.

There is much in Monnet's life's journey and legacy that resonates with this evening's gold medal recipient, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine – the parliament of a country at war, a polity that in the coming days with the assistance of Swiss diplomacy will seek to generate support for a sustainable, just and secure peace, and a country and people whose constitution expresses their aspiration to be part of the European Union and the wider Euro Atlantic community as safe harbours to underwrite and sustain Ukraine's post war peace and prosperity.

After the Maidan revolution of dignity legislative elections for the Rada were held in October 2014. The European Parliament's Democracy Support and Election Coordination Group (DEG) decided

“to consider Ukraine as a priority country for parliamentary capacity building and dialogue facilitation.” An unprecedented Memorandum of Understanding between the EP and the Rada was signed by Martin Schulz, EP President, and Volodymyr Groysman, Speaker of the Rada, in Kyiv in July 2015. They agreed to prepare a *Report and Roadmap on Internal Reform and Capacity Building for the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine* through the establishment of a *Needs Assessment Mission* to be led by a senior political figure. That privilege and challenge fell to me. Successive Presidents and Speakers of both institutions have signed consecutive Memoranda of Understanding extending and deepening this unique engagement over time, Antonio Tajani, David Sassoli, and Roberta Metsola for the EP, and Andriy Parubiy, Dmytro Razumkov, and Ruslan Stefanchuk for the Rada.

The Needs Assessment Report was delivered early in 2016. Since then considerable progress has been made but further work remains to be done.

Not surprisingly while most favour reform and modernisation the devil is in the detail as regards the chemistry of political consent and the administrative capacity and resources to succeed. This led to the creation of a dialogue forum involving the Speaker and Deputy Speakers of the Rada and the leaders of the Rada factions or their nominees – entitled the Jean Monnet Dialogues – to seek to

establish the common interest and build necessary consensus to make progress. These are held away from Kyiv affording participants an opportunity for conversation and dialogue outside the confines of day to day parliamentary work schedules and agendas. Our work has continued throughout the war, prepared in advance by visits to Kyiv. The 10th such dialogue was held in Lviv in mid-April this year. I have been privileged to work closely with the leadership of the Rada and its faction leaders throughout this process.

“Inter arma enim silent leges” – In times of war the law falls silent – words of Cicero from ancient Rome. Democracy and the rule of law are the first casualties of dictatorship and unhappily often also of war. Vladimir Putin is practising aggression abroad and repression at home. Political opponents at best are imprisoned, at worst in their graves. Russian television which is under state control is the medium and the message through which state propaganda underwrites the autocracy. Free media have been shut down or driven into exile. Civil society activists are marginalised, labelled as foreign agents, and attacked. Even mild dissent has been criminalised. Russia’s nationalistic authoritarian form of government offers a pretence of pluralism and a veneer of democracy through managed elections. There is something contemptible that such a system now questions the legitimacy of Ukraine’s political institutions even as it seeks to

destroy and replace them through war, in contravention of the fundamental values of the Charter of the United Nations.

Under normal conditions the mandate of the current convocation of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine would have expired last October and the mandate of President Zelensky on May 20th this year. This has led to a Russian disinformation campaign arguing that President Zelensky's hold on power is illegitimate. It is hard to take seriously any Russian critique about democratic legitimacy. As regards Ukraine's President and the Rada, far from being illegitimate, their continued agency is in fact founded on a respect for due process and the rule of law.

Take the case of the Rada. Starting on the day of Russia's invasion on 24 February 2022 the Peoples' Deputies assembled even as their personal fates and that of their nation was unknown. They voted to impose martial law, a curfew, and a special entry and exit regime to control the border. Like President Zelensky, they stood their ground. They did their duty. Since that fateful day, and contrary to Cicero's observation cited above, the Rada has continued to do its duty, renewing martial law every ninety days and sustaining Ukraine's legal order through the due process of law, while acting as a constitutional and institutional counterpart and balance to executive only action.

At the 9th Jean Monnet Dialogue held last November near Uzhgorod the sensitive political issues of the extended mandate and future elections to the Rada were discussed. After lengthy discussion there was unanimous agreement *“that future free and fair national elections parliamentary and presidential shall be held after the end of the war and the end of martial law with sufficient time to prepare for the elections, at least 6 months after the end of martial law.”*

This reflects an impressive collective democratic maturity. By agreeing unanimously, the factions chose not to turn the extended life of the current Rada or Presidential mandates into an internal political football concerning their legitimacy. The agreement for at least a six month pause after martial law is to permit the best possible preparation of post war elections, including the production a revised electoral register. The commitment of all involved is to seek to deliver free and fair post war elections. Moreover, Ukraine’s parliamentary leadership wisely chose not to give an electoral gift to Russia during the war to engage in covert and overt election subversion and interruption by all available hybrid, and military means.

The truth is that Ukraine’s elected leaders in a pluralist convocation, by reasoned dialogue, and through consensus chose to respect their constitution, which for the Rada precludes elections during martial law. They revealed their determination to seek to ensure free and

fair post war elections for the Presidency and the Rada. They chose to allow time for the internally and externally displaced and for those serving on a 1000 km line of contact to be duly registered to validate their participation in the first post war elections. The extended life of Ukraine's democratic institutions is the expression of democrats not despots, democrats committed to due process and the rule of law. This is the antithesis of the despotic self-serving propaganda of Russia.

Parliamentary politics can be challenging at the best of times and in the best of places. That the Verkhovna Rada in these extraordinary times continues to function and to legislate in far from ideal conditions is a tribute to its resolve to seek to respect its constitutional prerogatives and to fulfil its duty to the people of Ukraine. The reform and modernisation of Ukraine is a work in progress, no less for its parliament than for other institutions, but its goodwill and the good progress already made deserve recognition.

For the exercise of its constitutional prerogatives during martial law,

- for its commitment to stand by the Ukrainian nation's territorial integrity and sovereignty,
- for its resolve to lead Ukraine into the European Union,
- and for its readiness to seek consensus through dialogue and mutual respect -

I invite Ruslan Stefanchuk, Speaker of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, to join me to receive on its collective behalf the gold medal of the Jean Monnet Foundation for Europe with our warmest congratulations and our deepest solidarity.

Slava Ukraini

Pat Cox

Lausanne

11 June 2024