

EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF PARLIAMENT COMMITTEES

441.2 (70)

STATEMENT BY JACQUES DELORS

Brussels, 10 August 1992

This is hardly the time, and it would scarcely be appropriate anyway, to take stock of what the Community has been doing these last fifteen months since Yugoslavia started breaking up.

Except perhaps that it might be worth dispelling all doubts about the Community's intentions at this time when the Maastricht Treaty is up for ratification. Enormous progress has been made since 1985, but the fact is that the Community is not sufficiently integrated or sufficiently powerful to withstand the worldwide pattern of economic recession or to impose itself as a mediator in a conflict whose tragic effects are being felt only two hours away from Brussels. We know this, but we have to keep on reminding ourselves. Only Political Union, built on the dual foundation of monetary integration and a common foreign and security policy, will put us in a position to assume our global responsibilities boldly and lucidly.

As it happens, the experience of the last fifteen months has shown us that, if the Community had not existed, with all its weaknesses but with all its qualities too, the tragedy of Yugoslavia could well have spelled serious political tension for Western Europe.

Be that as it may, this situation brings the Community up against a tremendous moral and political challenge and with it a twofold duty. The moral duty is to work miracles to secure the human rights of every man and every woman living in Yugoslavia. The political duty is to restore peace there, though not necessarily at all costs.

The point ultimately is that a contagious fatal disease needs to be combated - the folly of ultranationalism, the outrageous obsession with ethnic purity, the refusal to tolerate other people who, after all, had lived next door for decades past. Let there be no mistake: if we do not contain the epidemic, it will spread right across the continent. And the response will be a proliferation of gut reactions, a resurgence of intolerance in all its forms.

We are, of course, expected to stay calm and face the facts. So let us be realistic - war is never an enjoyable experience. It generates fear and hatred. But let us take time to ponder a simple question: where is the former Yugoslavia going?

To the non-Croats, all Croats are Ustashe.

To the non-Serbs, all Serbs are Chetniks.

Nobody loves the Muslims.

The end result is a murderous passion which, I can tell you, having been there in June last year with Mr Santer, had not yet spread through the population at that time, with its hundreds of thousands of mixed marriages. But the mania could already be observed in what some of the leaders - happily not all of them - in the six Republics were saying. Every argument that has been put forward, whether based on common sense or on economic realism, foundered on a single obsession - independence at all costs. Independence was within the reach of each and every Republic on a consensus basis in the Conference chaired by Lord Carrington. But all was in vain. There was no abatement to the self-perpetuating pattern of violence.

My friend Abel Matutes will give you the details in a minute. The Community and its executive body, the Commission, have done everything in their power to release resources for humanitarian aid and to move food and medicines wherever they were needed. But there were immense barriers and there still are - the barriers raised by warfare plus the voluntary or involuntary obstacles created by the messengers of hatred.

The escalation of terror and misery is the outcome. Two million refugees, detention camps where the treatment meted out to political prisoners defies all the international conventions: so many more violations of human rights!

Once again, war is causing violence to flourish, whatever its origin. But let us try and look beyond the miserable facts. Whatever it says and whatever it does, the Belgrade régime reveals its destructive, anti-humanist ideology. It takes a conciliatory line when it wants to gain time, or it uses its henchmen to flaunt its threats.

That is the ideology that must be combated in the name of a universal concept of nationhood and pluralism which is at the very heart of democracy.

The best illustration that will help us understand this evil ideology is perhaps the question eloquently put by Gérard Miller: "Is hatred a necessary tool of the nation-builder?"

Only by feeding their hatred is it possible to bring the Serbs themselves to accept the notion of ethnic purity - and we all remember where that has led us in the past. Surely rampant hatred is the only explanation why it is no longer possible for people to live together in Sarajevo, that symbolic city of ethnic and religious pluralism.

If we give in on this point, we will be the accomplices to an epidemic that will ravage Europe - raising people up against people, exalting every kind of racism.

Peace, you see, cannot be achieved at just any price, for if this monstrous ideology were allowed to triumph in Bosnia-Herzegovina, it would bring other places into its fold, with new confrontations and persecutions in Vojvodina, Kosovo, Sandjek, Macedonia, to name but a few.

And if we reread the chronology of the last year's events - ceasefires that were violated, round-table talks to exchange views nobody took seriously - we might wonder what the future holds. Where are we going if unheeded warning after unheeded warning and escalation after escalation do nothing to quell the flames of war but delay - at what human cost! - the painful decision to go for military intervention?

These questions have to be put bluntly to our twelve Member States, but I am not going to say that the decision will be an easy one, with no risks, for the risks are there. The military opinions available to us make this clear. Any talk of armed intervention in Sarajevo brings Lebanon or Dien Bien Phu immediately to mind.

But it seems clear enough that in the absence of a credible, I repeat credible, prospect of military intervention, there is nothing to halt the subtle, murderous strategy of the Serbian leaders.

So my first question is this: do the Twelve agree to create this credible prospect on a realistic, demonstrative operational basis? Or can they not agree to go that far?

Naturally, nothing could actually be done without a resolution of the UN, or of the CSCE - the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe - if it is willing to equip itself with the means to apply the principles it proclaims.

Studies and preparations should be put in hand forthwith by WEU - Western European Union - as the direct follow-up to its decision of last June.

If the Twelve truly agree to do something practical about a credible prospect, the Peace Conference called by the UK Presidency for 26 August might just have a chance of getting somewhere.

Otherwise, I fear that there will be no stopping the expansionist madness, the ethnic madness, the murderous madness.

That is the central question. If we are clear and resolute on that, everything else we do will be meaningful and will help attenuate the misery and suffering.

What can, what must be done?

1. Detention camps - all of them, whether they are run by Serbs, by Croats, by Muslims - must be placed under international control so that decent, tolerable living conditions can be ensured there.

2. Humanitarian aid must get through, to Sarajevo and Goradze first of all, with armed protection if need be and at the very least under the control of the UN force, if the UN is willing.
3. Yugoslav Republics receiving refugees must be aided. There is a real risk that the refugees will have to spend the autumn and winter away from their homes; providing them with decent accommodation and subsistence will require considerable sums of money and investment.
4. Refugees should be accepted into other European countries, but only on a temporary basis, to avoid lending support to the new apartheid.
5. A tougher embargo is a vital component of the strategy to be used in bringing Serbia back to reality. Serbian leaders will perceive it as a clear signal that the democracies are determined not to let them get away with their monstrous ideology.
6. Diplomatic action to secure human rights must be stepped up. The UN Commission should speak out. Public opinion wants to know the truth about the detention camps, about the unbearable pressure being put on people to leave the country where they have lived in multiethnic peace until now.

The situation is complicated. We know that. One side alone is not to blame, of course. But the time has come for everyone to speak with a clear voice, the voice of conscience.

Today, as I have already said, we can learn the lessons of the last few months when no stone has been left unturned in the attempt to get all the protagonists in the Yugoslav crisis together round the same table. Successive Community Presidencies have spared no efforts; nor have Lord Carrington, or Robert Badinter and his Arbitration Commission. Promises have abounded; few have been kept.

The media have brought this war into all our homes. The best way of reassuring public opinion is to get up and speak up, provided practical arguments are presented that can be translated into action and roll back the frontiers of intolerance and oppression.

Let every one of us know the name of the game - which is that all our democracies must be ready to take up their duty in the service of democracy, human rights and pluralism.

Let other voices too appeal to the Yugoslav conscience. Above all, let the leaders of all the religious faiths unite in a call for peace, reason, and mutual respect.

For fifty years we have been struggling to build a united Europe, to outlaw civil strife between Europeans. We have a degree of success to our credit. But we are in duty bound to militate for recognition of the same values throughout the greater Europe. That is the new challenge of History.

* * * *