



BANQUET IN HONOUR OF
HIS EXCELLENCY JÁNOS ÁDER,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF HUNGARY

24 May 2016

Drapers' Hall

Speech by HE Sir Anthony Bailey

MR PRESIDENT, MADAME FIRST LADY, YOUR ROYAL HIGHNESSES,
YOUR SERENE HIGHNESSES, YOUR ILLUSTRIOUS HIGHNESS, YOUR
EMINENCES, YOUR GRACE, YOUR EXCELLENCIES, MY LORDS, HIGH
SHERIFF, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

It gives me very great pleasure as Delegate to welcome each and every one of you this evening to the magnificent setting of Drapers' Hall here in the heart of the ancient city of London and under these rather racy scenes above use which I assume are inspired by William Shakespeare.

We gather on a most auspicious occasion as our two great and ancient and progressive European nations – the United Kingdom and Hungary are joined together in a remarkable series of ecumenical acts of worship surrounding the return after 800 years of the relics of Thomas à Beckett, Saint and Martyr.

My first pleasurable duty is to extend the warmest of welcomes to our

guests of honour His Excellency János Áder, President of the Republic of Hungary, the most gracious First Lady and the Presidential delegation.

May I also welcome from Rome, the Grand Master of the Sacred Military Constantinian Order of St George, His Royal Highness Prince Charles of Bourbon Two Sicilies, Duke of Castro and Her Royal Highness Princess Camilla, Duchess of Castro. I would particularly like to thank you once again for organising such a beautiful pilgrimage to Rome and the Vatican City 10 days ago attended by over 1000 members of the Order including many from my delegation. It was touching too to be present at the confirmation of your two daughters and the announcement of the Duchess of Palermo as your heir.

I am delighted too to welcome members of several Royal Families from across Europe who honour us with their presence. May I welcome from the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, TRH Prince Louis and Princess Tessy of Luxembourg and ask you to extend the warmest good wishes to your parents the Grand Duke Henri and the Grand Duchess Maria, who are good and trusted friends of this country. From England's oldest ally Portugal, I welcome most especially TRH The Duke and Duchess of Braganza. From Austria, I welcome Princess Katarina and my wife Princess Marie-Therese of Hohenberg.

It is my distinguished pleasure to welcome tonight The Rt Hon Oliver Letwin, MP, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, who is representing the Prime Minister tonight. I hope that you are able to extend to the Prime Minister the very good wishes of all present for his gracious message.

I would like to pay tribute to the Church of England and to the Roman

Catholic Churches in Britain and Hungary for making this pilgrimage possible. I particular wish to salute most warmly all those who have made this possible including Their Eminences Cardinal Péter Erdő, of Ezstergom-Budapest, Cardinal Vincent Nichols of Westminster and Archbishop Justin Welby of Canterbury. I would also like to welcome and thank our Delegation Prior Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor and my dear friend Lord Carey of Clifton and Lady Carey for their support this evening.

It is my pleasure too to welcome tonight the High Commissioner of Grenada as well as the Ambassadors of Kosovo, the Slovak Republic, Hungary, Poland, Venezuela, Equatorial Guinea, Bolivia and the from the Apostolic Nunciature and Argentina. His Excellency Dr Renato Carlos Sersale di Cerisano is a knight of the Constantinian Order and I look forward to furthering the relations between the Order and Argentina during his mission in London.

It is with sadness that we note the departure of two of our three knights, the Polish Ambassador, HE Witold Sobków, the Hungarian Ambassador, HE Péter Szabadhegy and HE Lirim Greiçevci, Ambassador of Kosovo.

I am also delighted to welcome many of the Masters of the Livery Worshipful Companies of the City of London, including Master Fan Makers, Master Coopers, Master Brewers, Master Parish Clerks and Lightmongers. And in greeting the key figures of the City of London, I cannot help but recall the untimely passing last week of my good and dear friend Sir Gavyn Arthur who I have no doubt is here in spirit tonight. Sir Gavyn chose the music for this evening and I know he is smiling down on us giggling away.

Distinguished guests

In an ever increasing secular Europe, this week's pilgrimage which will see masses and services held in Westminster Cathedral, Westminster Abbey as well as the chapel at the Houses of Parliament before travelling onto Rochester and Canterbury cathedrals is so very reassuring.

Events like today's offer an opportunity to reflect on our common history and serve as a reminder that European unity has proved to be a powerful force and has the power to overcome divides.

The Constantinian Order has a long association with Hungary and was formally recognised by the Hungarian Government by decree of the President of the Republic in 2011.

As someone who has enjoyed over 25-year association with Hungary having lived, worked and studied here, I cannot fail to reflect on the warm hospitality, valued memories and countless friendships that have been the hallmarks of my journey from university student, to businessman, to charity worker and interfaith campaigner. All these experiences I must tell you have forever engrained Hungary and its people in my heart.

I also count myself fortunate to have been able to witness, sometimes at first hand, some key moments in modern Hungarian history, which had a profound impact on me.

And much like elsewhere in the region there no doubt that faith played a significant part in empowering the Hungarian people to stand up

against totalitarian oppression and dictatorship which in turn led to the long awaited rebirth of democracy and freedom in this great country of yours.

It is also very pleasing for me to see our cathedrals and churches and other important monuments is such fine repair thanks to the support of the Government.

Mr President

There were also moments of great hilarity during my time in your country in the late 1980. At a time Europe was going through tremendous change. As a student at the former Karl Marx University I remember being summoned together with other British students and being told by the rector that it was his very sad duty to inform us that that afternoon in London a Major had taken power in Britain. And not dissimilar to a Michael Winner advert, the kindly secretary of the British Embassy in Budapest seeing a dozen confused and stunned students invited us in for tea and said reassuring 'Calm Down Dears – Its John Major'.

This pilgrimage is also an appropriate time when those of us of faith should reflect on the centuries old Christian foundations of our society.

This is felt all the more at a time when for many across Europe there is a strong sense that our Christian and wider faith values are being tested and challenged by an increasingly intolerant secular society.

On behalf of everyone in this hall, I offer to you, Mr President and to your delegation all good wishes and ask that you do not forget this special evening and week and how each of us here tonight are a living

testament to the importance of British-Hungarian ties and to the importance which many of us place on our Christian and wider faith.

Sir Winston Churchill went on record and said: “We hope to see a Europe where men of every country will think as much of being a European as of belonging to their native land, and that without losing any of their love and loyalty of their birthplace.”

God bless Britain, Hungary and Europe.