UP SUMMIT

LADIES and gents as I arrived here last night at what I imagine the great Ross Perot would classify as one of his more modest agricultural outbuildings

 i was amazed to see a machine swoop in the air above us all

 a boeing b29 superfortress – a real one – not the plastic model I made as a kid

and as that plane thundered benignly over this community that Ross has helped to build

with its incredible mixture of cattle ranches and aviation and high technology

I remembered that this bomber – with its nuclear payload – that was decisive in ending the second world war, ending imperialist aggression in Japan

and it was that B29 superfortress that came in at the end of the war – as the ultimate expression of American power – and helped to terminate the delusions of the dictators of Europe

and end the terrible racist fascism that might have succeeded – had it not been for America

and it was that B29 that helped usher in what has been now 80 years of the rules based international order, 80 years of Nato

80 years of relative peace and tranquillity – for the vast majority in my country and your country

and in that period of the pax Americana science and technology have advanced faster than in any other period that we can study today

It took the Greeks centuries to produce a single surviving machine, the rusted gears of the antikythera machine, whose purpose is still unclear

- the orbit of venus, the mating habits of the squid, who knows

 in the 1200 year history of the Roman empire they made glacial progress in technology, hardly going beyond the hypocaust and the catapult

 they couldn’t even make an espresso machine

It took the Chinese emperors thousands of years to produce the terracotta army, whose military value is questionable

And yet it is barely a century since Orville and Wilbur Wright took off in their glorified laundry basket powered by a moped engine

and look at you guys now

I don’t know exactly what it is you are sprinkling on your cereal but you are doing some amazing stuff

 hydrogen powered planes that can cross the atlantic in an hour and a half

autonomous aerial taxis that can levitate out of the traffic and avoid the cycle lanes

I asked them to help me do it 15 years ago when I was mayor of London

come on, I said – 150 years ago we went down, we were the first city to have a tube network

 now we go up, up’s the word, I said

and at the time my officials said it was just impossible

and yet I know you guys are going to crack it

 and this UP summit poses the question

 what is it about this group, what is it about this place, what is it about America

that produces this relentless spirit of creativity and imagination

 Well there is no doubt that some of it has been a spin off from America’s role as the defender of freedom

the defence budgets

 and of course the Nasa space programme that saw you put a man on the moon in less than a decade

about the same time that it takes me to build a swimming pool in south Oxfordshire

It was fascinating to see those pictures of Ross Perot senior and junior at cape Canaveral

and it made me wonder whether we could do anything like it in Britain today

   let me ask you – when they built that space centre, were they forced by EU law to do a study into the possibility that the launching pad might be the habitat of great crested newts

Did they have to pay consultants thousands of pounds to stay up all night with binoculars, watching the pond for mating newts

and then to write a 75 page report saying that while there was no direct evidence of newts, it was the kind of place that newts might conceivably like to be

and that it was necessary to build various berms and bunds to protect them

Did they have to build little newt motels, in case the putative newts should stray into the path of the Saturn V rocket launchers

 they did not

and I want to stress that I am pro newt

no newts is bad news

but one of the reasons we did brexit is that we want the UK to be the best and most efficient place to invest and do business

the fastest place in the world to make and licence a vaccine – which it was in 2020, by the way

the biggest and best tech sector in Europe by miles

 by far the biggest financial sector

and going with our rule book with a pair of shears, so we regulate in a way that is pro-newt but also pro-business as well

and yet there is a reason why places like Britain and America are innovating at the pace we are seeing today

and it goes beyond defence funding and having the right regulatory and tax framework

 it is because this country like the UK is a free country

and when people invest in new tech companies they know that the deal will be underpinned by the rule of law

 and that you don’t have to bribe any politicians

and more importantly they know that their rivals will be arrested if they do

and above all talented people come here because they know that provided they do no harm to anyone else they can live their lives as they please

and no one is going to complain about how rich they get – quite the reverse

and so there is a simple reason why this UP summit bubbles and pullulates with ideas and energy

and that is because we live in a liberal capitalist democracy

the abiding legacy of the war-time generation

the stability that was created at least partly by that phenomenal American exertion and symbolised by that B29

 and yet my friends I have to warn you tonight that these shared values are under threat

and every year the number of democracies is now falling, not rising

and societies are becoming more closed and not more open

and if you want an example of a democracy under threat I give you the island of Taiwan, where they make a lot of the chips on which we all depend

and there is unquestionably a risk that there could be another tragic miscalculation

an attempt to invade Taiwan and to deprive western manufacturers of the semi-conductors on which we all depend

and so it is now more vital than ever that we show that we have the Right Stuff

 that we are still willing, like our parents and grandparents, to defend democracy, to defend freedom

and to stand up for our values where they are challenged

and those values are being challenged now

as never in our lifetimes

in Ukraine

where those heroic Ukrainians are fighting and laying down their lives because they love their country

and because they are determined to resist a brutal, criminal and above all a completely unnecessary act of aggression

and I warn you that if they lose – and if Putin wins – it will be a signal to every would-be autocrat around the world – to say nothing of the government in Beijing – that might is right

 that you can invade your neighbour and get away with it

and that we in the west have lost our mojo and won’t stand up for freedom

 and I believe that would be a tragedy

and a threat to the post war peace and prosperity that we have taken for granted

and if and when Ukraine wins – and with our support they certainly will

 then that victory – at a price of 1 per cent of the annual US defence budget – would be the most cost-effective investment that you could possibly make in the long-term security of the euro-atlantic area

AND for the security of the pacific as well

I pay tribute to what the US has done to support Ukraine, and I am proud that the UK was the first European country to give significant lethal assistance

but this is not the time to go wobbly on Ukraine

this is the moment to double down

because I have no doubt that the people in this room can produce the technical solutions, the weaponry, the drones

and that the heroism of the Ukrainians will do the rest

because the difference between the Ukrainians and the mercenaries and criminal conscripts who have invaded them

is that the Ukrainians are fighting for their families and for their country

and for freedom

They deserve our support, and they are going to win

and when they win it will be a victory for freedom everywhere

Thanks for listening and slava Ukraini