

recovery; they can't rebuild homes and businesses; farmers can't dig out their fields to plant crops. These people are in dire need, and Congress has failed to act for them. That is unconscionable. It flies in the face of the spirit of bipartisan cooperation we saw in our budget negotiations, and it's not how we treated other Americans when they were in similar dire straits over the last 4 years.

In North Dakota, I saw not only the devastation of the floods, I saw the determination of the people, proud people doing their level-best to survive and get on with their lives. They don't expect free rides or handouts, but they do have a right to expect us to do the right thing by them, as we have by their fellow Americans when they were down and out.

The wrath of nature can be random, swift, and unforgiving. That's where human nature

must provide a balance. We should act out of compassion, as many Americans have, to help the victims. And in Government, we must act because that is our duty as Americans. We cannot leave the victims without the help they need and deserve. We have to act.

I urge Congress to do its part and to do it quickly. Disaster doesn't take a holiday. Let's work together to bring relief to people who need it—now.

In closing, I want to wish you all a happy Memorial Day weekend. Drive safely, drive slowly, and buckle up.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:08 p.m. on May 23 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on May 24.

Remarks at a Memorial Day Ceremony in Arlington, Virginia

May 26, 1997

Thank you very much. General Foley, Chaplain Schwartzman, Mr. Metzler, to the members of the Cabinet, General Shalikashvili and the leaders of our Armed Forces, to Members of Congress, and especially to the members of the Armed Forces who are here, the leaders of our veterans organizations, all of you who are veterans and your families, and all of you who are family members of those who have given their lives in the service of our country.

My fellow Americans, we gather here today, as we do faithfully every year, to pay tribute to our country men and women who fell in the line of duty, who gave their lives to preserve the liberties upon which our Nation was founded and which we have managed to carry forward for more than 200 years now. All across America, our grateful Nation comes together today to honor these men and women, some celebrated, others quite unknown, each a patriot and a hero.

For many of our schoolchildren who have known no war, today may seem to be little more than a day off from school or a welcome start to the summer. But on this day, and all that we pause to remember, there are essential lessons for the young and, indeed, for all the rest

of us as well: Appreciate the blessings of freedom; recognize the power and virtue of sacrifice; respect those who gave everything on behalf of our common good.

This day reminds us of what we can achieve when we pull together as one nation, respecting each other with all of our myriad differences, but coming together, we can fight any battle and face any challenge.

It reminds us of our duty to honor not only those we have lost in freedom's cause but also, through attention and care, the service men and women who came back home and are now our veterans, as well as the families of those for whom there tragically has never been a final accounting.

It reminds us of our obligation to take care of those who have taken care of us and those who take care of us today. That means ensuring that our men and women in uniform have the best training and equipment and preparation possible to do their jobs for freedom, because even in times of peace, we must remain vigilant in a very new and still uncertain world.

And above all, it reminds us of America's responsibility to remain the world's leading force for peace and prosperity and freedom as we

enter the 21st century, so that future generations of young Americans who wear our uniform will never have to endure the losses in battles that our predecessors did in the 20th century.

Behind me, just a few yards from where we gather today, lies the grave of General George Marshall, an heroic soldier in war and a visionary statesman for peace after the Second World War. He built the armies that enabled freedom to triumph over tyranny in World War II. And after the war, along with President Truman, Senator Arthur Vandenberg, and others, he inspired America to make the investments and forge the institutions that built the peace, reached out to former adversaries, spread democracy and prosperity, and ultimately won the cold war. General George Marshall was the very first full-time soldier ever to win the Nobel Prize for Peace. A half-century ago, he knew that in order to be strong at home and safe at home, we had to lead the world to a more secure and better place.

Now, at the end of the cold war, when there appears to be no looming threat on the horizon, we must rise to Marshall's challenge in our day. We must remember the lessons of those who gave their lives in World War II and those who worked so hard to make sure that we would prevail in the cold war and not have to go back to war again. We must create the institutions and the understandings that will advance the security and prosperity of the American people for the next 50 years.

This great endeavor must begin in Europe. Twice in this century—indeed, twice within a period of a few decades—Americans went over there and gave their lives in defense of liberty. Many more stood sentry with our European allies through the long night of the cold war. Today, our generation has been given a precious chance to redeem that sacrifice and service, to build an undivided, democratic European Continent at peace for the very first time in history.

Over the course of this week, beginning this evening, I will travel to Europe to advance this goal. Tomorrow in Paris, President Yeltsin of Russia, my fellow NATO leaders, and I will join an historic signing of the Founding Act of the NATO-Russia partnership, opening a new era of cooperation in Europe to bridge the historic divisions there. Then I will have the great honor to represent you in The Netherlands, joining with leaders from all over Europe to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Marshall plan, the

plan that helped Europe to recover its prosperity and secure its liberty. I will challenge Europe's people to work together with America to complete the work that General Marshall's generation began, extending the reach of security and prosperity to the new democracies in Europe that once were on the other side in the cold war. Finally, I will have a chance to meet with the new Prime Minister of Great Britain to celebrate our unique partnership with our old and close ally.

My fellow Americans, if you look at all the gravestones here today, you will see that they have not died in vain, when you see what we enjoy today and that we stand at the pinnacle of our power, our success, and our influence as a nation. But that means we stand at the pinnacle of our responsibility.

At the end of World War II, General Marshall could make that case to America. We fought a bloody war because we did not assume that responsibility at the end of World War I. Today it is perhaps more difficult because we feel no impending threat as we did from the Communist forces in the cold war.

But I ask you when you leave this place today to ask yourself, as an American, what can I do to honor the sacrifices of those we honor here today? For what did George Marshall dedicate his life? For what did these people fight and die? And how can we make sure that we have a new century in which we do not repeat the mistakes of the last one?

I will say, the only way that can happen is if America refuses to walk away from the world and its present challenges. We must learn the lessons General Marshall and his generation left us. Their sacrifice and their spirit call upon us to seize this moment, to shape the peace of the present for future generations, to turn the hope we share into a history we can all be proud of.

And so on this day when we remember those who gave everything for our Nation and its freedom, let us resolve to honor them by renewing our commitment, on the edge of a new century and a new era, to lead the world toward greater peace and security, freedom and prosperity. In doing that, we will make Americans safer. We will allow our men and women in uniform to stand sentinel for our freedom with less risk to their lives.

May God always bless the American heroes we honor today. May He bless those fallen and

those who still stand at the ready. May He always bless the United States, and may He always give us the wisdom to do what is right for tomorrow.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:30 a.m. in the Amphitheater at Arlington National Cemetery. In

his remarks, he referred to Col. Joel R. Schwartzman, USAF, Chief of Chaplains, Bolling Air Force Base; John Metzler, Superintendent, Arlington National Cemetery; President Boris Yeltsin of Russia; and Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom.

Remarks at the Signing Ceremony for the NATO-Russia Founding Act in Paris, France *May 27, 1997*

President Yeltsin gave me this cane; now he's giving it to me twice. [*Laughter*]

Ladies and gentlemen, on this beautiful spring day in Paris, in the twilight of the 20th century, we look toward a new century with a new Russia and a new NATO, working together in a new Europe of unlimited possibility. The NATO-Russia Founding Act we have just signed joins a great nation and history's most successful alliance in common cause for a long-sought but never before realized goal: a peaceful, democratic, undivided Europe.

The United States feels a great deal of gratitude today. The world my predecessors dreamed of and worked for for 50 years is finally within reach. I want to thank President Chirac for his strong leadership in making this day possible and for hosting us. I thank President Yeltsin for his courage and vision, for his unbelievable capacity to imagine a future that is different from the past that imprisoned us. I thank his Foreign Minister, Mr. Primakov, for his negotiations in good faith to make this day possible. I especially thank Secretary General Solana for his brilliant and persistent and always good-natured efforts that made this founding act a reality. I thank my fellow leaders of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and especially our senior leader, Chancellor Kohl, who has worked longer and paid a higher price for the dream of a united Europe than any other leader.

For all of us, this is a great day. From now on, NATO and Russia will consult and coordinate and work together. Where we all agree, we will act jointly, as we are in Bosnia where a Russian brigade serves side by side with NATO troops, giving the Bosnian people a

chance to build a lasting peace. Deepening our partnership today will make all of us stronger and more secure.

The historic change in the relationship between NATO and Russia grows out of a fundamental change in how we think about each other and our future. NATO's member states recognize that the Russian people are building a new Russia, defining their greatness in terms of the future as much as the past. Russia's transition to democracy and open markets is as difficult as it is dramatic. And its steadfast commitment to freedom and reform has earned the world's admiration.

In turn, we are building a new NATO. It will remain the strongest alliance in history, with smaller, more flexible forces, prepared to provide for our defense but also trained for peace-keeping. It will work closely with other nations that share our hopes and values and interests through the Partnership For Peace. It will be an alliance directed no longer against a hostile bloc of nations but instead designed to advance the security of every democracy in Europe, NATO's old members, new members, and non-members alike.

I know that some still see NATO through the prism of the cold war and that especially in NATO's decision to open its doors to Central Europe's new democracies, they see a Europe still divided, only differently divided. But I ask them to look again, for this new NATO will work with Russia, not against it. And by reducing rivalry and fear, by strengthening peace and cooperation, by facing common threats to the security of all democracies, NATO will promote