

Remarks at a Dinner Hosted by President Aleksander Kwasniewski of  
Poland in Warsaw  
July 10, 1997

I and all of our American colleagues are honored to be here in Warsaw today, grateful that you have received us so warmly, proud to share in such an historic occasion for Poland, Europe, and the United States.

This week in Madrid, the old dividing lines of Europe were wiped away forever, and in their place we are building a framework of a Europe whole and free for the first time since nation-states arose on the Continent.

NATO's decision to welcome Poland into the alliance is both a tribute and a challenge: a tribute to the people of this great nation who were the first to unleash the force of freedom from behind the Iron Curtain; who pioneered the difficult transition to an open society and an open market; who took the lead in reaching out to your neighbors in the Baltics, Russia, and the Ukraine; who sent your troops to give the people of Bosnia a chance to rebuild their broken land.

It is a challenge to all of us to ensure that this moment of possibility fulfills its promise by meeting the solemn responsibilities that NATO membership entails, by living up to the shared ideals NATO represents, by continuing to support Europe's new democracies in their quest to be full partners in an undivided Europe, by making the defense of peace and freedom our common goal and commitment. I am confident we will meet these challenges because the love of liberty we share has been forged on the anvil of history.

In the park by the White House is a statue of Kosciusko, beloved son of Poland, adopted son of the United States. Moved by the ideals of our revolution, Kosciusko traveled to Philadelphia to enlist in freedom's cause. He was the first foreign soldier in America's army. He distinguished himself at Saratoga and West Point, where American cadets later built a monument in tribute to his role in forging our freedom. He returned to Poland to help defend his homeland against a foreign invasion. And though he did not succeed, he inspired the world with his courage and the force of his ideals. Thomas Jefferson said of his Polish friend, "He was as pure a son of liberty as I have ever known

and of that liberty which is to go to all, not to the few and rich alone."

In the more than 200 years since Kosciusko came to us, Poland has given us many sons and daughters of liberty. I want to say a special word about one—adopted son of the United States and pure son of liberty, the Chairman of our Joint Chiefs of Staff, the highest ranking American in the United States military, General John Shalikashvili, who is here with us tonight.

He was born here in Poland. He witnessed the destruction of Warsaw. He saw its heroic rise against tyranny. A child born of war, he has given his entire life to the cause of peace. Our ability to be here tonight celebrating NATO's enlargement is due in no small measure to his visionary leadership in helping to create the Partnership For Peace. The American people, and the President in particular, are very proud of the service of this son of Poland, John Shalikashvili. Thank you, sir.

The Poles have a tradition of sending their finest sons to fight for others' freedom. I have been told of the Polish phrase that describes this tradition, a phrase that also represents our new alliance through NATO. It goes, "For your freedom and ours," I believe: *Za wolnosc wasza i nasza*.

Nothing is more precious, nothing more noble, nothing more right. It is the spirit of Poland, the spirit of America, the spirit of NATO, to which this great nation is joining its strength fully, finally, forever.

I now ask you to join me in raising a glass to the President, the distinguished leaders here present, the people of Poland, the enduring friendship between our nations, and the future we will create in the new century.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 8:30 p.m. at the Presidential Palace. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.