

know who they are—and we know who they are—who have played a very constructive role in this process.

I was especially pleased that a bipartisan group of Members joined me last summer at the NATO Summit in Madrid. The wide-ranging debate on this issue within Congress and across our Nation is indeed a model of the kind of thoughtful, nonpartisan discussion we must have, and I commend Congress for helping to lead it.

Now the decision rests in the hands of the Senate, and I believe it's in good hands.

This room is named for Benjamin Franklin, one of America's first envoys to Europe after independence. I'm reminded of the comment he made at the close of our Constitutional Convention. He noted that on the chair of the Convention's President, George Washington, was a painted figure of the Sun, a symbol, he thought, of our new Republic. Mr. Franklin said, "I have the happiness to know it is rising and not a setting Sun." In the wake of the cold war, some

wondered whether our alliance faced a rising or a setting Sun, whether it had just a brilliant past or perhaps an even brighter future. With the step we take today, and the decision I am confident the Senate will take in the near future, I know that our historic partnership of nations is a rising Sun and that its ascendance will bring a more stable, more democratic, more peaceful, more unified future for all of us who live on both sides of the Atlantic.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:05 p.m. in the Benjamin Franklin Room at the State Department. In his remarks, he referred to former Secretary of State Alexander M. Haig, Jr.; former National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski; John J. Sweeney, president, AFL-CIO; Foreign Minister Laszlo Kovacs of Hungary; Foreign Minister Bronislaw Geremek of Poland; Foreign Minister Jaroslav Sedivy of the Czech Republic; and President Petar Stoyanov of Bulgaria.

Message to the Senate Transmitting the Protocols of Accession to NATO for Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic

February 11, 1998

To the Senate of the United States:

I transmit herewith Protocols to the North Atlantic Treaty of 1949 on the accession of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic. These Protocols were opened for signature at Brussels on December 16, 1997, and signed on behalf of the United States of America and the other parties to the North Atlantic Treaty. I request the advice and consent of the Senate to the ratification of these documents, and transmit for the Senate's information the report made to me by the Secretary of State regarding this matter.

The accession of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) will improve the ability of the United States to protect and advance our interests in the transatlantic area. The end of the Cold War changed the nature of the threats to this region, but not the fact that Europe's peace, stability, and well-being are vital to our own national security. The addition of these well-qualified democracies, which have

demonstrated their commitment to the values of freedom and the security of the broader region, will help deter potential threats to Europe, deepen the continent's stability, bolster its democratic advances, erase its artificial division, and strengthen an Alliance that has proved its effectiveness during and since the Cold War.

NATO is not the only instrument in our efforts to help build a new and undivided Europe, but it is our most important contributor to peace and security for the region. NATO's steadfastness during the long years of the Cold War, its performance in the mission it has led in Bosnia, the strong interest of a dozen new European democracies in becoming members, and the success of the Alliance's Partnership for Peace program all under score the continuing vitality of the Alliance and the Treaty that brought it into existence.

NATO's mission in Bosnia is of particular importance. No other multinational institution possessed the military capabilities and political cohesiveness necessary to bring an end to the fighting in the former Yugoslavia—Europe's worst conflict since World War II—and to give the people of that region a chance to build a lasting peace. Our work in Bosnia is not yet complete, but we should be thankful that NATO existed to unite Allies and partners in this determined common effort. Similarly, we should welcome steps such as the Alliance's enlargement that can strengthen its ability to meet future challenges, beginning with NATO's core mission of collective defense and other missions that we and our Allies may choose to pursue.

The three states that NATO now proposes to add as full members will make the Alliance stronger while helping to enlarge Europe's zone of democratic stability. Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic have been leaders in Central Europe's dramatic transformation over the past decade and already are a part of NATO's community of values. They each played pivotal roles in the overthrow of communist rule and repression, and they each proved equal to the challenge of comprehensive democratic and market reform. Together, they have helped to make Central Europe the continent's most robust zone of economic growth.

All three of these states will be security producers for the Alliance and not merely security consumers. They have demonstrated this through the accords they have reached with neighboring states, the contributions they have made to the mission in Bosnia, the forces they plan to commit to the Alliance, and the military modernization programs they have already begun and pledge to continue in the years to come at their own expense. These three states will strengthen NATO through the addition of military resources, strategic depth, and the prospect of greater stability in Europe's central region. American troops have worked alongside soldiers from each of these nations in earlier times, in the case of the Poles, dating back to our own Revolutionary War. Our cooperation with the Poles, Hungarians, and Czechs has contributed to our security in the past, and our Alliance with them will contribute to our security in the years to come.

The purpose of NATO's enlargement extends beyond the security of these three states, however, and entails a process encompassing more

than their admission to the Alliance. Accordingly, these first new members should not and will not be the last. No qualified European democracy is ruled out as a future member. The Alliance has agreed to review the process of enlargement at its 1999 summit in Washington. As we prepare for that summit, I look forward to discussing this matter with my fellow NATO leaders. The process of enlargement, combined with the Partnership for Peace program, the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, the NATO-Russia Founding Act, and NATO's new charter with Ukraine, signify NATO's commitment to avoid any new division of Europe, and to contribute to its progressive integration.

A democratic Russia is and should be a part of that new Europe. With bipartisan congressional support, my Administration and my predecessor's have worked with our Allies to support political and economic reform in Russia and the other newly independent states and to increase the bonds between them and the rest of Europe. NATO's enlargement and other adaptations are consistent, not at odds, with that policy. NATO has repeatedly demonstrated that it does not threaten Russia and that it seeks closer and more cooperative relations. We and our Allies welcomed the participation of Russian forces in the mission in Bosnia.

NATO most clearly signaled its interest in a constructive relationship through the signing in May 1997 of the NATO-Russia Founding Act. That Act, and the Permanent Joint Council it created, help to ensure that if Russia seeks to build a positive and peaceful future within Europe, NATO will be a full partner in that enterprise. I understand it will require time for the Russian people to gain a new understanding of NATO. The Russian people, in turn, must understand that an open door policy with regard to the addition of new members is an element of a new NATO. In this way, we will build a new and more stable Europe of which Russia is an integral part.

I therefore propose the ratification of these Protocols with every expectation that we can continue to pursue productive cooperation with the Russian Federation. I am encouraged that President Yeltsin has pledged his government's commitment to additional progress on nuclear and conventional arms control measures. At our summit in Helsinki, for example, we agreed that once START II has entered into force we will begin negotiations on a START III accord that

can achieve even deeper cuts in our strategic arsenals. Similarly, Russia's ratification of the Chemical Weapons Convention last year demonstrated that cooperation on a range of security matters will continue.

The Protocols of accession that I transmit to you constitute a decision of great consequence, and they involve solemn security commitments. The addition of new states also will entail financial costs. While those costs will be manageable and broadly shared with our current and new Allies, they nonetheless represent a sacrifice by the American people.

Successful ratification of these Protocols demands not only the Senate's advice and consent required by our Constitution, but also the broader, bipartisan support of the American people and their representatives. For that reason, it is encouraging that congressional leaders in both parties and both chambers have long advocated NATO's enlargement. I have endeavored to make the Congress an active partner in this process. I was pleased that a bipartisan group of Senators and Representatives accompanied the U.S. delegation at the NATO summit in Madrid last July. Officials at all levels of my Administration have consulted closely with the relevant committees and with the bipartisan Senate NATO Observer Group. It is my hope that this pattern of consultation and cooperation will ensure that NATO and our broader European policies continue to have the sustained bipartisan support that was so instrumental to their success throughout the decades of the Cold War.

The American people today are the direct beneficiaries of the extraordinary sacrifices made by our fellow citizens in the many theaters of that "long twilight struggle," and in the two world wars that preceded it. Those efforts aimed in large part to create across the breadth of Europe a lasting, democratic peace. The en-

largement of NATO represents an indispensable part of today's program to finish building such a peace, and therefore to repay a portion of the debt we owe to those who went before us in the quest for freedom and security.

The rise of new challenges in other regions does not in any way diminish the necessity of consolidating the increased level of security that Europe has attained at such high cost. To the contrary, our policy in Europe, including the Protocols I transmit herewith, can help preserve today's more favorable security environment in the transatlantic area, thus making it possible to focus attention and resources elsewhere while providing us with additional Allies and partners to help share our security burdens.

The century we are now completing has been the bloodiest in all of human history. Its lessons should be clear to us: the wisdom of deterrence, the value of strong Alliances, the potential for overcoming past divisions, and the imperative of American engagement in Europe. The NATO Alliance is one of the most important embodiments of these truths, and it is in the interest of the United States to strengthen this proven institution and adapt it to a new era. The addition to this Alliance of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic is an essential part of that program. It will help build a Europe that can be integrated, democratic, free, and at peace for the first time in its history. It can help ensure that we and our Allies and our partners will enjoy greater security and freedom in the century that is about to begin.

I therefore recommend that the Senate give prompt advice and consent to ratification of these historic Protocols.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
February 11, 1998.

Statement on Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt *February 11, 1998*

I have known Bruce Babbitt for many years. He is a man of the highest integrity and a dedicated public servant. I am convinced that when this matter is concluded he will be vindicated.

I look forward to his continuing service to the American people.