

everything we could to resolve this matter peacefully.

But when we fight, we fight to prevail—to prevail in this conflict and to build the undivided, democratic Europe that the founders of NATO envisioned 50 years ago.

Thank you, and welcome again.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 9:25 a.m. in the pavilion at the Ronald Reagan Inter-

national Trade Center. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary General Javier Solana of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization; and President Slobodan Milosevic of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro). The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Secretary General Solana.

## Remarks at a North Atlantic Treaty Organization Commemorative Ceremony

*April 23, 1999*

Mr. Secretary General, leaders of NATO, other distinguished foreign guests, my fellow Americans. It is a profound honor for the United States to welcome NATO back to Washington for its 50th anniversary, an occasion to honor NATO's past, to reaffirm its present mission in Kosovo, to envision its future.

In 1949, in his acceptance speech for the Nobel Prize, the American novelist William Faulkner acknowledged the fear of nuclear holocaust that then gripped the world. But he declared firmly that humanity will not merely endure, it will prevail. In that same year, 12 nations came here to pledge to vindicate that faith. They were North Americans and Europeans determined to build a new Europe on the ruins of the old through a mutual commitment to each other's security and freedom.

In this auditorium, the French Foreign Minister, Robert Schuman, said that NATO's fundamental aim was not to win a war that would, after all, leave Europe ravaged but to avoid such a war, and I quote, "by becoming, together, strong enough to safeguard the peace." He was right. No member of NATO has ever been called upon to fire a shot in anger to defend an ally from attack.

The American Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, said that NATO would "free the minds of men in many nations from a haunting sense of insecurity and enable them to work and plan with confidence in the future." And he was right. NATO bought time for the Marshall plan. It encouraged allies to pool their military and

economic strength, instead of pitting it against their neighbors.

The Prime Minister of Canada, Lester Pearson, predicted that the NATO Pact's achievement would "extend beyond the time of emergency which gave it birth, or the geographical area which it now includes." And he, too, was right. NATO gave hope to West Germany and confidence to Greece and Turkey. Ultimately, NATO helped break the grip of the cold war. Yesterday, Europe divided by an arbitrary line: on one side, free people living in fear of aggression; on the other, people living in tyranny who wanted to be free. Today, thanks in no small measure to NATO, most of Europe is free and at peace.

Today we are joined by the leaders of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic, whose descent into darkness helped to spark NATO's creation. Today they are a part of NATO, pledged to defend what was too long denied to them. So we say to Prime Minister Orbán, President Havel, President Kwasniewski: Welcome to NATO, welcome home to the community of freedom.

As we look to the future, we know that for the first time in history we have a chance to build a Europe truly undivided, peaceful, and free. But we know there are challenges to that vision: in the fragility of new democracies; in the proliferation of deadly weapons and terrorism; and surely, in the awful specter of ethnic cleansing in southeast Europe, where Mr. Milosevic—first in Croatia and Slovenia, then in Bosnia, now in Kosovo—has inflamed ancient

hatreds to gain and maintain his power. He is bent on dehumanizing, indeed, destroying a whole people and their culture and, in the process, driving his own people to deep levels of distress.

We're in Kosovo because we want to replace ethnic cleansing with tolerance and decency, violence with security, disintegration with restoration, isolation with integration into the rest of the region and the continent. We want southeastern Europe to travel the same road as Western Europe half a century ago and Central Europe a decade ago.

But we are fundamentally there because the Alliance will not have meaning in the 21st century if it permits the slaughter of innocents on its doorstep. This is not a question of territorial conquest or political domination but standing for the values that made NATO possible in the first place.

This is the mission of NATO at the age of 50 on the edge of a new century, determined to reach forward into the future with a united continent, with a collective defense, remaining open to new members from the Baltics to the Black Sea, remaining committed to work with partners for peace and progress, including Russia and Ukraine, and others who are willing to work for the values and the future we dream of. This is the kind of alliance we come to this summit to reaffirm and to build for the future.

Almost 100 years ago, President Theodore Roosevelt said something that could well be applied to a united Europe and to our united transatlantic Alliance today. Of America's coming of age in the world, he said, "We have no choice as to whether we will play a great

part in the world. That has been determined for us by fate, by the march of events. The only question is whether we will play it well or ill."

Our nations played our part well after World War II, from the Berlin airlift to the founding of NATO, to the restoration of hope and confidence in Western Europe. We played it well after the cold war, from the reunification of Germany to the enlargement of NATO, to the support we have offered democratic open government in Russia and Ukraine, and the reach out we have done to other partners for peace. We played it well when we joined together to end the slaughter in Bosnia.

Now we rise, as we must, to this new and fundamental challenge to the peace and humanity of Europe. Our message is clear: Peace and humanity will prevail in Kosovo. The refugees will go home; they will have security; they will have their self-government. The last European dictatorship of the 20th century will not destroy Europe's long-awaited chance to live, at last, together in peace and freedom.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 1:15 p.m. in the Mellon Auditorium. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary General Javier Solana of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization; Prime Minister Viktor Orban of Hungary; President Václav Havel of the Czech Republic; President Aleksander Kwasniewski of Poland; and President Slobodan Milosevic of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro). The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Secretary General Solana.

## **Joint Statement on Kosovo** *April 23, 1999*

1. The crisis in Kosovo represents a fundamental challenge to the values for which NATO has stood since its foundation: democracy, human rights and the rule of law. It is the culmination of a deliberate policy of oppression, ethnic cleansing and violence pursued by the Belgrade regime under the direction of President Milosevic. We will not allow this campaign

of terror to succeed. NATO is determined to prevail.

2. NATO's military action against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) supports the political aims of the international community, which were reaffirmed in recent statements by the UN Secretary-General and the European Union: a peaceful, multi-ethnic and democratic Kosovo