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THE SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON

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July 14, 1997

Dear Mr. President,

I am heading back from Prague - Vilnius, St. Petersburg, Ljubljana and Bucharest and Warsaw - but I must admit that the Prague stop was the most moving for me.

Mr. President, you have created a new world for the people of Central and Eastern Europe. I know we have been saying that for some time in speeches and interviews, but it really was evident in the faces of the people we saw. Your steadfastness on this issue has payed off - and you have undone injustice, kept a promise, and launched an undivided Europe in a new direction.

Mr President, standing in Prague on a stage in a building where the Czechoslovak Republic was announced in 1918, facing over a 1,000 Czech dignitaries, and hearing the "Star Spangled Banner" and the Czech

National Anthem. "Where Is My Home?" I worked hard to keep my composure. I thought about my parents, and I thought about you. I am grateful beyond measure to you for giving me the privilege of representing this the most remarkable country in the world. Thank you for letting me share in righting wrongs in Central and Eastern Europe, and especially for the country of my birth.

The Czechs said to me - you have brought us optimism. Thank you for letting me deliver that message. I ended my speech the way that you do - by saying "God Bless You." That surprised and pleased them. So as you say, Mr. President "God Bless America."

With greatest admiration, affection,
and gratitude.

Mlodnicki

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Office of the Spokesman

(Prague, Czech Republic)

For Immediate Release

July 15, 1997

A MOMENT OF CELEBRATION AND OF DEDICATION

AN ADDRESS BY SECRETARY MADELEINE K. ALBRIGHT
TO THE PEOPLE OF PRAGUE

Obecni Dum
Prague, Czech Republic
July 14, 1997

President Havel, Prime Minister Klaus, Mayor Koukal, Senators and Parliamentarians, Excellencies, distinguished guests, thank you so much for your warm and unforgettable welcome. Let me begin by expressing my sadness at the devastation that has been caused by the flooding over the last week. Our thoughts and prayers today are with those who have lost their loved ones and their homes. I know that there are many mayors here from regions affected by the flood. The solidarity and dedication that you and the Czech people have shown in this tragedy is inspiring.

This week, as I traveled from Madrid to central Europe, I could not help but think about the three journeys that have framed my life, and my life's work:

I have been thinking about the memories and the meaning of my own family's journey through the war and the turbulence of post-war Europe to the freedom and security of the United States.

I have been thinking as well about Europe's journey from total war to absolute division to the promise of enduring unity and peace.

And of course, I have been thinking about the journey of the Czech nation from the day in 1918 when its independence was proclaimed on this very spot, to the day in 1948 when its liberty was extinguished, to this day, when you take your rightful place in the family of European democracies -- fully, finally and forever.

T.S. Eliot wrote:

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.

Today, you know me in a new way, in my new role. And I see you in a new way as well -- not only as the friend of the United States, but also as our next ally. Truth does conquer, after all. President Havel, Truth and love conquer, after all.

I have been here many times since the Velvet Revolution. And I am filled with pride every time I hear the playing of my country's national anthem, "The Star Spangled Banner," and yours, "Where is My Home." But nothing compares to the feeling of coming to my original home, Prague, as the Secretary of State of the United States, for the purpose of saying to you: Welcome home.

For with the news from Madrid this week, you are coming home *in fact* to the community of freedom that you never left *in spirit*.

From Munich to Madrid, from tragedy to triumph, it has been a long and painful journey. But you have arrived at your destination.

You have arrived at a moment of injustice undone, of promises kept, of a unified Europe begun. Now, a new journey begins; and at last, we can travel it together.

We stand at one of those great turning points in history. For the third time in this century, the politics of Europe are changing fundamentally. And this time, we pray, for good.

Almost 80 years ago, our parents and grandparents were full of the hope that Woodrow Wilson's dream of universal democracy inspired across the lands of central and eastern Europe. That dream was shattered by the illusion that the people of Paris and London and New York could simply go on with their lives while the people of Vilnius and Krakow and Prague were robbed of their independence, sent away in box cars, and machine-gunned in forests.

After World War II, it was Stalin's armies that shattered our dream. And for the next 50 years, one half of Europe was consigned to subjugation, the other half to fear. We were separated by concrete and barbed wire, by radio jammers and minefields, by lies that might seem ridiculous today had they not ruined so many lives.

The amazing thing is that all those years of propaganda, terror, and isolation utterly failed to flatten Europe's moral landscape. The communist authorities kept from you the truth, and still you spoke the truth. They fed you a vacuous culture and still you gave us works of art that fill our lives with intelligence, humor and warmth. They tried to smother your allegiances, your faith and your initiative, and still you taught the world the meaning of solidarity and civil society. They banished your finest leaders, and still you gave us Vaclav Havel.

This is what we must remember as the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland join NATO. As President Clinton has said, we are not just new allies. In the ways that truly matter, we are old allies. We are and always have been part of the same community.

NATO membership will bring many benefits to the Czech Republic and to others who join today and in the future -- as will our broader strategy of integration. Above all, it means you will always be able to rely on us and we will always be able to rely on you. If there is a threat to the peace and security of this country, we will be bound by a solemn commitment to defeat it together. For this reason, we can be confident such a threat is far less likely to arise.

It means security in Europe will not stop at its Cold War dividing lines. It means Europe's new democracies will not be consigned to a buffer zone of excluded states. It means you will be the authors of your history, the masters of your destiny, the vassals and victims of no one.

But, my friends, this is more than a moment of celebration. For NATO's old and new allies alike, it is also a moment of challenge.

Our most immediate challenge is to ensure together that the people and parliaments of NATO's 16 member nations embrace the enlargement of our alliance. In America, the debate will be vigorous. Because we take our commitments seriously, we do not extend them lightly.

I believe that our Senate will approve this initiative, but the burden of proof will still rest with those of us who believe that NATO enlargement serves American interests. The Senators will ask us many appropriate questions about risks and costs. They will remind you, as do I, that with a first class ticket to NATO comes the obligation to make a first class contribution.

Regrettably, you will also hear echoes of Munich in this debate. Already, people have trotted out the tired myth that in times of crisis we will make no sacrifice to defend a distant city with an unpronounceable name; that we will protect the freedom of Barcelona but not Brno, Stuttgart but not Szczecin.

I challenge those critics: come meet your future allies. Speak with their people. Their names may sound unfamiliar, but they speak the same language of freedom. Visit the veterans in this region who fought for the allied cause in World War II. Talk to the veterans of the dissident movements. They have spent a lifetime sacrificing for the ideals we have in common. Look them in the eye. Ask them why we should be allied with Europe's old democracies forever, but its new democracies never.

You might listen to President Havel, as well. "If we appeal to the West not to close itself off to us," he has said, "this is not only because we are concerned about our own security and stability. We are concerned about the destiny of the values and principles that communism denied, and in whose name we resisted communism and ultimately brought it down."

Defending values, righting history's wrongs -- these are idealistic arguments. Oddly, some are troubled by that. They want NATO to retain its military muscle, but they are suspicious of enlargement because it also appeals to our hearts. Others, who champion freedom in central Europe and Russia, are suspicious of enlargement precisely because NATO is an organization with tanks and bombers. But there is no contradiction here between realism and idealism, between pragmatism and principle, between security and justice.

Those of us who knew Prague before the Cold War know that freedom without security is a frail reed. And those in America who most ardently prosecuted the Cold War should be the first to admit that it was not merely a military enterprise, but an idealistic one as well.

You know that NATO enlargement fulfills a moral *and* strategic challenge. By turning a Europe of shared values into a Europe of shared responsibilities, you know we can do both.

Because we are old friends, let me speak plainly. NATO is welcoming new members because we know you are ready to make an even deeper commitment to the common endeavors of our alliance of democracies -- from the pursuit of peace in troubled regions, to the fight against terror and crime, to our support for those who still struggle for the freedom you enjoy.

For example, the SFOR mission in Bosnia will come to an end in one year. But the United States has made a long-term commitment to support peace in that country and given what you have already done in Bosnia, I trust you will, too. I trust you will also be leaders in the effort to keep deadly weapons from dangerous rogue states, even if it means losing a sale from time to time. And I trust you will pay the costs and do what is necessary to assure the full integration of the Czech armed forces into NATO.

It is your willingness to assume great responsibilities that has brought you to this point. You are about to join NATO. You are already a member of the OECD. No doubt, you will join the EU as well. Our memory of the last 50 years makes it hard to believe, but as you enter these institutions, you will stand among the most prosperous and powerful nations in the world.

You are no longer on the outside looking in; you are on the inside looking forward.

For 50 years, you looked to the free world for support, understanding, and recognition. Now you are the free world; other nations will look to you for support.

Part of our new responsibility to others is to ensure that the door to NATO remains open to all European democracies that are willing and able to meet the obligations of membership.

That is the policy NATO adopted in Madrid. We count on you to support that policy in word and deed. It is also a personal commitment President Clinton has made to all the nations that lie between the Baltic and Black Seas. And it is our message today to the people of Slovakia. For it is our sincere hope that their nation will rejoin the path of true democratic reform and make itself a strong candidate for the second round of NATO enlargement.

To all the nations that still aspire to join NATO, I say: consider why we have invited the Czech Republic. It is not because the Czechs are somehow more "European" than the Orthodox and Muslim peoples to the south and east; we have no patience for that kind of thinking. It is not because Prague is west of Vienna. It is not just because of your pre-war democratic tradition.

Rather, the Czech Republic's invitation to NATO was inscribed by its deeds over the past seven years. Others will soon be ready to follow your lead, and you must join us in helping them.

You know that the effort to join NATO is not a race to escape a bad neighborhood. It is an effort to improve the neighborhood for the benefit of all.

This is why I appreciate the Czech Republic's support for the NATO-Russia Founding Act and your recognition that a democratic Russia must be part of a Europe whole and free. As President Havel has said, "in this era, we -- as nations -- cannot divide ourselves according to who were the victors and who the vanquished in the past."

After my trip to Europe this week, I am more confident than ever that together, we can meet his challenge and more. In Madrid, I saw NATO's strength as its leaders made a decision that was difficult but right. With President Clinton in Warsaw, I saw that our new allies are not just ready but eager to add their energy to ours. In Bucharest, I watched the President address 100,000 people at University Square -- and even though their country will not be among the first group of new allies, they showed us that they support NATO's enlargement and that they will do what it takes to be part of a new Europe. I heard the same message in Ljubljana and in Vilnius. And in St. Petersburg, I saw a Russia that is moving ahead with reform and moving closer to the rest of Europe.

Today, I can foresee a Europe where every nation is free and every free nation is our partner. Not long ago, that was a future we might have imagined, but in the darkest moments perhaps thought would never come. And that brings me back to the earlier part of my remarks -- and of my life.

Fifty years ago, Jan Masaryk was told by Stalin in Moscow that Czechoslovakia must not participate in the Marshall Plan despite its national interest in doing so. Upon his return to Prague, Masaryk told my father, his chef de cabinet, that it was then he understood that he was employed by a government no longer sovereign in its own land.

Soon after, the communists took over in Prague. That coup drove my parents and me from this country for the second time. And more than any other single event, that coup awakened America and western Europe to the need for an Atlantic Alliance. Thus, the event that cast my family out of Prague, and you into darkness, also helped to create the Alliance that has brought me back again, and put you in the center of a new Europe.

Today, there is no Stalin to give orders to you or to anyone. The opportunity to be part of the international system is open to all. The goal of integration is not bound by strategic realities or confined by cultural arrogance to western Europe, to central Europe or even to Europe.

Today, the west has no fixed eastern frontiers. Every democratic nation that seeks to participate in the global system we are constructing and that is willing to do all it can to help itself will have America's help in finding the right path. Now they will have your help and your example as well.

People of Prague, people of the Czech Republic: Half a century ago, our journeys diverged. But this week's events have brought our paths together again. Now thanks to the vision of my President, Bill Clinton, and the courage of your people, we are reunited in a common cause. Soon we will be joined in a common alliance. And we will never be parted again.

You were the passion of my parents. You are the land of my birth. And now you and I, my nation and yours, will build and defend a new Europe together. God bless you.

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