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Remarks at the Welcoming Ceremony for President Lech Walesa of Poland

March 20, 1991

President Bush. Mr. President, to all our Polish and American friends here today: A poet once wrote, ''Let me address you in the name of millions.'' Today, I address you in the name of millions who convey their admiration and love—the people of the United States.

Two years ago, Lech Walesa became only the second private citizen from abroad to address a joint session of the Congress. And he impressed us then with his commitment to goodness, his passion for the hard-fought necessity we call democracy. Today he returns as his nation's first democratically elected President.

Mr. President, you have led by principle and example. You created a solidarity of spirit that inspired millions of Poles to risk their lives in steel mills, shipyards, and tenements and towns. And after winning the fight for independence, you instilled the sense of tolerance essential for letting democracy set down roots in an unsettled world. No wonder your countrymen sing to you, *''Sto lat, sto lat''*—may he live 100 years.

But you also understand that the cause of freedom cannot end at your own borders, and you proved it during the war in the Persian Gulf. You joined us in demonstrating to the entire world that we cannot permit aggression to stand. And you taught your countrymen that the answer to tyranny is international solidarity. And in the process, you helped shape a new world order.

That order, of course, began in Europe with the end of the cold war and the emergence of a continent whole and free. You played a key role in helping Central and Eastern Europe join the commonwealth of freedom. And you have worked hard to build a prosperous land upon tyranny's ruins.

This is not an easy task. In your New Year's Eve message, you talked of reform: political reform—you've called for fully free parliamentary elections; intellectual reform that can help man begin the hard work of freedom; spiritual reform, honoring the One through whom all things are possible; and finally, you've spoken of economic reform, upon which so much depends. In your address to Congress, you said, ''We are not expecting philanthropy. But we would like to see our country treated as a partner and friend.''

Today we rededicate ourselves to the success of free democracy in Poland and throughout Central and Eastern Europe.

Last week, the Paris Club agreed to cut Poland's official debt burden by at least 50 percent. The United States worked long and hard to achieve that unprecedented agreement, and we encourage other creditors to join us in going beyond that 50-percent level. We certainly shall. We will reduce your indebtedness to us by a full 70 percent, a portion of which will help Poland fund a new foundation for the environment.

I am pleased to tell you, Mr. President, that I've asked the Congress to increase next year's grant assistance to these new democracies to $470 million, half again last year's request. And since the real engine of progress is not aid but trade, I am pleased to announce two new economic initiatives designed to help the nations of Central and Eastern Europe proceed along the path to growth and prosperity.

The American Business Initiative and the Trade Enhancement Initiative will encourage businesses to invest in your future. In addition, Commerce Secretary Robert Mosbacher will lead an investment mission to Poland this summer, letting U.S. businesses see the great opportunity the new Poland offers.

So, as you can see, Mr. President, we want your economic transformation to succeed, your new democracy to flourish. And we call on other nations to follow our example.

For two centuries, the love of liberty has linked our lands. General Kosciusko was a friend to our Founding Fathers, just as you

and His Holiness Pope John Paul II are our steadfast friends today. Mr. President, our nations and heroes have long fought together to defend the rights of man. This historic commitment forms the core of the Joint Declaration of Principles that we will sign later today.

Two hundred years ago, gallant Polish freedom fighters praised these principles when they sang, ''Poland is not lost while Poles still live.'' Today we rejoice. Poland is not lost but has once again been found because men like you still live.

God bless you, your beloved land, and our United States of America.

President Walesa. Honored Mr. President, thank you for such a nice welcome. Thank you for your friendly words. I am happy that I stepped again on the hospitable American land.

I come as the President of a sovereign and democratic Republic of Poland, the country which was the first to challenge communism and today is building a system of freedom, democracy, and free enterprise.

It is not a coincidence that it is America which is the target of one of my first trips in my Presidential term of office. The United States has, for over 200 years, been exemplifying to the world how to build a system of freedom. The United States led the free world defending values of democracy and humanism. Your determination and your civilizational bloom were the hope of Poles opposing alien domination. It was America, in the name of the international community, that restored recently peace and justice in the Persian Gulf.

Poland is not a world superpower; her actions do not have a global dimension. But it was Poland first in Central Europe to step upon the path of freedom. Poland is the country which paves the way for other nations liberating themselves from communism.

Poland also took upon itself the burden of leading in the structuring of a market economy. We used in the past the assistance of the United States of America—political, economic, and first of all, moral.

Today, a major part of our debt burden was reduced. Your personal involvement in this cause has, for Poland, a historical dimension. It gives us new, great possibilities. For this help, I most cordially thank the great American Nation.

The changes in Poland are not completed yet. The political victory of Solidarity should be reflected in economic success. Our success is important not only to us; it is needed for Europe because it is a condition of order and stability. It is needed by the whole free world, for it extends its boundaries by the central region of the continent, it extends the zone of democracy and security.

The relations between the Republic of Poland and the United States have today reached their peak after the war. One could even say that they reached their peak in the whole of history. Our countries are linked by common values and the same ideals. We are linked by friendly collaboration on the international arena. I would like this to be followed by a development of mutually advantageous economic cooperation.

Free Poland is becoming a country of new economic opportunities. It is worth to broaden the cooperation with it, to trade and to invest. I invite you to this cooperation, for it is going to be advantageous to both sides.

I know, Mr. President, that you're a sincere friend of Poland. I'm grateful to you for your extremely goodwill interest in our problems. Our talks shall contribute to the strengthening of cooperation and the friendship of our nations.

God bless you, Mr. President. God bless America.

Note: President Bush spoke at 10:12 a.m. at the South Portico of the White House, where President Walesa was accorded a formal welcome with full military honors. In his remarks, President Bush referred to Secretary of Commerce Robert A. Mosbacher. President Walesa spoke in Polish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. Following the ceremony, the two Presidents met in the Oval Office.