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their plants are located. Through Project Change, Levi's has worked with local leaders all across the country—and some of them introduced here today—to fight old hatreds and fill the opportunity gaps between the races. From increasing access to credit and capital in Albuquerque to raising awareness about hate crimes in Knoxville, these two companies' efforts on behalf of diversity and against racism are models which we hope by this award to have followed by more companies all across the United States.

I also want to pay tribute to the three companies that received honorable mention. I mentioned their representatives earlier: Bright Horizons children's centers, Lancaster Laboratories, Public Service Electric and Gas Company. I thank them for their leadership and innovation in strengthening their communities, helping their employees meet the responsibilities of parenthood and at work. I hope their successes will also inspire more companies to follow in their footsteps.

I still miss Ron Brown a lot, and I think of him often. It's hard for me to believe that in a few weeks we'll celebrate—or mark—the second anniversary of his passing. In a very special way, every time we present these awards to deserving businesses, we will keep alive the mission that Ron Brown was on nearly two Aprils ago in the Balkans: to promote the idea that business can do well by doing good, that they can profit by bringing hope and prosperity to people.

I know Ron is smiling down on us today. I know he's proud of the five companies we've honored. I know he's looking forward to the day when companies in every community in our Nation will have earned the distinction of being Ron Brown Award winners.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:32 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Edgar S. Woolard, Jr., chair, and Curtis H. Barnette, member, board of directors, Ron Brown Award for Corporate Leadership; Alma Brown, widow of former Commerce Secretary Ron Brown, and their children Michael, Tammy, and Tracey; Louis V. Gerstner, Jr., chief executive officer, IBM; Robert O. Haas, chief executive officer, Levi Strauss & Co.; Alfred C. Koeppe, vice president, Public Service Electric and Gas Company; Roger Brown and Linda Mason, owners, Bright Horizons; and J. Wilson Hershey, president, Lancaster Laboratories.

Remarks on Signing the Transmittal to the Senate of the Protocols of Accession to NATO for Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic

February 11, 1998

Thank you very much, Mr. Vice President, Madam Secretary, Senator Roth, Senator Biden, Senator Lieberman, Senator Mikulski, Senator DeWine, Congressman Solomon, Congressman Gejdenson, Deputy Secretary of Defense Hamre, NSA Adviser Berger, and the other distinguished military and diplomatic and citizen guests who are here. I especially thank the retired members of the Joint Chiefs who have endorsed NATO expansion. And thank you, Secretary Haig and Mr. Brzezinski and Mr. Sweeney, for being here. To all the diplomatic corps and especially to Minister Kovacs, Minister Geremek, and Minister Sedivy, we are pleased that all of you are here today.

This building has seen many negotiations and the signing of many pacts to end bloodshed. Now we come together not to sign another agreement to end a war but instead to begin a new era of security and stability for America and for Europe. In just a moment, I will transmit to the Senate for its advice and consent the documents that will add Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic to NATO. Their addition to the alliance is not only a pivotal event in the quest for freedom and security by their own people; it is also a major stride forward for America, for the alliance, and for the stability and unity of all Europe, a big part of our dream that we can in the 21st century create for the first time in all history a Europe that is free, at peace, and undivided.

As the Senate takes up consideration of these agreements, the question the Members of the

Senate must answer is, how does adding these states to NATO advance America's national security? I believe there are three compelling reasons.

First, the alliance will make NATO stronger. The cold war has passed, but dangers remain. Conflicts like the one in Bosnia, weapons of mass destruction, threats we cannot even predict today, require a NATO that is strong. A NATO that embraces Europe's new democracies will be more capable of carrying out the core mission of defending the territory of its members, as well as addressing new kinds of conflicts that threaten our common peace.

These three states will add some 200,000 troops to the alliance. A larger NATO will be a better deterrent against aggressors of the future. It will deepen the ranks of those who stand with us should deterrents fail. I am pleased that just last week 60 of America's top retired military leaders, including 5 former Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, underscored that message when they said these 3 states will make NATO stronger. They are right, and we have already seen the proof.

As we speak, Czech, Hungarian, and Polish troops are participating in NATO's peacekeeping effort in Bosnia. They served beside us in the Gulf war, where they made a significant contribution to our success. And they recognize the threat to the world posed today by Saddam Hussein and by his efforts to develop weapons of mass destruction. I am pleased that all three countries have announced that they are prepared to serve and support with us as appropriate, should military action prove necessary.

We all hope we can avoid the use of force. But let's face it, in the end, that is up to Saddam Hussein. He must let the weapons inspectors back with full and free access to all suspect sites. If he will not act, we must be prepared to do so.

The second reason NATO must grow is that it will make Europe more stable. NATO can do for Europe's East what it did for Europe's West after the Second World War, provide a secure climate in which democracy and prosperity can grow. Enlarging NATO will encourage prospective members to resolve their differences peacefully. We already see evidence of that. Already, the prospect of NATO membership has helped to convince countries in Central Europe to improve ties with their neighbors, to settle border and ethnic disputes, any one of which could have led to a conflict. Enlargement, therefore, will make all of Europe more stable.

Finally, NATO's growth will erase the artificial line in Europe drawn by Joseph Stalin. Behind me is a picture of the wall that for so long represented the false and forced division of the European continent. It has been nearly 10 years since that wall was torn down by brave people on both sides. Countries once confined by it now are truly free, with strong democracies, vibrant market economies, a proven track record of standing up for peace and security beyond their own borders. NATO cannot maintain the old Iron Curtain as its permanent eastern frontier. It must and can bring Europe together in security, not keep it apart in instability.

In the 20th century, we have learned the hard way here in America just how vital Europe's security is to our own. Enlarging NATO will make us safer.

Our goal is and remains the creation of an undivided democratic and peaceful Europe for the first time in history. Bringing the three nations into the alliance will advance it; so will NATO's new Founding Act with Russia and the broad new relationship we are building with Moscow, helping us to move forward on arms control, building the peace in Bosnia, achieving progress on a wide range of issues; so will the Partnership For Peace, the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, the Charter with Ukraine, and the Charter of Partnership I signed just last month with the presidents of the three Baltic States, and our Southeast Europe Action Plan, which I announced yesterday with President Stoyanov of Bulgaria.

Our effort to build a new Europe also depends upon keeping NATO's door open to other qualified European democracies. History teaches us that the realm of freedom in Europe has no fixed boundaries. The United States is determined that the visions of the past not circumscribe the boundaries of the future.

As the Senate begins it deliberations, I want to salute the indispensable role that leading members of both parties and both Houses of Congress have already played in bringing us to this day. The two Senators from Delaware have already been acknowledged, and, Mr. Vice President, I'm prepared to vote to move NATO headquarters to Wilmington. [*Laughter*] I thank the Senators and the Members of the House who are here today. And there are others, who

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.