

Interview With Tomasz Lis of Polish Television

July 1, 1994

Poland-U.S. Relations

Mr. Lis. Mr. President, what is the most important message you would like to bring to Poland?

The President. That the United States and Poland are bound together, our futures are bound together; we're bound together by affection, by family ties, by our comradeship in World War II, and by our devotion to the constitutional idea of government, but that we have a very important future, and we need to build that future together.

NATO and the Partnership For Peace

Mr. Lis. In January in Prague, you said that there was no question if NATO should be expanded, the only question was when and how. Could you make that step forward and say when and how?

The President. Well, first of all, I have to make sure there is an agreement among the NATO members about what exactly the standards should be and the timetable. And they haven't all agreed. But I do want to make it clear that, in my view, NATO will be expanded, that it should be expanded, and that it should be expanded as a way of strengthening security and not conditioned on events in any other country or some new threat arising to NATO.

The Partnership For Peace is actually exceeding my hopes for its success. We now have 21 countries signed up, 19 who were in the former Communist bloc and Sweden and Finland. And we are going to hold our first exercises, as you know, in Poland, which I hope will send a message about how important I think Poland is to the future security of Europe and our future alliance.

Mr. Lis. But will you give Poland and other Eastern European countries a clear timetable for becoming full members of NATO? Because maybe that's the only way to—

The President. I think that a timetable should be developed, but I can't do that alone. NATO is an alliance. There are many partners in it, and we have to discuss that

among ourselves and to reach agreement on exactly how this staging should be done.

Last year—or earlier this year when I met with the NATO members, they felt very strongly that we should first have these exercises, these Partnership For Peace exercises, and we should gauge the nature of our security cooperation with all of the people in the Partnership and then see which people in the Partnership really wanted to become members and who was ready and then come back and meet and determine what the standards should be. So I think that probably won't be done until sometime next year, because of the feeling of all the NATO members about it.

Russia

Mr. Lis. What can the United States do to promote friendly links with Russia and, on the other hand, to enhance Poland's and Central Europe's security?

The President. I think we're doing both those things now. I think we can promote our friendship with Russia by working to develop Russia, by helping to diffuse our tensions. Our nuclear weapons are no longer pointed at each other, for the first time since the end of World War II. We are working together to try to solve the conflict in Bosnia. So I think in all those ways we can work together. We have a commission between the Prime Minister of Russia and our Vice President working on matters of defense conversion and environmental technology and energy and things of that kind. So we have a good, broad-based relationship with Russia.

But we have to pursue independently our relationships with Poland, with Central and Eastern Europe. And I think that the security issue is one; that's why we pushed so hard for the Partnership For Peace. Also our economic issue is another where we have—the United States provides, I think, about 44 percent of total outside investment in Poland. And we know we need to do more in Central and Eastern Europe than we have done, and we will do more. There are limits to what we can do, but we will do more. I think we have to pursue that totally independently of our growing relationship with Russia.

Mr. Lis. But Mr. President, you have a vision of an undivided, integrated Europe.

The President. I do.

Mr. Lis. And don't you think that your vision is against what we often hear from Russian politicians about so-called—doubts, influence—about the Russian opposition to expansion of NATO to Central Europe?

The President. You hear some of that. But we also have to look at what is happening. I mean, Russian troops have withdrawn from Lithuania. Russian troops are, I think, about to withdraw from Latvia. We've worked out most of the issues on that. There are some minority rights issues to be worked out in Estonia, but I think that will occur. I think you'll have all the Baltics free, independent, and without foreign troops on their soil pretty soon, and the Russians have been pretty consistent in supporting that.

I also believe that—keep in mind, conditions of membership in things like Partnership For Peace, which Russia has also joined, involve respecting one another's territorial boundaries. And in terms of Russia's exercise of influence outside its borders, at least in Bosnia I would have to say so far it's been a positive thing for the cause of peace, not a negative thing.

So we have to judge people not only by the words they use and the way they use them but also by what they do. And so far, I would say there will be tensions and disagreements from time to time, but I believe we can have a united Europe with a responsible, strong Russia, and we are going to work for that.

Mr. Lis. What do you think about an idea of expanding NATO and, at the same time, signing a special treaty between such an expanding NATO and Russia, a treaty that would confirm Russia's status as a major power and a friendly one?

The President. I don't know, I haven't thought of it in exactly those terms. I think that that's where Russia is right now. Right now, it's a major power and a friendly one. And I think that what we want to do is to try to work through our differences and find new ways we can cooperate. And that's an interesting suggestion you made, but I haven't had time to think it through, so I can't comment on it.

Poland-U.S. Trade

Mr. Lis. And Mr. President, what about economic partnership? Your administration stresses very often that such a partnership should be based more on trade than aid. But what can the United States do now to ease Polish exports to your country?

The President. That's one of the things I want to talk with President Walesa about when I'm in Poland and when I have the chance to meet with other leaders of Poland, what we can do to accelerate economic development and what we can do to help cushion the pain of all these changes.

Your country last year had the highest growth rate in all of Europe, 4 percent. And I believe that the potential is very great there. So I want to think about that because even if we lower our barriers to Polish products and services, because of the distances between our two countries and because of the pattern of commercial relationships that developed during the cold war period, that may not be enough. So I want to see what else we can do to accelerate trade and investment as well as certain specific aid programs. And I will be bringing some specific suggestions and offers to Poland that I hope will bear some fruit.

Mr. Lis. I would like to ask you about it, because we hear about a new, very interesting program of U.S.-Polish cooperation concerning social issues, a program that you're going to present in Warsaw. Could you reveal at least some details of that program?

The President. I think it's only appropriate that I speak, really, to your representatives of your people and your government first. But I just think the United States should do what it can to help countries that have been brave and courageous as the Polish people have always been but very brave in going through this period of reform, not only to continue to grow economically but to deal with the social tensions that come from this sort of dramatic transformation. And we will be talking about that in Poland. But I don't—I think I had better wait until I go there and talk to your leaders about it first.

Mr. Lis. It was said for the first time in February by U.S. officials that Poland is one of 10 big emerging markets in the world.

What does it mean? What does that statement, that opinion mean in practice?

The President. We identified, as you know, Mexico, Brazil, India, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan—that cluster—Poland, Argentina, a number of other countries, Turkey, Indonesia—that's not quite all, but that's close—countries that we see as having a very bright future, having a substantial population, a diversified, strong economy, and the ability to grow into major trading powers. And what that means is that over the next several years the United States, focusing on our Department of Commerce and our other agencies involved in trade and development, will make extraordinary efforts to promote American investment, to promote American trade, the selling of our products abroad, and to promote more purchases by Americans of products coming out of those countries.

And what we're trying to do is to say not what does the world look like this year and next year but what might the world look like in 10 years or 15 years or 20 years. And the 10 nations on that list we believe will be major, major factors in the global economy. And the United States, for its own interests as well as for the interests of the world, must be heavily involved with them. And Poland is a very important part of that strategy.

World Cup Soccer

Mr. Lis. Mr. President, the last question. I have to go back to the question which was asked by my friend from Germany: What is your prediction about the score of the game between the United States and Brazil on the Fourth of July?

The President. Well, obviously Brazil will be heavily favored. But I think we have a chance to win. I mean, after all it's our Independence Day and we—it's the first time we've ever been in the second round, and our people have played very well. In two of their three games they have exceeded expectations dramatically. So I wouldn't count the United States out.

Mr. Lis. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

NOTE: The interview began at 12:34 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House and was embargoed for release by the Office of the Press Secretary until July 5.

Interview With the Polish Media

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NATO and the Partnership For Peace

Q. You won't mind if I will read. My English is not as good as yours, so that's a great help for me.

Mr. President, the Polish people would like to join the NATO alliance, not just participate in the so-called Partnership For Peace. What is your intention for the future or for Poland?

The President. Well, my intention is to support an expansion of NATO. But in order to expand NATO we have to get agreement from all the members of NATO about when to expand and how to expand.

I can say this: The expansion of NATO is not dependent on any bad developments in Russia or anyplace else, and nobody has a veto over the expansion of NATO. But last year when I raised this question with the other NATO members, there was a strong feeling that we weren't yet ready to expand NATO but that we had to do something to try to create a better security environment in all of Central and Eastern Europe. And so the decision was made to launch the Partnership For Peace that was our idea, the United States idea, to try to get all the nations of Europe who would join to agree to do joint military exercises and to promise to respect one another's borders.

Now 19 countries that were formerly in the Soviet bloc or the Warsaw Pact countries and formerly Soviet Union countries, plus Sweden and Finland have all agreed to join. And we will be having our first military exercises in Poland later this year. So the security of Poland is very important to me personally and to all the NATO countries. And the history of Poland is very much on our mind. But I think that the Polish people should feel very good about the rapid acceptance of Partnership For Peace, the fact that the first military exercises will be in Poland, and the fact that we are committed to the expansion of NATO.

But after such a long time—NATO, after all, has existed for, well, more than four decades—I think it's just taking a while for the NATO members to decide exactly how membership should be expanded. Meanwhile, I