

**Remarks at the Dedication of the National Czech and Slovak Museum in Cedar Rapids, Iowa**

*October 21, 1995*

Thank you very much. President Havel, President Kovac, Governor Branstad, Senator Harkin, Congressman Leach, Mayor Serbousek, Mr. Schaeffer, Mr. Hruska, Ambassador Albright. Ladies and gentlemen, if we have not demonstrated anything else about the Czech and the Slovak heritage of Iowa, we have certainly shown to these two Presidents that you are a hearty people.

I thank the Czech Plus Band for playing today. I thought they did a marvelous job, and we thank them. I am proud to stand here with these two Presidents, each a pioneer and a patriot, each leading his nation through an epic transformation, each representing the promise of Europe's future, and their presence today reflects our growing partnership as well as the deep roots of their people in the soil of Iowa.

I will never forget visiting Prague in January of 1994, the first time I had been there in 24 years, and walking across the magnificent Charles Bridge with President Havel. I remembered then all the young people I had met there a quarter century before and how desperately then they had longed for the freedom they now enjoy. In his devotion to democracy and through his courage and sacrifice, Vaclav Havel helped to make the dreams of those young people a reality, and the world is in his debt.

President Kovac stands with us as a leader of a newly independent nation with a proud heritage and a hopeful future. Mr. President, we know your job has been and continues to be difficult. And the United States supports your personal strong commitment to openness and reform as Slovakia takes its place within the family of democratic nations. And we thank you for your leadership.

Here in America's heartland, the heart of Europe beats loud and clear. Czech immigrants first came to Cedar Rapids in the middle of the 19th century. Soon, a little Bohemia had blossomed in the city where Czech culture flourished in journalism, music, and drama.

Today that proud heritage is as vibrant as ever. One in five residents of Cedar Rapids is of Czech descent, including your mayor. There are eight major Czech-American organizations in this city, and through the Czech school, American children learn the language and traditions of their ancestors an ocean away. Just a few steps from here the shops of Czech Village are filled with authentic crafts and home cooking. I think it's fitting that in this celebration of American diversity, we have a city which produces both Quaker Oats and kolaches. [*Laughter*]

In Iowa and beyond, Americans of Czech and Slovak descent have added richness and texture to our American quilt. The values they, like so many other immigrants brought from their homelands—love of family, devotion to community, taking responsibility, and working hard—these values flourished in America and helped America to flourish.

In the mid-19th century, thousands of Czech settlers farmed America's new frontiers, an experience immortalized in Willa Cather's novel, "My Antonia." Slovak immigrants brought their skill and strength to the urban Northeast and the Midwest, where they helped to build heavy industry and oil and steel and coal.

The children and grandchildren of these early pioneers, as well as more recent arrivals, have been generous with their gifts to America: Filmmakers like Milos Forman have challenged our imagination; students of the humanities have been enlightened by Jaroslav Pelikan; and stargazers stand in awe of Captain Eugene Cernan, the last human being to leave his footprints on the Moon. From city hall to Capitol Hill, individuals like Congressman Peter Visclosky of Indiana, former Congressman Charles Vanick of Ohio, and former Senator Roman Hruska of Nebraska, have served our country with distinction. Our dynamic Ambassador to the United Nations, Madeleine Albright, who is here with me today, was born in Prague. And as I have told President Havel several times, the Czech Republic is the only nation in the world that has two Ambassadors at the United Nations. [*Laughter*]

The National Czech and Slovak Museum and Library we are privileged to dedicate here today is a wonderful tribute to two cul-

tures and two peoples, and to the contributions Czech and Slovak immigrants and their descendants have made and continue to make to our great Nation.

In keeping with tradition, a dozen eggs have been added to the mortar of the cornerstone, guaranteeing that the museum will serve the public as long and proudly as the Charles Bridge in Prague. To all who have played a part in creating this great place, congratulations on your marvelous achievement.

My fellow Americans, I ask you to take just one more minute to reflect on what our history and this moment mean for us today and in our tomorrows. We celebrate a special corner of our rich and varied mosaic of race and ethnicity and culture and tradition that is America. We are many different peoples who all cherish faith and family, work and community and country. We strive to live lives that are free and honest and responsible. We know we have to build our foundation, even in all of our differences, on unity, not division; on peace, not hatred; and on a common vision for a better tomorrow. We know that our motto, *E pluribus unum*, is more than a motto, it's a national commitment.

As we deal with all the remarkable changes that are moving us from the cold war to the global village, from the industrial to the information and technology age, we have to remember that we cannot keep the American dream alive here at home unless we continue to make common cause with people like President Havel and President Kovac, unless we continue to stand for freedom and democracy and peace around the world.

The United States has made a real contribution to the march of freedom, democracy, and peace, in accelerating the dismantling of our nuclear weapons so that now, for the first time since the dawn of the nuclear age, there's not a single nuclear missile pointed at a single American citizen.

We are working with people all around the world to combat the dangers of terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of destruction. We have tried to be a force for peace and freedom from the Middle East to Northern Ireland to Haiti and, most recently, in Bosnia, where we are hoping and praying that the peace talks will succeed and that the

cease-fire will turn into a genuine peace agreement. All of that, of course, especially affects the efforts of these two Presidents to secure their own people and their future.

The Czech Republic, Slovakia, other nations in Central Europe, they are working hard to build the democracy and foster the prosperity that we sometimes take for granted. They've made an awful lot of progress in the face of real challenges, and we have to continue to stand by them by opening the door to new NATO members, by supporting their integration into the other institutions of Europe, by improving access to our own markets and enabling them to move from aid to trade. The Czech and the Slovak people who came to the United States helped us to build our country. It's time for us to return the favor.

More and more Americans are investing in becoming economic partners. There was \$300 million worth of economic transaction with the Czech Republic and about \$100 million with Slovakia last year, with much more in the pipeline. And I have to say, a lot of that was due to the extraordinary personal efforts of one distinguished citizen of Iowa, the head of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation, Ruth Harkin, who is here with us today. And I thank her for her efforts.

Making these countries economically strong and helping them to be free and to stay free is the best way to ensure that American soldiers never again have to shed their blood on Europe's soil. It's also good business for us, as you well know. Cedar Rapids is the largest exporting city per capita in the entire United States. Foreign trade creates jobs here.

But we have to do this because it's also the right thing to do. For 45 years we challenged the people of these nations to cast off the yoke of communism. They have done it, and we dare not abandon them now. We have an obligation to work together so that all our people can enjoy the rewards of freedom and prosperity in the 21st century.

I believe the citizens of Cedar Rapids understand that. Those of you of Central European descent have to know it and feel it in your bones. But all of us as Americans should feel it in our hearts, for we believe the American dream is not for Americans only. It is

for every hardworking man and woman who seeks to build a brighter future, every boy or girl who studies hard and wants to learn and live up to their dreams, every community trying to clean its streets of crime and pollution and build a better future for all the people who live there, every nation committed to peace and progress. That dream belongs to every citizen of the world who shares our values and will work to support them.

President Havel, President Kovac, my fellow Americans, as we celebrate the opening of this marvelous museum, a monument to those who had faith in the American dream and who struggled to make it come true for themselves and their children, let us resolve to work together, for hope and opportunity for all who are reaching for their dreams.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 11:30 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to President Vaclav Havel of the Czech Republic; President Michal Kovac of the Slovak Republic; Governor Terry E. Branstad of Iowa; Mayor Larry Serbousek of Cedar Rapids, IA; Robert Schaeffer, president, and Roman Hruska, chairman of the board, National Czech and Slovak Museum.

### **Remarks at the National Italian-American Foundation Dinner**

*October 21, 1995*

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you, Frank Guarini, for that wonderful introduction. Chairman Frank Stella, Vice Chairman Art Gajarsa, Senator Domenici—always does a good job at these dinners. I must say I was delighted this was not one of those annual roasts, because otherwise I would have been the object of his wonderful humor. [Laughter] I am delighted to be here with you and with all the Members of Congress tonight. To the Most Reverend Cacciavillan, the Ambassador from the Holy See; the Italian Ambassador, Ambassador Biancheri; to the Foreign Minister of Italy, Foreign Minister Agnelli, I'm delighted to see you here tonight. And I want to say a special word of thanks on behalf of the United States to our Ambassador to Italy, Reginald Bartholomew, for what a fine job he has done. To all the board members and friends of the

foundation, some of whom—hundreds, indeed, of whom have come here tonight from Italy, I am deeply honored to be with you tonight for the fourth time in a row on the occasion of your 20th dinner. And I would like to say one thing to the Italians here present, beginning with the Foreign Minister.

Last year I came to this dinner direct from a trip to the Middle East and a signing of the peace treaty between Israel and Jordan. In the last year, in many ways the world has moved closer to peace in Northern Ireland and Haiti, another signal event on the road to peace in the Middle East. And by the grace of God, we will continue the road to peace, beginning on October 31st, when the leaders of all the countries involved in the conflict in Bosnia meet in the United States in Ohio. If we are able to make a peace and enforce it, I want all my fellow Americans to know that it would not have been possible but for the strong and firm leadership and involvement of Italy. And I am very grateful for what they have done to bring about peace in Bosnia.

I know a lot of your honorees. Last Monday, I was in Los Angeles with Tony Bennett, who was the headliner for a wonderful concert put together as a benefit for the Center for Alcohol and Substance Abuse at Columbia University. Just a couple of days ago, Joe Montana and his lovely wife and their four wonderful children and some of their friends came to the White House. And as their children were examining—I think that's the appropriate word, examining—everything in the Oval Office I thought to myself, now, there are real family values. And since we're—I have to say, since this event is held in Washington, DC, and given all that's going on here in Washington, I think it's quite appropriate that you're honoring on the same night Joe Montana and John Travolta, because what's going on here reminds me of a cross between a pro football game and "Pulp Fiction" half the time. [Laughter]

Earlier this month, I was with Cardinal Bevilacqua when I had the great honor to welcome His Holiness Pope John Paul II to Newark, New Jersey. It was our third meeting since I've been President. I don't want to commit heresy here and I'm not a Roman