

Lazienki Palace,
7/2/96 Warsaw, Poland

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

[TEXT AS PREPARED]

FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
REMARKS AT LAZIENKI PALACE
WARSAW, POLAND
JULY 2, 1996

It is an honor for me to be back in Poland -- and to have this chance to visit Warsaw during the city's 400th anniversary as the Polish capital. One need not be here long to see that on the eve of a new century, Warsaw is again the vibrant European metropolis it once was, sparkling with life and promise.

Yesterday I was in Krakow, your beautiful ancient capital, where I met some of the intellectual heroes of Poland's struggle for freedom and democracy. I saw Wawel [Vah-vell] Cathedral, which reminded me of the church's crucial place in preserving and protecting Poland's spirit of independence. Without the church, the triumph of Polish democracy and freedom might never have occurred.

Knowing of the Holy Father's role in setting a spiritual example for Poland's recent struggle for liberty, I wrote to him before coming to Poland to tell him that I would be paying a visit to his beloved city of Krakow. And I promised to deliver a message of support and solidarity from America to the Polish people.

We are proud to lend our hand to Poland because it is the right thing to do -- and because we remember that Poland supported us at the dawn of our own democracy.

Yesterday, I had the honor of laying flowers at the grave of the great Polish patriot and American hero, General Kosciuszko [kosh-YOU-shko]. Like my country's Founding Fathers -- his contemporaries -- Kosh-you-shko believed that the cause of Poland and the larger cause of human freedom were indivisible. It was that vision of freedom that brought him to places like West Point and Saratoga to fight in our Revolutionary War. And it is that same vision that continues to tie our nations together today,

more than 200 years later.

Millions of Americans trace their origins to Poland. Yet our bonds are of more than blood, they are of brotherhood and sisterhood. Today, Polish and American soldiers are serving together in Bosnia to help others secure their own freedom in a troubled land.

Indeed, it seems that the values of democracy and freedom are in the very fiber of our being -- we Americans and Poles. It was Poland, after all, that rejected absolutism and built the fundamentals of the rule of law during the Renaissance. When America's Founding Fathers wrote the world's first Constitution, Poland soon followed with the world's second. President Wilson put the weight of the United States behind Polish independence in his 14 points. And in 1989, Poland led the way again in undoing the oppressive grip of communist rule.

The poet Czeslaw Milosz [CHESS-wash MEE-wash], whom I had the privilege of meeting in Krakow yesterday, once wrote that in earlier times, Polish poetry became "a home for incorrigible hope, immune to historical disasters."

That hopeful poetic spirit clearly was still alive in the hearts of the Polish people in 1989. You embarked on a journey of reform and transformation that had never been attempted before -- and many thought you would fail. But here you are -- today -- a nation that has earned the right to regain its place as a full member of the Western family of nations.

My husband often says that with freedom and opportunity comes responsibility. Your struggle for freedom was in many ways a struggle to assume personal responsibility for the fate of your country. Father Josef Tischner [Yo-sef TISH-ner] once called Solidarity "a forest of awakened consciences" -- a movement dedicated to the highest standards of service to others.

Today, the struggle for freedom is over in Poland. And at last, your nation's future is yours to shape. You have built a vibrant democracy in which elections are routine, the press is skeptical and free, and politicians are held accountable for the decisions they make. You have reached out to your neighbors to overcome ancient disputes. Your economy is growing faster than

any in Europe.

And thanks to the success of your democratic transformation and your economic reforms, America now looks at Poland in a very different way. For us, Poland is no longer a place where heroes and villains -- democrats and dictators -- compete for the conscience of a people not yet free. Today Poland is becoming what you always wanted it to become: a normal European country with normal European problems -- and most important, with normal European responsibilities.

After all these years of struggle, we have finally been liberated to stand together as partners in security, diplomacy and trade. And with that newfound freedom comes the responsibility to jointly meet a new set of challenges: the challenge of keeping the peace in a world where old hatreds are slow to die and new ones are too easily born; the challenge of giving all of our citizens the chance to fulfill their God-given potential.

These challenges are compounded because we live in a time of rapid economic change, increasing global competition and scarcer resources. Today, in democracies new and old, families are under greater stress. The gap between rich and poor is growing wider. Governments from Washington to Warsaw are grappling with social issues ranging from education, to pensions, to health care to environmental pollution. And we are all worrying about how to re-train our workers for a new millennium and new age of high-technology and information.

Throwing off the yoke of totalitarianism and building democratic institutions is the first step of the democratic journey. Solving society's social problems is a second equally difficult one.

I believe strongly that democracy can only thrive in the post-Cold War era if we are willing to invest in our greatest resource -- our people. Political freedoms, human rights, and an open economy are essential to our progress and stability. But so are investments in human capital, especially in women and children.

Here in Poland, as elsewhere, women have suffered

disproportionately during this period of transition from the Industrial Age to the Information Age. Women are the primary caretakers for families and extended families. They do much of the work in and out of the home. Yet, by and large, their wages have lagged the most since 1989.

This problem is not unique to Poland. Traveling around America, I have met with women of all kinds -- homemakers, nurses, teachers, bankers, judges -- who want to be respected for the choices they make in their lives, whether they choose to stay at home or work at jobs outside their homes.

Elsewhere around the world, the obstacles for women are even greater. I have met women and girls in South Asia and South America who have been denied schooling because of their gender; who cannot get credit from a bank simply because they are women; who are excluded from the political life of their countries; who have no legal recourse when their rights are violated.

But I also have seen what happens when women do have access to education, health care, credit, jobs and basic rights. Not only do they gain a greater sense of their own possibility and promise, they earn new respect in their families and communities. Everybody benefits.

As a leader in economic growth in Europe, Poland can also be a leader in promoting the human dimension of democracy, particularly social investments that will improve conditions for women, children and families.

I say this, in part, because I recognize the important role that women have played throughout Poland's history. Although I did not have the chance to visit the University in Krakow, I have heard many times the story of Queen Jadwiga [Yahd-vee-gah] selling her crown jewels to pay for the school's restoration centuries ago.

I have read about the Polish women who wore black in mourning for their country during the great uprising of 1863. And I know that in the days of Solidarity, women were the backbone of the underground press. Some of those same women lead Poland's modern journalistic establishment today.

My point is simply this: Women are a key to building civil society -- and to progress and prosperity in every country, including yours and mine.

I am proud that the United States is working with committed men and women here in Poland to strengthen civil society by improving the health of children and families, bolstering human rights, assuring freedom of the press, encouraging environmental protections and economic development, and promoting civic education.

Today, I have the honor of announcing that, as part of our ongoing commitment to the Democracy Network Program, the United States government, through its Agency for International Development, will contribute \$700,000 for up to 36 small grants to be given out later this month. And I am pleased that so many past recipients are with us today.

The grants that I am announcing, like previous ones, will be delivered to non-governmental organizations that are building democracy on the front lines in Poland by helping local groups protect their environment, improve health services, enable women to take their rightful place in society and teach children the values of democracy.

Above all, the NGOs that enjoy American support are helping people in Poland organize themselves and form associations to solve their problems at the grass roots level.

This USAID support for these projects represents America's confidence in and commitment to Poland's future. It also represents our belief that democracy will only work if it is rooted in the hearts, minds and actions of the Polish people.

There is no doubt that democracy has found a home in Poland. Before I left the United States to come on this trip, a Polish-American friend gave me a copy of the preamble to the Polish Constitution of 1791. What an extraordinary and timeless document it is.

It describes a Poland "free from the shameful shackles of foreign might" . . . and Polish people who prize "more than life, and every personal consideration, the political existence,

external independence and internal liberty" of their nation. No wonder Polish-Americans are so proud of that Constitution and of their homeland's devotion to freedom. No wonder they feel so much joy in Poland's progress since 1989.

Two hundred years ago, when Polish liberty was extinguished, America was too new, too far away to help. Now we have another chance, and this time we are here. We are helping you undo -- once and for all -- the false judgment of history.

When I return to Washington next week, I will look out the window of the White House at the statue of General Kosciuszko in Lafayette Square. And I will know with certainty that the ideals of freedom he fought for have finally triumphed in Poland.

Thank you very much.

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