

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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THE WHITE HOUSE

EXCHANGE OF TOASTS
BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT

AND

EDWARD GIEREK
FIRST SECRETARY OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE
OF THE
POLISH UNITED WORKERS' PARTY

STATE DINING ROOM

10:12 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Mr. First Secretary, our wonderful guests:

It is a great privilege and pleasure to have you and Mrs. Gierek here with us this evening. We have had a very delightful dinner and we had a very helpful and constructive discussion during the day, and I am looking forward to further discussions tomorrow.

Mr. First Secretary, I come from a part of our country where we have roughly 30,000 people with a Polish heritage or background, and as I grew up, Mr. First Secretary, I had many wonderful personal experiences with families that had a Polish background, families that had the same great family strength, families that had a tremendous religious dedication, individuals with a Polish heritage that became leaders in our community, outstanding scholars, athletes, public servants.

And so I had a great exposure to the finest, the best, with individuals who had come from your country to ours.

And then in 1958 or '59, I had the opportunity to go to Poland, and I wondered as I went to Poland, whether there would be so many comparable, wonderful people in Poland as I had known in my hometown in Michigan in the United States.

And I found, Mr. First Secretary, that instead of 30,000, there were 30 million, and all of them had the same warmth, friendship, family dedication, deep conviction, and all of them wanted to uplift their community, their state, and make their country a better and finer place in which to live.

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So it seemed to me, Mr. First Secretary, that it was very easy for Poland and our country to start building a foundation some years ago which has now developed into a great relationship, a relationship predicated on understanding, a relationship that has a far broader vision.

We want to help one another and we do, but we want to build from our relationship a broader effort to improve world relations between countries that did not understand one another, but who now hopefully will, blocs that did not understand one another, but hopefully will, and the net result is that because of our citizens who came from Poland, settled here, and have become so strong and vital in our society and yours, who are so strong and so vital in Europe, I hope and trust that we can move together in cooperation and economic matters, cultural matters, educational matters, environmental matters, and set an example for all nations because we do understand one another, and we can, by history, work together.

And so I ask all of our guests here tonight to rise and join with me in offering a toast to the First Secretary and to Mrs. Gierek, and offer them the best from all of us in the United States to the First Secretary, to the Polish people.

FIRST SECRETARY GIEREK: Dear Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen:

I thank you, Mr. President, for your kind and friendly words. I thank you for the hospitality you have shown us, which both Mrs. Gierek and I greatly appreciate and sincerely hope to heartily reciprocate.

From the outset of our sojourn on the American soil, we have been accompanied by a good, matter-of-fact and friendly atmosphere. This gladdens us and reaffirms in our profound conviction that my visit here will prove fruitful.

Our conversations with you, Mr. President, have above all reassured me in this. We have exchanged, in their course, views on the most important issues of Polish-American relations and on the further development of the process of international detente.

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We have reached important conclusions which will be set down on our joint documents. I am confident that the results of our meetings will open up a new state in the mutual relations between both our countries and nations.

I highly value, Mr. President, the direct contact with you, with the leader of the United States, who, by his own deep understanding of and positive approach to issues of the present-day cooperation between our two nations, confirms the willingness to develop it further in the friendly attitude toward Poland.

I am also satisfied over my meetings with the Secretary of State, Dr. Henry Kissinger, and with all eminent associates of yours.

It is my conviction, Mr. President, that there exists very favorable conditions to a significant expansion of Polish-U.S. cooperation which is the common concern of ours. These conditions, as you have pointed out a moment ago, stem from our longstanding tradition of friendly, mutual bonds, dating back to the times of the founding of the United States begun by the participation of Tadeusz Kosciuszko and other sons of the Polish people struggling for the independence of the United States.

These bonds were subsequently strengthened by the sympathy toward and interest of the democratic forces of the American Nation in the cause of Polish independence, and they were amply reaffirmed in our joint struggle for freedom, greatest in history, as it were, conducted by the great anti-Fascist coalition in the years of World War II.

These traditions have remained alive although their early postwar phase has fortunately become a closed historical chapter.

As a result of its own heroic struggle and its cooperation with all other freedom-loving forces, the people of Poland found its road to durable independence, to enviable security, to dynamic development.

The people of Poland found it in its new Socialist homeland, in its consciously chosen alliance with the USSR and other Socialist countries, in its active foreign policy of international security and peaceful cooperation.

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Modern Poland, Mr. President, with a more than 1,000-year history and great tradition of love for freedom and progress, is proud of the great historic achievements of the past three decades which have essentially altered the course of our nation's tragic past and verily transformed the country, elevating it onto a new place in Europe and the world at large.

The Poland of today, one of the world's top ten industrial producers, is a country of a dynamic economy, of high cultural and scientific standards, and constantly growing standards of living.

In recent years we have endowed her development with a still greater dynamism and higher quality. We still have much to accomplish but the decisive stage is behind us and Poland could now enter the phase of accelerated growth of her economy, and the aspirations of my people are indeed in keeping with these vital needs and aspirations of all.

It is from this position and for this purpose that we also desire to eject new impetus and quality to our cooperation with other countries of the world. We are delighted to see considerable progress achieved in Polish-American relations, particularly in recent years. But we take it only as a harbinger of a much broader cooperation.

We therefore attach special importance to development of economic cooperation which establishes most durable of bonds and provides for a material base of cooperation in all other fields.

We conceive of the United States as one of our principal partners in the West. There exists all opportunities that it be so. The essential thing is to create conditions that would make us seize of all those opportunities.

I strongly believe that arrangements we are now adopting and agreements we are concluding will be a decisive contribution towards this end. In the overall framework of relations between our two countries, a major positive role can no doubt be played by the multi-million strong group of Americans of Polish ancestry as good citizens of the United States, and at the same time retaining their emotional ties with their old land.

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They have always been one of the important factors of mutual rapprochement between our two nations and they can further make a substantial contribution to their friendly cooperation.

Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen: Our thoughts constantly turn to the great and common cause of all mankind, the cause of peace.

The Polish nation which paid the highest price for its freedom and is fully cognizant of the value of peace, attaches great importance to the process of detente which has been developing in recent years. We see in it a true road toward the strengthening of international security and development of cooperation among nations on the basis of peaceful coexistence of states with different political systems.

This is the prime need and necessity of our time.

Let me say, Mr. President, that Poland fully appreciates the far-reaching and all-around significance of Soviet-American agreements for the cause of world peace and general improvement of international relations.

It was with greatest satisfaction that we welcomed progress already achieved here, and together with other countries we have noted with great appreciation the promise that these propitious trends will be continued.

It is only natural that Poland should attach particular significance to progress of detente and to consolidation of the facts of nearly three decades of peace in Europe. We have been actively cooperating to insure the success of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. We believe that there exists very realistic conditions for its successful conclusion in the months to come.

We shall continue to make our constructive contribution to the Vienna talks on troops and arms reduction in Central Europe.

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We are convinced that the United States is also vitally interested in a lasting peace on our continent and can indeed make a substantial and constructive contribution to that cause. We rest assured of the indivisibility of and the universal need for peace and of the desire common to all nations for security, justice and a better morale.

I trust that also in the strivings to achieve these great objectives closer cooperation between both our countries is possible and necessary.

My first day in Washington, and above all, the talks I had with you, Mr. President, reaffirm me in my conviction that together we can open up new, broader prospects for the development of Polish-U.S. cooperation. I am reassured in this also by the good climate in which all our meetings are held and which is typical of the friendly relations obtaining between our two peoples.

Mr. President, I should like to propose a toast. To your very good health and all success in steering the affairs of the great United States; for the speediest recovery of Mrs. Ford; to your good health, Ladies and Gentlemen; to the development of friendly cooperation between our peoples and states; to world peace.

END

(AT 10:28 P.M. EDT)