

National Security Bureau

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Message by President before the National Assembly

Honourable Madam Marshal of the Sejm,

Honourable Marshal of the Senate,

Honourable Prime Minister,

Welcome to the two former Presidents of the Republic of Poland: Mr Aleksander Kwaśniewski and Mr Bronisław Komorowski,

Honourable Deputy Marshals of the Sejm and the Senate,

Honourable Deputy Prime Ministers and Cabinet Ministers,

Honourable former Marshals of the Sejm and former Prime Ministers,

Honourable Madam President of the Constitutional Tribunal,

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Two Houses, Honourable Members of the Sejm and Senators,

Honourable Members of the European Parliament,

Honourable Presidents and Chairs of Central Agencies of State Administration, Representatives of the Chancellery of the President of the Republic of Poland and the Chancellery of the Prime Minister, as well as Chancelleries of the Sejm and the Senate,

Representatives of State and Local Administration Authorities,

Generals, Officers, Representatives of the Polish Army,

Eminences and Excellencies, Reverend Representatives of Churches and Religious Unions in Poland,

Excellencies Ambassadors,

And my special welcome goes to Excellencies Ambassadors of NATO States,

We are also joined by His Excellency Ambassador of Ukraine, Mr Andrii Deshchytsia, it is my great pleasure to see you and I cordially welcome you, Mr Ambassador,

Honourable Guests attending the Session of the National Assembly,

Dear Compatriots!

The National Assembly always convenes to mark the occasions that are exceptional for Poland. This is also the case today on the eve of the anniversary of fundamental importance, the anniversary of accession to the North Atlantic Alliance by Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary. On March 12, 1999, we saw the ultimate end of the post-Yalta world order and the resulting division into spheres of influence. By joining NATO, we were fully re-united with the community of the West where we had always belonged in cultural terms. We also joined that community in political and military terms. It was a momentous occasion for Poland, for Europe and the world.

Today, most unfortunately, it is not an occasion for joyous celebration. We are meeting in dramatic times, at the height of the greatest security crisis ever since the end of World War II. An entirely unprovoked assault of Russia on Ukraine has shocked the world. For more than two weeks, the army and the Ukrainian nation have been heroically resisting the invaders.

Our neighbours exemplify to the whole world the true meaning of the words: courage, and attachment to the shared values: freedom, sovereignty and democracy. They are paying the highest possible price: Ukrainian cities

and towns are shelled, and residential houses, blocks of flats, schools and hospitals are being destroyed, people are losing their lives. There is death toll among the civilian population. This is a calamity. The assaults of the Russian invaders are bearing the attributes of genocide: which occurs when premeditated attack is directed at human settlements, free of any military installations, just to kill people, the ordinary civilian people who are not involved in fighting. We must do everything in our might to bring the perpetrators, the war criminals responsible for those atrocities before international tribunals. Today what is at stake is the very dignity or disgrace of the international community.

Vladimir Putin by unleashing this cruel warfare has directly invoked the heritage of the Soviet Union, to “the evil empire” as it was once termed by the US President, a great friend of Poland, Ronald Reagan. What Russia does in Ukraine demonstrates that it continues to be “the evil empire”, that it was never consigned to the past, and today again it rears its ugly head! Worthwhile in this connection is to recall the seminal words of Professor Zbigniew Brzezinski: “It cannot be stressed enough that without Ukraine, Russia ceases to be an empire, but with Ukraine suborned and then subordinated, Russia automatically becomes an empire. Russia can be either an empire or a democracy, but it cannot be both”. Today we can clearly see what Russia opted for, and we see in all clarity the option Ukraine has chosen standing up in defence of freedom, in defence of democracy, in defence of a fair world.

No one can understand the pain and suffering of the Ukrainian people better than we, the Poles, who have suffered so much throughout our history. Especially in the 20th century. Polish soldiers fought on all fronts of World War II – from Narvik to Tobruk, from the Battle of Britain to Monte Cassino and Berlin. We remember the heroism of the Home Army and the Insurgents from the Warsaw Uprising. We have before our eyes the ruins of the Polish capital, Warsaw, razed to the ground by Nazi Germany.

That is why from here, from Poland, from Warsaw, an unceasing appeal goes out to the entire free world: We cannot allow Russia to conquer free, independent and democratic Ukraine. We must increase our efforts and support for the fighting Ukrainian people. Let Kiev and other Ukrainian cities not share the fate of the demolished Warsaw. Let us stop this evil! This is a call to the entire free world.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Compatriots!

Despite a long and heroic struggle on all fronts of World War II, Poland found itself in the Soviet sphere of influence as a result of the Yalta Agreement. Against our will we were separated from the free world by the Iron Curtain. The generation of our grandparents, our parents, and many of those present here dreamt of changing the course of history. The peaceful revolution of Solidarity, the regaining of our country's sovereignty after 1989, and finally the collapse of the Soviet Union made it possible. This story was then made complete by our successful efforts to make Poland part of the North Atlantic Alliance. Our dream came true. The dream of generations came true.

When at the beginning of the 1990's, back in 1991 and 1992 to be precise, Prime Minister Jan Olszewski, from this very place, was the first to announce Poland's ambition to join NATO, many people thought it was an unattainable challenge. After all, Soviet troops were still stationed in our country at that time. Those days, Poland at a boiling point with heated disputes about the settlement of the past, as well as the assessment of the often difficult present. However, thanks to the common effort of the whole political class, Poland's accession to NATO was excluded from the political dispute and this great work was successfully carried out. The fact that talks about our participation in the Alliance were started by President Lech Wałęsa and finished by his election rival, President Aleksander Kwaśniewski, may serve as a symbol.

This also involved all-out effort of the succession of Polish governments, from right to left, and an outstanding contribution made by the Polish Diplomacy and the Polish Army. I would like to acknowledge in warmest terms all of them who contributed to the unity back then, the unity in pursuit of this noble goal. Your conduct is a role model to us all.

When on March 12, 1999, in Independence, Poland's Minister of Foreign Affairs Bronisław Geremek handed over the act of Poland's accession to the North Atlantic Alliance, we could all feel a sense of great satisfaction. Earlier, on February 11, the Sejm passed the ratification act. A week later, President Aleksander Kwaśniewski signed it, and on 23 February, Prime Minister Jerzy Buzek countersigned the ratification act of the North Atlantic Treaty. It was a momentous occasion, an extraordinary moment in the history of our Home Country.

Let us remember, however, that the idea of admitting Poland and other former Eastern Bloc countries to NATO did not immediately meet with universal support in the West. That is why strong support from the United States of America was crucial there. And this was provided to us regardless of political affiliations. We started the talks with the Republican administration of President George Bush Sr, and the whole process of joining NATO was accomplished under the Democratic administration of President Bill Clinton, who said here in Warsaw, at Castle Square: "Now, Poland is joining NATO. Poland is taking its place in the community of democracies. Never again will your fate be decided by others. Never again will the birthright of freedom be denied you. Poland is coming home!"

That is what President Bill Clinton said then, and that is what happened. Yes, we have come home. Because a sovereign and independent Poland is and always will be the home of freedom and democracy. And we will defend this home with all our might!

At that time, we could count on the support of many tried-and-true friends of Poland, including the incumbent President of the United States. Let me remind you that back in the 1990's, Joe Biden, then a Senator – an influential member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, was one of the leaders in support for Poland's NATO accession in the American Congress. He described Poland's joining the North Atlantic Alliance as „righting an historical injustice forced upon the Poles, by Joseph Stalin.” Mr. President, Poland thanks you!

However, it must be strongly emphasized at this point that this “historical injustice by Joseph Stalin”, as Joe Biden put it, and as we know perfectly well, has something the Poles never came to terms with. Also, during the times of Soviet domination over our lands. Many were forced to make dramatic choices and had to rise to heroism. A symbol of such conduct was a great Polish patriot, the first really Polish officer in NATO, Colonel Ryszard Kuklinski, posthumously made since 2016 Brigadier General. I had the honor of being able to confer this rank of brigadier general posthumously on the Colonel. But at this point, my thanks go out to the then Minister of National Defence, Mr. Antoni Macierewicz, for his initiative in this matter. Thank you, Minister. It is a question of Poland's honour.

The meritorious services rendered by Colonel General Ryszard Kuklinski for Poland's entry into the North Atlantic Alliance will never be forgotten. Just like meritorious services of many Poles whose fortunes brought them far away from our Home Country, but who greatly contributed to the cause of Poland's accession to the North Atlantic Alliance. Such as the former director of the Polish section of Radio Free Europe, the legendary courier from Warsaw Jan Nowak-Jeziorański, who, as the representative of the Polish American Congress, was intensely lobbying the White House and the Congress to support our membership. Or the already mentioned prominent strategist Professor Zbigniew Brzezinski, National Security Advisor to US President Jimmy Carter. Jan Nowak-Jeziorański and Zbigniew Brzeziński were the best ambassadors championing our cause in the United States. So was the whole Polish community, the Polonia, especially the American one, whose contribution to this achievement – the achievement of Poland's freedom – cannot be overestimated.

Of symbolic importance is the fact now in the time of another serious security threat affecting not only Europe but the whole world, the office of the US Ambassador to Poland is held by the son of Professor Brzezinski: Mark Brzeziński. Mr Ambassador, we thank you for your presence here!

Ladies and gentlemen,
Dear Compatriots!

Poland is safe. While entering NATO we have become part of the greatest defence alliance in history of the world, the Alliance which is founded on the shared values and for 70 years now has been providing security to its members and doing so in an unwavering manner. This is in line with the principle derived directly from Article 5 of the Washington Treaty: "one for all, all for one".

We in Poland shall always stand ready to fulfil our obligations. On many occasions have we proved that we are reliable. Standing shoulder to shoulder with the US Army and other Allied Armies, be it in Iraq or Afghanistan. Poland's membership of NATO is a symbol of our national unity. Levels of support to membership of the Alliance in the Polish society are among the highest recorded all across the North Atlantic Alliance.

Security is obtained on the strength of alliances but, first and foremost, by strength of one's own army. That is why we have been modernising and developing Polish armed forces. We enhance the defence capabilities and consolidate our Army. We reconstruct it.

The situation at hand requires from us even greater efforts. That is why in the Parliament, works continue on the Bill on Defence of the Home Country, the bill that provides for the extension and significant increase of our defence spending to reach 3% of our GDP next year, in order to develop and modernize the Polish Army. This is a matter of top priority for our state and for our people. Today, this is visible to the naked eye.

I wish to express my thanks to the Members of the Sejm and the Senators from all across the political scene for their pledges of support to the bill on Defence of the Home Country. I do hope that issues related to Poland's security and the development of our Armed Forces will command consensus transcending the party lines, far away from the political disputes, very much the same way the membership of the North Atlantic Alliance 20 years ago was at the time Poland sought to join NATO.

The Polish Army must be not only more numerous but also superbly equipped and armed. Yes, it must, in order to have a Polish soldier serving their country effectively and securely. I spoke addressed this point talking to President of the United States of America Joe Biden and also yesterday with Vice President of the United States of America Kamala Harris during her yesterday's visit in Warsaw. Cooperation with the United States has never been as good as it is now. The successful 2016 NATO summit in Warsaw resulted in having the eastern flank of the Alliance substantially reinforced, and in Poland American troops were deployed on a permanent basis. Poland is today in NATO and NATO troops are present in our Home Country! This is crucially important, historic change for us. This is an obvious manifestation that we are no longer in the Soviet sphere of influence, and – as I trust – we will never be. Strategic Polish-American relations develop at a good pace no matter who holds the office in the White House. The decision on the deployment of American troops in Poland was taken by President Barack Obama and his administration, and during Donald Trump's term in office the number of American troops has been substantially increased, and today this process is continued by President Joe Biden and his team. This is of crucial importance from the security perspective, equally for our country and the entire region.

In order to further enhance cooperation in eastern and Central Europe, we have originated the Bucharest Nine format in the field of security: these are nine members of NATO coming from Central Europe with whom we work together preparing for the upcoming NATO summits. We have also created the Three Seas Initiative bringing

together member states of European Union from Central Europe, stretched in between the three seas: the Baltic Sea, the Adriatic and the Black Sea. Thanks to it, our voice: the voice of countries from Central Europe is even more audible, equally in NATO and in the European Union fold. All these elements come together to build the security architecture. Each of them is fundamentally important, each of them must be jointly worked upon, for the sake of safety and security of Poland in the whole region.

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg fully appreciates the need to reinforce the eastern flank of NATO. It is also thanks to his work, his friendly attitude, his immense determination and realization of threats that today we are better prepared to face head on the challenge: the Russian aggression on the free and independent Ukraine, and the threats sent by Russia in the direction of the free world.

For this commitment, I would like to sincerely thank Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg. We will always remember this in Poland and all across Central and Eastern Europe!

Dear Compatriots,
Ladies and Gentlemen!

On 24 February, we woke up to see a completely different world, to a new reality. Many of the theses canvassed internationally were brutally refuted that day, and I would even say: trampled upon. Also, those relating to the North Atlantic Alliance. It was alleged that the Alliance has lost its *raison d'être*. Everyone can now see, clearly and distinctly, that this is not true. You can see how much mistaken were all those who claimed that.

It was we, the Poles, and representatives of other countries in our region who were right as we kept warning the West about Russian imperialism, about dependency on Russian raw materials that will be used as weapons in a possible conflict, warning against limiting the role of the United States in Europe, against attempts to make NATO and the European Union at odds.

However, this is no time for bitter satisfaction and triumphalism. The most important thing today is unity, unity, and unity once again. Both within the Alliance and within the European Union. Therefore, I will reiterate: it is equally important for Poland to be in NATO and in the European Union. These are the foundations of our security. This is the Polish *raison d'état*!

Professor Lech Kaczyński, the President of the Republic of Poland, was the one who understood this perfectly well. That is why he championed the cause also for the countries of our region. We all remember how he fought for the right of Ukraine and Georgia to become members of NATO and the European Union. Before the 2008 summit of the Alliance, he sent a special letter to the leaders in which he recalled the circumstances of the admission of the Federal Republic of Germany to NATO in 1955. Just 10 years after World War II. He wrote at the time: „Germany's situation was far more complicated than that of Ukraine or Georgia today. Some countries back then were not yet recognizing the borders of the German states, drawn after World War II. But NATO was then able to take the courageous decision to admit West Germany. The most important enlargement decision in the history of the Alliance,” wrote President Lech Kaczyński.

If President Lech Kaczyński had been heeded at that time, if courageous decisions had been made, if the naive attitude not to irritate Russia had not prevailed, Ukraine would be in NATO today. The aggression of 2014 would probably never have happened, and the current war would probably not have flared up, either. History would have taken a different course.

Today, day in day out, the Ukrainian army and people are fighting an uneven battle against the Russian aggressor, showing great heroism, proving that they fully deserve membership of the Alliance. The courageous leadership of President Volodymyr Zelensky embodies all the values on which the Western community is

founded. The free world today has the face of President Volodymyr Zelensky!

However, the decision whether Ukraine will be in NATO must belong to the Ukrainian people and the Ukrainian leadership. These are the principles of democracy, in which, it is my firm belief, a free, sovereign, independent Ukraine will continue because I do believe they will win. It is they, the Ukrainians, who must have the right to decide whether they want to be part of the Alliance after the war is over, or whether they choose another way to ensure their security. No one has the right to make that decision for them. There is not and will never be our consent to a new Yalta!

Dear Compatriots,
Ladies and Gentlemen!

Vladimir Putin while launching the beastly attack on Ukraine wants to institute a new world order, he wants to reverse the course of history, as he put it himself, to restore the time from before 1997, from before the decision on the eastward expansion of NATO. As a matter of fact, he would like to return to the times of the Soviet Union and the division of Europe into spheres of influence, and likewise, the division of the world.

However, the Russian aggression on Ukraine has produced a result reverse than expected: it served to reunite the entire Transatlantic community, it demonstrated the vital role of NATO and the importance of American presence in Europe, it reaffirmed the leadership of the United States in terms of security in the world, it brought about a change in the European Union policy, and in the policy of its biggest member states towards Russia. It has united the public opinion in Europe as well as societies of the Western countries. I do not know if this is way Vladimir Putin imagined his success.

The great evil that Vladimir Putin and Russia brought upon Ukraine in Europe generated a response in the shape of the great good: here, in our country, from the earliest hours Polish people have opened their hearts and have come to aid their Ukrainian brothers who are in need. I bow to millions of our compatriots who day in day out respond to the evil by doing the good: by making a whole-hearted effort to erase the evil, by receiving refugees to their homes, by assisting in transportation, organizing collections, charitable actions and providing goods and financial contributions to aid Ukraine.

As I look at the heroism of the Ukrainian nations standing up for their freedom, for their homes, for the security and their children's future, as I see Poland's solidarity and that of other nations, I am persuaded that the good will prevail, that the good must prevail!

I trust that Ukraine will defend herself from the Russian aggression that millions of her citizens will have the possibility to return to their homes, the homes that we as the West will jointly help to rebuild; that Ukraine will accede to the European Union, the effort we will champion everywhere always.

I trust that the values will prevail to which will all subscribe. The values on which the entire Western community has been built, and the ones that are to be defended by the North Atlantic Alliance!

Long live the North Atlantic Alliance!
Long live free Ukraine!
Long live Poland!
God bless our Home Country!

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