

# National Security Bureau

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## Address by the President at the Royal Castle in Warsaw

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**On February 23, just a few hours before the Russian aggression one year ago, I was in a beautiful and proud Kyiv to support Ukraine. I had a long conversation with my friend, President Volodymyr Zelensky. The situation at that time was, as you know, extremely dramatic. We already knew that in a few hours the Russians would attack, a full-scale war would begin.**

Volodymyr!

When we said goodbye, you said words to me that are etched in my memory ever since: Andrzej, we may never see each other again. If the Russians think they can just come and occupy Kyiv, conquer Ukraine, they are sorely mistaken. We will fight to the end. Nobody here will give up.

To which I replied: Volodymyr, we will see each other many times. You can always count on Poland. Stay with God.

My Dear Ones,

And so it happened. Ukraine has been defending itself heroically for more than four hundred days, and we Poles have kept our word. You can always count on Poland!

We have seen each other many times since then – during my visits to Kyiv and Lviv, yours to Rzeszów, and today I am enormously proud to welcome you back to Poland's capital, Warsaw!

Dear Volodymyr!

Today you are welcomed by the whole of Poland, you are welcomed by the Poles, you are welcomed by the Ukrainians, your compatriots who are our guests. We are happy to have you with us!

We are also happy to have with us Olena Zelenska, the First Lady of Ukraine. Dear Olena, I bow to you, and to the other brave heroic Ukrainian women: mothers but also sisters, wives, and also widows, who are showing such great heroism in this war, such a great unique resilience leading them as they take care of their families and their men! I thank you wholeheartedly!

Distinguished President!

Dear First Lady of Ukraine!

Honourable Prime Minister!

Honourable Madam Speaker! Honourable Mr Speaker!

Honourable Deputy Prime Ministers of Poland and Ukraine!

Honourable Ministers!

Generals! Officers!

Dear Representatives of Local Governments, Municipal Authorities, Regional Governments, NGO's!

Dear All Ukrainian Friends!

Dear Compatriots!

Ladies and Gentlemen!

Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Friends,

Back in 2008, President Lech Kaczyński warned the world against Russian imperialism in his historic speech in Tbilisi during the Russian onslaught on Georgia. He said: „Today Georgia, tomorrow Ukraine, the day after tomorrow the Baltic States, and later perhaps it is time for my country, for Poland”. But then he also said that „Central Europe has courageous leaders”. And in saying so, he was also right!

A courageous leader is with us today. A leader who did not abandon his country, his capital, even when the invading troops were on its outskirts. A leader whose courage inspired his people to defend themselves heroically, who inspired the entire world to support a fighting Ukraine, who stood up to Russian lies and disinformation, and who showed the world the truth about Russian aggression.

Volodymyr!

You are a hero of the free world, but for us you are above all a great friend of Poland. That is why today, in the name of the Republic of Poland, in the name of the Polish women and men, I have presented you with the highest Polish decoration – the Order of the White Eagle.

This is a tribute to a courageous leader, but it is also an expression of profound respect for all the Ukrainian people, who are now fighting a heroic battle to defend their independence.

Today, as we are speaking, Ukrainian soldiers are fighting fierce battles to defend their homeland. They are defending Bahmut, Avdiivka, Zaporizhia and dozens of other places. With superhuman efforts they are stopping the Russian aggressor. Often they pay the highest price, the price of their own lives.

The posture of the entire Ukrainian people, united and determined to defend their country, is also admirable. They support the fighters every day. They have not been intimidated, despite the fact that civilian objects are also the target of Russian attacks. Despite the fact that homes, energy and communications infrastructure, hospitals, kindergartens, and schools are being shelled.

These war crimes must be condemned and brought to justice! The criminals must be punished!

Ukraine has shown the entire world that it is capable of confronting a neighbouring power, a state, much bigger and theoretically much more powerful. Putin has not achieved any of his strategic goals. Russia has suffered and is still suffering enormous losses. This is a remarkable success for the Ukrainian state, Ukraine’s society, and armed forces.

But there is still a long way to go before the war is settled and over. Ukraine needs support, more supplies of modern weapons.

Poland was and is one of the leaders in this support. We know very well that those who are defending their homes, those who are defending their homeland, those who are defending their towns and villages, those who are defending their citizens – need help immediately. There is no time to wait. That is why we are expeditious in providing tanks, armoured personnel carriers, howitzers and, in the last few days, aircraft to the fighting Ukraine. We are setting an example for other countries, sometimes breaking their persistence and resistance to arms supplies.

We know that today you are fighting not only for your independence, but also for the security of the whole of

Europe. We Poles remember full well what it means to fight for 'our freedom and yours'.

We shed our blood many times to defend other countries. That is why we value your courage and bravery so highly.

And every step of the way we appeal to the world for even greater and faster military support for a free and democratic Ukraine! For the defenders of her borders!

Support for a free and independent Ukraine was, is and will remain beyond political dispute in our country. Regardless of whether the left or the right is in power in the land on the Vistula.

This was the case during the Orange Revolution, when then President Aleksander Kwasniewski was one of the leaders of support for Ukraine. It was so during the presidency of President Kaczyński.

It was so during the Revolution of Dignity, when in Kyiv, at the Maidan of Independence, there was unanimous support for your struggle, both from the representatives of the then ruling factions and from the opposition.

And so it is today, when you are facing the toughest test, defending the independence of your homeland. And so it will be in the future!

Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Dear Friends,

On the monument to Taras Shevchenko, the great Ukrainian bard, which stands in the centre of Warsaw, near the Belvedere, are engraved the beautiful words with which he addressed the Poles:

„Give me your hand, brother Lach / Give me a place in your heart /  
And we will regain our happiness / In the name of Christ a quiet paradise!„

The prophecy of the Ukrainian poet is being fulfilled before our eyes.

Yes, we have reached out to our brothers in need in the hour of trial. We Poles opened our hearts and immediately rushed to help, welcoming neighbours fleeing the war into their homes, helping with transportation, organising collections, charity events, donating gifts and taking them to Ukraine. To those most in need. And we continue to do so to this day.

The Polish state, Polish local authorities, NGOs, and churches are involved but above all millions of Polish women and men are involved. There are those among us who, from the very first hours of the Russian invasion, brought help in every way they could. They came from all over Poland. Once again, I thank you sincerely for this great, civic, universal outpouring of solidarity! Thank you wholeheartedly!

Ladies and Gentlemen,  
My Dear Ones,

Poland is the land of Solidarity. It is known throughout the world for the great Solidarity movement, which brought together millions of people who courageously stood up to the evil changing the recent history of the world and contributing to the collapse of communism. We are immensely proud of that Solidarity.

But after the outbreak of war, we showed that Solidarity is not just an illustrious past, but that Solidarity lives in us. Today we are just as proud of the second great wave of solidarity. Solidarity with Ukraine and its people! I wholeheartedly thank you for that!

Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Dear Friends,

There would have been no Solidarity, no collapse of communism, no freedom without the Holy Father John Paul II. Three days ago, we celebrated the anniversary of his passing away.

He was not only a great Pope, the greatest Pole in history, he was also a great advocate of peace and Polish-Ukrainian reconciliation. He spoke of this in Lviv during his historic pilgrimage to Ukraine. Let me recall his words again: „It is time to leave behind this painful past! (...) May forgiveness – given and received – spread like a healing balm in every heart. May the cleansing of historical memories make everyone ready to place what unites above what divides, so that together we can build a future based on mutual respect, fraternity, brotherly cooperation, and true solidarity”.

It is this great task set before us by Saint John Paul II that we are carrying out together today. Great nations, at the most important moments in history, and we are at such a moment, are able to overcome the greatest differences that divide them and look to the future together. And we are the great nations. We Poles and Ukrainians. We have a great history, a great culture, but also a great, bright future!

That is why we are not afraid to talk about the most difficult issues of our common history. We demonstrated this, Ladies and Gentlemen, with our joint visit to Lviv – to the cemetery of the Lviv Eaglets and Sich Riflemen. We will build relations between our peoples on the basis of truth and mutual trust.

Poles and Ukrainians are linked by a centuries-old, shared history. A wonderful history, but on many occasions strewn with difficulties and painful experiences. We made many mistakes together, for which we paid a dramatically high price.

The partitioners and occupiers often tried to divide us and turn us against each other according to the “divide and rule” logic.

Today they are trying to do the same – by frightening Poles with Ukrainians and Ukrainians with Poles. But I am convinced beyond any doubt they will not succeed this time. That is why today, from here, together, we are sending a clear message to Moscow, to the Kremlin: You will not succeed in turning us against each other! You will not succeed in dividing us ever again!

Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Dear Friends,

Almost two years ago, we met here, in exactly the same place, in the Royal Castle in Warsaw, with President Volodymyr Zelensky, in a completely different and joyful atmosphere. The Presidents of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia were also present. Together we celebrated the 230th anniversary of the Constitution of 3 May. The first constitution in Europe and the second in the world.

The meeting ended with the signing of a joint declaration containing some especially important words. Let me recall them now: „we look with hope to the future. We express the conviction that the prosperity of our common heritage and common home, rooted in the European civilization, demands that, just like home, also Europe be built on the basis of fundamental values and principles. These are with no doubt: freedom, sovereignty, territorial integrity, democracy, the rule of law, equality, and solidarity.”.

Despite the tragedy of war, we still look to the future with hope! That is why these words are even more relevant for us today!

Freedom! Sovereignty! Territorial integrity! Democracy! Solidarity!

These are fundamental values for the free world. But the free world has to prove every day that they mean something, that they are not empty words.

I mention this today not by accident. Because in many countries, after more than four hundred days of war, fatigue, weariness, and discouragement are setting in. There is a temptation, fuelled by Russian propaganda and disinformation, to bring about a ceasefire at any cost, as soon as possible, and consequently to conclude a peace with Russia that is unfavourable to Ukraine.

There will never be our consent to this! The policy of appeasement and submission to Russia and Vladimir Putin's policies over the years has borne poisoned fruit. It should be remembered that its result is today's aggression and thousands of innocent victims.

Only Ukraine has the right to decide on its sovereignty. On what terms to hold peace talks. The only conditions that world leaders must demand from Russia is the complete withdrawal of troops from Ukrainian territory. There can be no negotiating and deciding over Ukraine's head!

If anyone in the world starts a conversation to his effect with me, I reply: have you been to Bucha? have you been to Borodzianka? have you been to Irpin? Then go there and tell the people whose loved ones were murdered, tortured, raped, tell them straight to their eyes that the sacrifice of their loved ones, that their suffering did not matter. That everything will be as it was before.

Well, I say it won't. It cannot be as it was before. Ukraine will decide itself its destinies! Now and forever. And we, as a neighbouring country, will act as a guardian.

We Poles, like few other nations in the world, understand the tragedy of Ukraine. We know what war is, death and suffering, demolished cities, and crimes of genocide. But we also know that even all this will not break the true spirit of a nation, the true spirit of freedom!

A testimony to the belief in the victory of freedom is the place where we met today: the Royal Castle in Warsaw. A castle that shared the tragic fate of destroyed Warsaw during the Second World War, having been razed to the ground by the German occupiers. Here behind me there was nothing there was empty space, only ruins.

And this Castle was raised from the ruins by the efforts of the whole nation. Just like Warsaw. A city untamed.

That is why an appeal is being made to the world today from here, from Warsaw, from Poland: We must stand by Ukraine. We must continue to support it militarily, economically and in humanitarian terms. We must be consistent in this. We must not doubt. We owe it to the victims of this barbaric aggression!

Ukraine today needs the faith of the whole free world in its victory.

We Poles believe that Ukraine will defend itself against Russian aggression, that millions of its citizens will be able to return to their homes, which together, as the West, we will help to rebuild. That it will join the European Union, join the transatlantic community.

We believe in you! We believe in your victory!

Poland has not yet perished while we live.

What foreign violence has taken from us we will take back with a sabre!

Shche ne vmerla Ukrayiny, ni slava, ni volya,

Shche nam, brattya molodiyi, usmikhnet'sya dolya.

Long live an independent Ukraine.

Long live a free sovereign independent Poland!

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