



# DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

# NEWS

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

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REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY JOHN A. VOLPE, SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION, AT THE THIRD OF MAY CONSTITUTION DAY CELEBRATION, IN HUMBOLDT PARK, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS, SUNDAY, MAY 4, 1969, 3:00 P.M.

I am honored by your invitation to be here. This is a momentous occasion for Polish-Americans. I consider it a great privilege to join with you in observing it.

President Nixon has asked me to extend to you his greetings on this your native holiday. He is mindful of the many and the rich contributions Polish Americans have made to our culture. He is appreciative of the sacrifices of Polish Americans in our wars.

And I want to tell you I have brought with me today my Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs, Mr. Walter Mazan, who is himself of Polish descent. Every morning Walter says "Dobrii Dyen" and I say "Dyen Dobrii" and after that everything seems to go pretty well. It must be psychological.

Mr. Mazan has just joined me in the Department after a period of outstanding service with the President's Office of Emergency Preparedness from 1957 through 1969. As Acting Director of Liaison with the Office of Emergency Preparedness he was given a special citation in July 1968 by the National Governors' Conference. The Governors said that Walter had created "the best working partnership in modern history ... between the Governors and the Executive Branch of the Federal Government."

As a former chairman of the Governors' Conference I can tell you that those words of praise for Walter are well earned. In fact, it was on the strength of his performance there that I offered him a high level position on my staff.

We meet to commemorate a great declaration of freedom -- the Polish Constitution. To some Americans, democracy and individual liberty are long established facts and we occasionally tend to forget that these rights have a most sacred meaning. We sometimes forget that our human heritage of freedom had its beginning long before our American revolution and our own Constitutional convention. The struggle for freedom from tyranny -- the battle for the rights of man began many hundreds of years before.

Our own Constitution was the culmination of the best efforts of many great men. We need only mention the names of Kosciusko -- Pulaski -- Lafayette -- Von Steuben -- and the significance is apparent.

(And let me add to that list, on behalf of my own heritage, the names of two great Italians who assisted in the American war for independence: Cosima Medici, and Colonel Francesco Vigo.)

But the real point -- is that if we think of these men solely in terms of their military contribution to our freedoms, we miss a far greater truth.

Kosciusko and Pulaski: came to the United States some fifteen years before the establishment of their own constitution. They came not as free men but as men seeking freedom. They brought with them from their native Poland the spirit of liberty.

In fact, as this group certainly knows, Kosciusko made Thomas Jefferson the executor of his will and directed that all funds from his estates be used to purchase freedom for individual American Negro slaves.

Yes, my friends, the same great dreams and hopes -- the same firm faith in the worth of the common man that later brought forth the Polish Constitution earlier inspired our own struggle for freedom. The common effort of American and Polish patriots is evident in both documents. Listen to these excerpts from the stirring preamble of the Polish Constitution:

"Prizing more than life, and every personal consideration, the political existence, external independence, and internal liberty of the nation....

We do solemnly establish the present Constitution which we declare wholly inviolable in every part.."

It is evident that Polish and American patriots were of a common heart. They contributed spirit and thought to each other. Our American freedom owes a debt to these Polish revolutionaries who established their own national Constitution. This is the meaning of the third of May to all Americans.

But to you Americans of Polish origin, the Polish Constitution cannot but call forth other emotions. The Constitution was but barely new when Poland was crushed and destroyed by invading armies. And the long night of Poland began, and the great Polish Constitution was forgotten. Or was it?

I say it was not. I say it will one day again become the great document of human rights, the governing document of the Polish Nation.

My friends, I have a deep conviction that no noble effort by any man ever dies but that, no matter how small it is, it becomes part of the rich human inheritance that increases through the centuries and ever adds to the improvement and glory of the state of man.

So it is with the Polish Constitution. It exists and is remembered and revered. Witness our meeting here today. And I have no doubt but that in the cities and villages of Poland, May Third does not pass but what teachers and leaders and rational men pause to reflect on their memory of a former and better way of arranging the affairs of men. I maintain that the Polish Constitution -- a great statement of human hopes -- still lives in the hearts and minds of Polish people everywhere.

I maintain that freedom will be restored to the land of your fathers, and that tyranny will not survive.

I submit that Poland's war for liberation is far from over, and that the people of Poland will -- again -- join the proud ranks of free men.

But while we are concerned with the prospects of freedom abroad, we must be no less attentive to the protection of our liberty at home. There is still much for us to do here on these shores.

Freedom in America is still unfinished business and it is our job to take this generation one step closer to our goal. Freedom has many enemies.

This opposition takes many forms. It can be the white man who hates the black man. It can be the black militant who cries out for race war and separatism. It can be the superpatriot who cries out for preventive war. It can be the isolationist who demands that we withdraw from world affairs and pretends that we have no responsibility to maintain the peace.

Your fathers -- as did mine -- came here to find opportunity. They didn't want to leave their homes, but they did so for the sake of the higher good, for the benefit of their families. They found what they were looking for and the Polish contribution is now one of the glorious chapters in American history. Polish Americans have helped build America from the forges and factories to the pinnacle of professional and cultural achievement. They have enriched the whole range of American life.

However, the Poles who came to this country did not turn their backs on their homeland. The work of the Polish National Alliance is proof of that. This persistent endeavor between the people of Poland and the people of the United States, carried on against considerable obstacles, will continue to pay great dividends for both countries.

You may also be proud of the American Research Hospital for Children in Krakow, for it is preparing a better life for those who will succeed us, regardless of nationality.

In these and many ways, Polish Americans are building bridges of understanding between people who want to live in peace with one another.

While the Polish Constitution was a landmark of democracy in its own time and remains so today, in the years in between we have learned how fragile liberty is unless there is equality as well. In fact, we are learning that without equality, freedom cannot survive.

Today, we are trying to extend equal opportunity to all who are willing to help themselves. The future of freedom today is being moulded by decisions we take on the neighborhood level -- in the communities where we live, work and go to school. I'm not talking about theories; I'm talking about whether a man can get a good job and find a decent home for his family and a good school for his kids regardless of his accent, his color, or his religion.

When this Nation was being born it was helped into existence by the great heroes Kosciusko and Pulaski. It needs such generous and dedicated men today, for we are fighting another war for justice and opportunity. Many Americans, white and black, still do not have an equal chance at the good things of life. Americans who have benefitted from opportunity -- such as you and me -- will be the last to deny opportunity to any man, because we of all people know what it really means.

The fight for freedom continues on all fronts. We must not retreat if America is to be the world's greatest democracy. What Polish Americans have done for themselves can give all Americans a lesson. They have fought and died for freedom in four of our wars. Their sacrifices have made this country more credible in the world at large -- for the world knows that we mean what we say about defending freedom at home and abroad.

We are the strongest power in the world. We did not actively seek such power, but we have it and we have to use it responsibly. We must courageously do what needs to be done for the cause of peace. We cannot win the peace by being weak. And that is why the President has decided to deploy a limited A-B-M System to defend our deterrent power. The Safeguard will not only protect us but will indicate our resolve to resist tyranny from any quarter. The President's decision on the A-B-M is a perfect example of the cautious but tough-minded attitude of this Administration.

Indeed, in the short period of three months President Nixon has reoriented the Federal Government apparatus. He has inspired a new confidence in the people of this country. He is fighting inflation so your dollar will still be able to buy your groceries and other needs. He has launched an anti-crime program in Washington, D. C., that could become a model for other cities. He has proposed new ways to fight the hideous power of criminal syndicates. He is taking the Post Office out of politics. He is doing his best behind the scenes to prevent an explosion in the Middle East. And he is seeking an honorable peace in Vietnam.

Here is a real chief executive, then, who knows that performance is more impressive and longer lasting than public relations. Here is a man who can really lead the free world, who can negotiate from strength, and who is above all confident in the eventual victory of freedom over totalitarianism. He needs your support, your confidence, your prayers, and your heart -- and together we shall prevail.

Again, my friends, I thank you for giving me the opportunity to be here with you today to celebrate this most significant occasion. God bless you all.

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