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[AUTHENTICITY CERTIFIED: Text version below transcribed directly from audio]

Thank you all. Good afternoon. *Dobry den*.¹ Let me try it that way. How did I do? All right. That's -- That's all you're going to suffer of my Czech today.

Minister Petricek, Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies Vondracek, Senator Fischer, who I'll be speaking with after my remarks, members of the parliament, and other distinguished guests:

Thank you. This is an amazing honor to be with you all today.

This -- This has very special meaning to me. Many years ago -- too many to speak about -- I was a young soldier in Europe stationed not far from here, near Bayreuth.



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Back then, it was nearly impossible to imagine that an American secretary of state would ever deliver an address in this exquisite city that was, at that time, held captive by communists; or that I'd be the one doing it. I was a young lieutenant. God has been good to us all.

This visit is personal for me in another way. My home state of Kansas was a magnet for Czech settlers in the 19th century, from places like Bohemia and Moravia and other parts of this fine country. We have a Pilsen not too far from Wichita, where I live. Their -- Their legacy is still alive today in their descendants and Czech festivals held in small towns all across Kansas.

Those -- Those settlers came to Kansas -- I know this history pretty well -- they came for a better life. There was also a familiar, very rich soil, and the coveted freedom that America always promises to its people. And the Czech people know about freedom, too, and it is indeed a great and enduring bond between our two amazing countries.

You all know this history well: In 1918, in Pittsburgh, Czechs and Slovaks living in and inspired by the United States signed an agreement laying the foundations for the new democratic state of Czechoslovakia.²

And yesterday I had the chance to commemorate in Pilsen, 75 years ago, American troops coming to liberate. And that even during the darkest years of the Soviet occupation, the ties that endured through the American people's hopes and prayers for your country and the broadcasts of Radio Free Europe, they meant we were always there. We were always with you.

When the Iron Curtain finally fell, Americans rejoiced in your freedom. And it's only fitting that Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty moved here in 1995. This mission -- it's the one that was just spoken about -- is as important today as it has ever been.

I was serving in America's House of Representatives, the lower body, in 2014 when we put Vaclav Havel's bust in the U.S. Capitol to mark two and a half decades of the Velvet Revolution. May it always remain there.



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Thirty years ago, President Havel became the first politician from the former Soviet bloc to come to speak at the joint session of Congress. I went to a handful of them during my time. It's always remarkable, and only the most special leaders are given that opportunity.

He said that day, quote, "We [are] living in very extraordinary times. The human face of the world is changing so rapidly that none of the familiar political speedometers are adequate."

It was, truly, and it was an extraordinary time, an exciting time for this part of the world, as the clouds of communism parted and the rays of freedom burst forth. Central and Eastern Europe rejoined their free brothers and sisters in the West.

But we see today that in spite of this great time, we see that many of the geopolitical assumptions that we held back then haven't come to pass. The things we believed just turned out not to be so. And perhaps -- perhaps just now we're recognizing the trends that we should have recognized long ago.

Let me be a bit more specific. We see that authoritarianism didn't die in 1989, or in 1991. The storm was still there; it was simply over the horizon. While we wrote the epitaph on those types of regimes, we now know that it was premature.

I -- I happen to believe with all my heart -- and America's friends in the Czech Republic realize this now too -- the Czech experience is a harbinger of what other nations on the continent face.

Russia -- Russia continues to seek to undermine your democracy, your security through disinformation campaigns and through cyber attacks. It's even trying to rewrite your history. We've all seen that.

Today, an even greater threat is the threat posed by the Chinese Communist Party and its campaigns of coercion and control. In your country alone, we see influence campaigns against your politicians and your security forces; we see the theft of industrial data that you have



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created through your innovation and creativity; we see the use of economic levels [leverage] to stifle freedom itself.

It's not tanks and guns. It's very different from that. The CCP initiates retaliation against innocent parties when crossed. It infamously canceled the PFK [PKF] Philharmonia's trip to Beijing for something as simple as the mayor's efforts to deepen ties with Taiwan. Shanghai cancelled its cooperation with Prague after this city signed a sister-city agreement with Taipei.

Look, you all see this. The CCP leverages economic power to coerce countries. Recall that the Chinese embassy in Prague sent a letter to your former senate president,³ who had hoped to visit Taiwan. Your free press did amazing work and reported on this strong-arming. The letter read as follows -- said, quote, "Czech enterprises with economic interests in China will have to pay," end of quote.

This is deeply inconsistent with each of our values. The CCP lies. It makes those who tell the truth disappear. The virulent pandemic that came from Wuhan spread so widely, and caused so much damage, because the CCP covered it up.

Then there's the tragedy that has befallen Hong Kong and the premature denial of freedom to those people. You see it in far-off places and their attempts to dominate the South China Sea. You see it in the detention of one million Uyghur Muslims living in internment camps in Xinjiang. This is the human rights stain of the century, sustained by companies like Huawei, using technology that secret police could only have dreamed of in times gone by.

Now, it might be easy to dismiss the China challenge as just a passing irritant, but I hope you all know it is not so. The regime has a Marxist-Leninist core no less than the Soviet Union did, and indeed, perhaps more so. The party has always put itself first. Its actions flow from its ideology. And it's paranoid about free societies like ours.



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What's happening now isn't Cold War 2.0. The challenge of resisting the CCP threat is in some ways much more difficult. That's because the CCP is already enmeshed in our economies, in our politics, in our societies in ways the Soviet Union never was. And Beijing is not likely to change course in the near future, although one lives in hope.

No one thought the Berlin Wall would fall. I was a soldier there until -- in -- in then-West Germany until 1989, until just a couple weeks before that wall came down, was serving in a little border unit in a town called Bindlach. We had no idea that in just a matter of weeks, people would be crossing freely back to be reunited with their families. Well, freedom will win this time too. As President Havel once reminded us, we must commit not to "live the lie" but to "live [with]in the truth."⁴

And here's what's true: China's world dominance is not inevitable. We are the authors of our fate. Free societies have always been more attractive. Your people know this. Our people do too.

And here's the best news of all from all of that: The resolve of freedom-loving people all over the world is to defend their way of life, and it is growing. I see it every place I go.

Americans now recognize that the CCP, which is totally separate from the Chinese people, threatens their values and their way of life. Both parties in Washington agree on very little, but on this, we all know what we're up against. You know, I -- I spend a great deal of time talking to members of both of our political parties. The tide has turned, just as I see it turning here in Europe as well. The -- The West is winning. Don't let anybody tell you about the decline of the West. That is false. That is their narrative.

I've heard the same observations from political leaders across the spectrum, most recently in London. Those meetings reminded me that there are plenty of European leaders eager to lean into freedom.



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But it's going to take all of us. It will take us working together here in Prague, in Poland, in Portugal. We have the obligation to speak clearly and plainly to our people and without fear. We must confront the complex questions presented by this challenge, and we must do so together.

We have to explain what I think those of us who grew up in another time knew. We have to explain to our citizens the price free societies will pay if we don't confront this threat. We have to explain what kind of scrutiny we must give to Chinese investment and why we do that. And we have to talk to them about what sorts of alliances are needed to be built between the United States and Europe and around the world, and how we will retool to withstand and resist this threat.

Your nation, and others that suffered behind the Iron Curtain, know this. You know best how all deeply communists plunge societies into ruin and oppression. You -- You all have seen it and you've heard it from the generations before you.

Our countries must work together to awaken all. We must help them. We must help everyone. I urge you -- the representatives of the Czech people -- to summon a hearty measure of courage to stand up for the sovereignty and freedoms of you and your countrymen demanded on the streets of Prague back in 1968, in the Charter 77 document, in Wenceslas Square back in 1989.

Your nation has the opportunity to show all of Europe what it means to be a trailblazer for freedom. Indeed, I can must say you're doing it in many ways already:

Citizens like those with Project Synopsis have fought for years to create transparency around CCP actions, often in the face of legal threats.

The Czech press, too, has investigated and disclosed disturbing cases of CCP interference in academia and the media, also under the threat of legal reprisal.



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Your senate foreign affairs committee has recommended withdrawal from your expedition treaty -- extradition treaty with Hong Kong.

Prime Minister Babis, with whom I just spent some time, helped set the tone for all of the world for international cybersecurity with the conference that produced the 5G Prague Proposals.

And Mayor Hrib has continued President Havel's good work of supporting Tibet.

Your senate president will make that trip to Taiwan later this month, fulfilling the wishes of his late predecessor. Good on him.

Know too -- Know too that America is supporting you and will always do it. We will always take a stand for freedom and fight with our brothers and sisters who are prepared to do it with us.

We recently accepted the EU's offer to start a dialogue focused between the EU and the United States on China and how we will jointly confront it. We're working with our UN friends to protect UN bodies from CCP malign influence. Too, we're refocusing NATO, making sure that it is fit for purpose in these times and on the new and emerging threats.

And we've joined you in building a Clean Network of countries and companies who refuse to sacrifice cybersecurity just to save a little bit of money. And we're ready to invest up to one billion dollars in the Three Seas Initiative Fund to help protect against Chinese opaque lending practices, and we look forward to the Czech Republic and other nations doing their part financially as well.

And that canceled PFK Prague Philharmonic [PKF Prague Philharmonia] trip I mentioned? The American Embassy rescheduled a concert in our ambassador's residence, and we hope to host that group for a trip to the United States just as soon as we can get it arranged. It'll be glorious.



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So, too, have we taken actions like ejecting Chinese intellectual property thieves from our own borders, putting sanctions on human rights abusers in the Chinese Government, and much, much more. The United States is indeed rising under President Trump to meet this moment.

I'll -- I'll close here because I want to have a good conversation with you, and I want to leave plenty of time for that. Today you should know that after three decades of freedom, we can see the blessings of liberty here in the Czech Republic.

Earlier today I -- I met with a group of startup leaders. Their nimble enterprises -- once unthinkable under Soviet commissars -- are bringing value to both the United States and the Czech economies. But maybe more importantly, they reflect how the rich soil of liberty yields a plentiful harvest in human flourishing when freedom is tolerated.

I'll close by quoting one more time President Havel: "The idea of human rights and freedoms must be an integral part of any meaningful world order."⁵ My Czech friends, please remember that. And remember too that today, tomorrow, and forever, America will be with you as we champion those precious human rights and freedoms.

Thank you. May God bless you and the Czech people. I look forward to our conversation today.

Thank you all so much.

¹ Formal greeting in Czech language. Literally "Good day" (which covers morning and afternoon). Dobry = "good." and den = "day." [Sources: <https://www1.chapman.edu/~bdehning/ECAIS/Basic%20Czech%20Phrases.htm>; <https://forum.duolingo.com/comment/24325734/Dobr%C3%BD-den>; <https://hinative.com/en-US/questions/15085970>]

² "Representatives of the Slovak League and Czech National Committee signed an agreement in this spirit in October 1915 in Cleveland, USA, demanding the creation of a common independent state on the basis of a federative union of two nations...An agreement signed by Slovak and Czech representatives in 1918 in Pittsburgh enshrined autonomous administration for Slovakia in the future common state." [Source: <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/basic-facts-about/slovakia/brief-history-of>]

³ Jaroslav Kubera



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⁴ An acclaimed source for these quotations is Havel's essay *The Power of the Powerless* [Sources: <https://hac.bard.edu/amor-mundi/the-power-of-the-powerless-vaclav-havel-2011-12-23> and https://web.archive.org/web/20120107141633/http://www.vaclavhavel.cz/showtrans.php?cat=clanky&val=72_aj_clanky.html&typ=HTML]

⁵ As discussed in a 1992 New York Times Opinion piece entitled *The New Measure of Man*. Broader quotation: "This modern anthropocentrism inevitably meant that He who allegedly endowed man with his inalienable rights began to disappear from the world: He was so far beyond the grasp of modern science that He was gradually pushed into a sphere of privacy of sorts, if not directly into a sphere of private fancy -- that is, to a place where public obligations no longer apply. The existence of a higher authority than man himself simply began to get in the way of human aspirations. The idea of human rights and freedoms must be an integral part of any meaningful world order. Yet I think it must be anchored in a different place, and in a different way, than has been the case so far." To this end, Havel offers "the anthropic cosmological principle" and the "Gaia hypothesis" as complimentary (postmodern) principles for anchoring the expression and protection of human rights and freedoms. As Havel puts it: "The awareness of our being anchored in the Earth and the universe, the awareness that we are not here alone nor for ourselves alone but that we are an integral part of higher, mysterious entities against whom it is not advisable to blaspheme." [Source: <https://www.nytimes.com/1994/07/08/opinion/the-new-measure-of-man.html>]