

Ambassador Feinstein's Remarks
at the University of Economics in Katowice

December 5, 2011

Dzień dobry. Cieszę się z wizyty na Uniwersytecie
Ekonomicznym w Katowicach. Chciałbym podziękować
rektorowi Janowi Pyce, prorektorowi Wojciechowi Dyduchowi i
dziekan Krystynie Jędralskiej za zaproszenie. Witam studentów
Uniwersytetu Śląskiego i Politechniki Śląskiej.

[Good afternoon. It is a real pleasure to be here at the
University of Economics in Katowice. I want to thank Rector
Jan Pyka, Vice-Rector Wojciech Dyduch, and Dean Krystyna
Jędralska for inviting me. I'd also like to welcome students
from the Silesian University and the Silesian University of
Technology here today.]

I'm going to talk about the Obama administration's foreign policy and transatlantic relations today, and I believe that the historic and diverse city of Katowice is a great place to do so. I won't talk for too long, because I look forward to hearing your thoughts and answering your questions. And I hope some of you in the room today will consider contributing directly to transatlantic relations by working for U.S. Embassy in Warsaw or the Consulate General in Krakow, or perhaps the Polish Embassy in Washington.

President Barack Obama, who has now been in office for almost three years, believes that America should play a leading role in the world, while working closely with vital partners like Poland. President Obama has pursued a foreign policy that starts with a worldview of increasing interconnectedness. This analysis concludes that there are more opportunities for trade, travel and government cooperation, but also more global threats that affect more countries more quickly.

President Obama is committed to addressing a number of security challenges today. These include continuing to make progress in Afghanistan, in both security and development, as we transition to Afghan leadership in 2014. He is also focused on finding a diplomatic solution to the Iranian nuclear situation, allowing Iran to use peaceful nuclear energy in a way that's consistent with its international obligations. The Obama administration has worked tirelessly to counter violent extremism, keeping America and her allies safe.

The Obama administration strives to promote both political and economic development around the world. It has encouraged democratic movements, particularly in North Africa and the Middle East, but has also closely followed the situation in eastern European countries like Ukraine and Belarus.

Obama's foreign policy recognizes a fundamental truth: economic strength at home is the foundation of leadership abroad. So his administration has put a strong emphasis on increasing jobs and trade in the United States. To do this, he has promoted trade and investment around the world, including passing free trade agreements recently with Columbia, Panama and South Korea. The Obama administration is following the Eurozone crisis very closely, and stands ready to do its part to help resolve this issue. We appreciated Minister Sikorski's speech in Berlin last week calling for a strong Europe, which is absolutely consistent with American interests.

Now let me ask you a question: how important do you think cooperation with Europe is on these issues? Of course, it is absolutely crucial on all of them! That is why I say that transatlantic relations have never been more important. Today, the transatlantic space represents what Poland's first post-communist Foreign Minister, Krzysztof Skubiszewski, called a "community of interests," where values and economic ties bind us closely together.

President Obama certainly appreciates this fact, as he emphasized during the U.S.-EU summit in Washington last week. During a meeting with Presidents Barroso and Van Rompuy, he declared: “What hasn’t changed [in the world], is the fundamental bonds that exist between the European Union and the United States. Our common values, our common belief in the rule of law, in democracy, in freedom, in a free market system – all those things bind us together... And so this is an extraordinarily important relationship.”

President Obama has backed up those words with action. He has visited Europe nine times, more than any other president, including a two-day visit to Poland this May. He has come to consult on all of the issues I mentioned and more.

The United States has three overarching objectives in our policy toward Europe, and Poland plays an important role in each.

First, we work with Europe to promote prosperity on both sides of the Atlantic. And in this respect the importance of Europe and America to one another cannot be overstated.

America and Europe are one another's biggest trading partners and foreign employers by far. Investment is over \$3 trillion a year and U.S.-EU trade accounts for almost 40 percent of world trade.

Second, we work with Europe to meet global challenges. No matter what the issue is, whether it is responding to the stirring for democracy in North Africa and the Middle East; combating violent extremism in Afghanistan and Pakistan, or opposing Iran's nuclear ambitions, Europe is indispensable. Together, we are vastly stronger in terms of legitimacy, resources, and ideas. That is why the United States supports a strong and united Europe, and a strong Poland within the EU, playing an important and influential role.

Third, the United States is committed to the historic project of building a Europe that is prosperous, whole and free.

Poland's bold and skillful democratic transition paved the way for Central and Eastern Europe. And, today, Poland's expertise and example are inspiration and sustenance for those seeking to build democracy in the eastern neighborhood. The leadership of Poland and Sweden established the European Union's Eastern Partnership Initiative. And America is proud to provide \$310 million in assistance to the countries of the Eastern Partnership, plus an additional \$450 million this year for Georgia as part of our \$1 billion assistance package pledge. And we signed a five-year package of assistance with Moldova, under the Millennium Challenge Corporation Compact, worth \$262 million.

Now let me turn to my second home of Poland. America looks to Poland as one of our closest allies and friends. Our bilateral relations are broad and deep, forged over more than two centuries of supporting each other in war and in peace. And now, after President Obama's visit, we can be proud of our achievements in broadening and deepening our relationship for the new century. Our relationship is one that values and encourages Poland's emergence as a strong and influential member of NATO and the European Union.

It is a relationship built on a shared strategic view. No one agrees about everything, but I sometimes like to say the laws of physics bring Poland and the United States closer together.

Poland is the eastern frontier of the EU and America is the western edge of the transatlantic space and because we tend to see the world through a similar lens, we have a unique opportunity, and I might even say responsibility, to forge transatlantic solidarity together.

When President Obama visited Poland, he was reciprocating the visit of President Komorowski to Washington last December. He focused on three main pillars of our relationship: promoting democracy, expanding prosperity, and strengthening mutual security. But most importantly, he took the time to consult your leaders and get to know today's Poland so that we can jointly build a partnership for the 21st century. We often talk of the importance of increasing mutual understanding through people-to-people exchanges, and this visit clearly did that at the highest levels.

Foreign Minister Sikorski, in a tribute in Washington to Professor Geremek, said that democracy has two main advantages: it is morally superior to the alternatives and has achieved better practical outcomes. And today, Polish and American cooperation on democracy promotion is substantive. In March, Secretary Clinton and Minister Sikorski announced the establishment of a democracy dialogue between our two countries; the only such dialogue the United States has with another country. During their meeting, they discussed Poland's plans to share experiences and knowledge with the government of Tunisia. Poland also brought observers from Tunisia, Egypt and Libya to witness the October parliamentary elections here.

We have coordinated our actions on Belarus, supporting Warsaw's lead to announce strong sanctions to punish Lukashenko following the brutal post-election crackdown last December and, as important, announcing an increase in support to civil society and democracy activists in Belarus, to let them know clearly that they are recognized and supported by the international community.

Together we helped to establish the Community of Democracies, born in Warsaw 10 years ago, under the leadership of Professor Geremek and Secretary Albright. Last July, Secretary Clinton attended the 10th anniversary meeting in Krakow and established nurturing of civil society as a key task for the CD.

The second pillar of our cooperation is promoting prosperity in both of our countries. Trade and investment between Poland and the United States is probably more than you think – but not nearly enough. In 2010 the cumulative value of U.S. investments in Poland was \$30 billion, and U.S. firms now provide direct and indirect employment to an estimated 350,000 workers in Poland. Since 2008, the interest in Poland as an investment destination has grown, and the scope of investment – high tech, energy, research and development – is as important as the size.

One final point. The BRIC countries are of course emerging economic powers, but the levels of U.S. investment in Europe and central Europe are more significant. Total U.S. investment in three central European countries – Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic – totaled \$83 billion last year, twice the value of U.S. investments in India.

Nonetheless, America is the world's largest economy and Poland is one of the EU's fastest growing, so there is a lot of scope for growth.

Energy is an area of particular interest. We are cooperating on clean energy, including wind and biomass. We have signed two agreements with Poland on nuclear cooperation. Poland is a member of the Global Shale Gas Initiative, and the Embassy has co-sponsored shale gas conferences in Warsaw with the Foreign Ministry.

Secretary Clinton puts a very high priority on promoting energy diversity in Europe to ensure the security of supplies, competitive prices, and political independence.

Security is of course fundamental and we have made very significant steps in the last two years. Both of our governments have much to be proud of. In less than one year, we will establish together, as announced by Presidents Obama and Komorowski, the first permanent U.S. military presence in Poland. This of course will be the U.S. air detachment at Lask air force base, where Americans and Poles will cooperate to strengthen our air forces.

At NATO, we agreed to adopt a new Strategic Concept which fundamentally reaffirmed the importance of Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, the article that makes an attack against one an attack against all, and reinforced collective defense as a core task of the Alliance. We have signed an agreement for ballistic missile defense cooperation in Poland, as part of a NATO system to provide for the territorial defense of Europe against the growing threat of ballistic missiles.

The NATO summit in Lisbon also agreed on a strategy for Afghanistan. America and all of the NATO allies greatly appreciate Poland's contributions to ISAF, and we honor Poland's sacrifices and commitment. I travelled to Afghanistan and saw the contribution Poland is making, and heard from ISAF commanders about how honorably Polish troops are serving.

We have also strengthened ties between the American and Polish peoples in the last year. We have supported the Polish-American Freedom Foundation's internship program for more young Poles to work at leading American companies. We have expanded the Fulbright program, with the generous support of the Polish government, to over 80 scholars per year. We have celebrated the opening of the Kosciusko Foundation and the German Marshall Fund office in Poland. The Atlantic Council has helped organize the Wroclaw Global Forum, and in October, Stanford University welcomed the first group of talented young Polish scientists and researchers participating in Prime Minister Tusk's Top 500 Innovators program.

To celebrate the 100th anniversary of President Ronald Reagan, a private Polish group erected a monument to him across from our Embassy in Warsaw last month. The City of Warsaw, supported also by Citibank, unveiled a new monument to Kosciusko, a hero to both our nations for his courage and his true democratic values. American universities hosted conferences to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Ignacy Paderewski's birth.

Our Embassy and Consulate have become more active in reaching out to the Polish public.

Ambasada amerykańska w Warszawie i konsulat w Krakowie są na Facebooku. Mam nadzieję, że będziecie tam państwo zaglądać i że nas polubicie.

We now have a Facebook page and a Twitter account where we advertise events, hold trivia contests, and more. And our exciting internet page, *poland.usembassy.gov*, has a link to our YouTube video about U.S. visa procedures.

To sum up, Poland and America are united in wanting a strong Europe and a strong bilateral relationship. President Obama's visit to Poland was proof of that. Our democratic governments, regardless of political party, understand that our two peoples want this and therefore work to keep the bonds tight and expanding. We believe that good things happen when we combine our unique historical experiences, ideas and resources.

Sometimes I marvel at just how remarkable the U.S.-Polish relationship is. Does anyone know for example, how many Americans of Polish descent there are today?

Yes, approximately 10 million. Out of a population of 300 million Americans, that's quite a bit. And some states, like Wisconsin and Michigan, are about 10 percent Polish!

Or do you know how many Polish citizens traveled to the United States last year? Actually, it was over 150,000, a number that includes *babcias* visiting grandchildren in Chicago, programmers at Google Poland going to their Silicon Valley headquarters, students on scholarships to Harvard funded by the Harvard Club of Poland, and tourists taking pictures of the Grand Canyon.

And while I'm on the subject of visas—do you know what percentage of Polish citizens receive visas? In fact, it's about 90 percent of all applicants, and nearly everyone receives a 10-year, multi-entry visa.

You might know that Tadeusz Kosciuszko and Kazimierz Pulaski helped America win our independence from Great Britain. But did you know that we showed our gratitude by making Pulaski an honorary U.S. citizen—one of only seven in history—and establishing October 11 as General Pulaski Memorial Day in America?

Do you know how many U.S. Senators, out of 100 total, are of Polish descent? At least four, including Barbara Mikulski of Maryland and Lisa Murkowski of Alaska [also Kirsten Gillibrand nee Rutnik of NY and Bernie Sanders of VT].

Did you know that many Polish Americans have won Nobel prizes, such as Frank Wilczek for physics in 2004? Or that many sports stars, like baseball great Stan Musial or Olympic basketball coach Mike Krzyzewski, have Polish roots? Or that many famous Hollywood actors could be your relatives? Like Natalie Portman, Scarlett Johansson, John Krasinski [“The Office”], Leelee Elzbieta Sobieski [“Joan of Arc”], Gwyneth Paltrow, or Shia LaBeouf [“Transformers”].

On a more serious note, do you know how much American companies have invested in Poland? It’s now over \$30 billion dollars, which is more than in many European countries.

You surely know that American and Polish troops have fought side by side as brothers in Iraq and Afghanistan. But do you know what other places they have served honorably together? Iraq, Haiti, Somalia, the Mediterranean, and the Balkans.

How about the first U.S. President to visit Poland? It was Richard Nixon in 1972, and every President since then has also visited, a club President Obama joined in May.

You may know that there are many ways for Polish students to travel to America, including the prestigious Fulbright program, our new internship program with American companies for engineers, and the popular Summer Work and Travel program. But do you know which Polish President participated in an exchange program to the United States? It turns out President Komorowski traveled as part of the State Department-sponsored International Visitor Leadership program in 2006. Moreover, seven of your current government ministers traveled to the United States on similar programs.

Kiedy myślę o tym, jak wiele nas łączy, dochodzę do wniosku, że bycie ambasadorem amerykańskim w Polsce to chyba najfajniejsza praca na świecie.

Stany Zjednoczone mają dużo wyzwań na świecie, ale mają też to szczęście, że mogą liczyć na Polskę - prawdziwego sojusznika i przyjaciela.

Bardzo dziękuję za uwagę. Czy są jakieś pytania?

[When I think about ties like these that bind our nations together, I realize that being U.S. Ambassador to Poland is one of the best jobs in the world. The United States faces many challenges around the globe, but the United States is blessed to face them together with a true ally and friend like Poland.]