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Mr. President, it is an honor to welcome you to the White House. As a playwright, you could hardly have written a more dramatic scenario than the one you have lived over the last ten years ... a prominent dissident, summoned from the opposition to shape his country’s destiny, bridge its divisions and return it to greatness. You have restored more than the Czech Republic’s future ... you have restored your history as well.

Your presidency has reminded people around the world that words matter ... that creativity has a place in politics ... that a nation’s strength is measured not by its ability to control people, but rather by the opposite, by its success in empowering them.

For all your achievement in the political realm, you have never lost the honesty, spontaneity and contagious friendliness of your writing. I feel certain that no other head of state would have appointed Frank Zappa as a cultural ambassador. Or taken our favorite Czech-American, Madeline Albright, out on the town in New York to hear a few bands. As President, you have gone out of your way to pay respect to the American musicians who inspired you before the Velvet Revolution ... all of whom were cultural ambassadors long before you were able to appoint them.

Before you became President, you wrote movingly about human rights and the need to encourage people’s hopes and dreams – and you refused to relinquish your own hopes for the future of your country. Even in the dark days of 1978, the last lines of your essay on “The Power of the Powerless” reflected a remarkable optimism: “For the real question is whether the ‘brighter future’ is really always so distant. What if, on the contrary, it has been here for a long time already ...?”

Since assuming power, you have always worked to nurture this sense of the strength within people. You have brought back democracy and civil society. You have led the Czech Republic to a place of prominence in the new Europe, and we look forward to your pending accession to NATO. It is a great step forward ... but it also builds on something that existed long before the North Atlantic Treaty ... the friendship that has always united our peoples, and always will. Together, we have been working as partners in Bosnia and other Balkan trouble spots to repair the ravages of intolerance and injustice. As allies, I hope we can apply a common vision to promote freedom and prosperity throughout Eastern Europe ... using your own success as an example.
Since the beginning of the United States, we Americans have placed a high value on our connection to the Czech people. The first Czechs arrived in the New World in the seventeenth century. Many more came in the wake of the 1848 revolutions. A little over a century ago, the great composer Antonin Dvorak [AN-toe-nin di-VOR-zhahk] composed his New World Symphony, borrowing from the rhythms he heard during his travels across the United States, particularly from African-American folk music. The flag of the Czech Republic was designed and first flown in New York to honor a visit by the patriot, Tomas Masaryk [MAH-sah-reek]. From athletes to artists, from actors to astronauts, from secretaries to Secretaries of State, Czech-Americans have lent their gifts to a grateful nation [Stan Musial, George Halas, Andy Warhol, Tom Selleck, Kim Novak, Eugene Cernan, James Lovell, Milos Forman, Ray Kroc, et al.].

The progress of the Czech people this century has inspired all Americans. We shared the world's despondency when democratic Czechoslovakia lost its independence fifty years ago. We felt a similar sense of loss when the Prague spring was followed by Soviet invasion in 1968. But you taught us that seasons are cyclical, that spring always returns. In 1989, the Velvet Revolution rejuvenated the entire world.

There is an old Czech-American saying ... "too much wisdom does not produce courage." That is a nice way of saying that writers sometimes spend a little too much time with their books, and not enough time in the real world. Mr. President, you have harmonized the life of the mind with a life of great service to your people. You have moved people not only to think hard about their hopes, but then to act to redeem them.

Thank you for the personal inspiration you have afforded me ... and thank you for the voice of reason you have provided for all Americans, for all people everywhere.

Please join me in a toast to the President of the Czech Republic, Vaclav Havel [VAHTS-loff HAH-vul].

###
PRESIDENT WILLIAM JEFFERSON CLINTON
TOAST TO PRESIDENT VACLAV HAVEL OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC
THE WHITE HOUSE
SEPTEMBER 16, 1998

[acknowledgments: President Havel (HAH-vul), Mrs. Havlova (HAH-vloe-vah), friends from the Czech Republic; fellow Americans]

Mr. President, it is an honor to welcome you to the White House. As a playwright, you could hardly have written a more dramatic scenario than the one you have lived over the last ten years... a prominent dissident, summoned from the opposition to shape his country's destiny, bridge its divisions and return it to greatness. You have restored more than the Czech Republic's future... you have restored your history as well.

Your presidency has reminded people around the world that words matter... that creativity has a place in politics... that a nation's strength is measured not by its ability to control people, but rather by the opposite, by its success in empowering them.

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Before you became President, you wrote movingly about human rights and the need to encourage people's hopes and dreams – and you refused to relinquish your own hopes for the future of your country. Even in the dark days of 1978, the last lines of your essay on "The Power of the Powerless" reflected a remarkable optimism: "For the real question is whether the 'brighter future' is really always so distant. What if, on the contrary, it has been here for a long time already . . .?"

Since assuming power, you have always worked to nurture this sense of the strength within people. You have brought back democracy and civil society. You have led the Czech Republic to a place of prominence in the new Europe, and we look forward to your pending accession to NATO. It is a great step forward . . . but it also builds on something that existed long before the North Atlantic Treaty . . . the friendship that has always united our peoples, and always will.

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Thank you for the personal inspiration you have afforded me . . . and thank you for the voice of reason you have provided for all Americans, for all people everywhere.

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###
9/15/98 6:35 pm

PRESIDENT WILLIAM JEFFERSON CLINTON
TOAST TO PRESIDENT VACLAV HAVEL OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC
THE WHITE HOUSE
SEPTEMBER 16, 1998

[acknowledgments: President Havel (HAH-vul), Mrs. Havlova (HAH-vloe-vah); friends from the Czech Republic; fellow Americans]

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For all your achievement in the political realm, you have never lost the honesty, spontaneity and contagious friendliness of your writing. I feel certain that no other head of state would have appointed Frank Zappa as a cultural ambassador. Or taken Madeline Albright out to hear bands in New York City. As President, you have gone out of your way to pay respect to the American musicians who inspired you before the Velvet Revolution... and we are looking forward to your participation in our jazz evening this Friday.

Before you became President, you wrote movingly about human rights and the need to encourage people's hopes and dreams — and you refused to relinquish your own hopes for the
future of your country. Even in the dark days of 1978, the last lines of your essay on "The Power of the Powerless" reflected a remarkable optimism and a belief that I have always shared: "For the real question is whether the 'brighter future' is really always so distant. What if, on the contrary, it has been here for a long time already ...?"

Since assuming power, you have always worked to nurture this sense of the strength within people. You have brought back democracy and civil society. You have led the Czech Republic to a place of prominence in the new Europe, and we look forward to your pending accession to NATO. It is a great step forward ... but it also builds on something that existed long before the North Atlantic Treaty ... the friendship that has always united our peoples, and always will. Together, we have been working as partners in Bosnia and other Balkan trouble spots to repair the ravages of intolerance and injustice. As allies, I hope we can apply a common vision to promote freedom and prosperity throughout Eastern Europe ... using your own success as an example.

Since the beginning of the United States, we Americans have placed a high value on our connection to the Czech people. The first Czechs arrived in the New World in the seventeenth century. Many more came in the wake of the 1848 revolutions. A little over a century ago, the great composer Antonin Dvorak [AN-toe-nin di-VOR-zhahk] composed his New World Symphony, borrowing from the rhythms he heard during his travels across the United States, particularly from African-American folk music. The flag of the Czech Republic was designed and first flown in New York to honor a visit by the patriot, Tomas Masaryk [MAH-sah-reek]. From athletes to artists, from actors to astronauts, Czech-Americans have lent their gifts to a grateful nation [Stan Musial, George Halas, Andy Warhol, Tom Selleck, Kim Novak, Eugene
Cernan, James Lovell, Milos Forman, Ray Kroc, et al.) They are an extraordinary assemblage of people, none more so than the Secretary of State of the United States, Madeline Albright.

The progress of the Czech people this century has inspired all Americans. We shared the world’s despondency when democratic Czechoslovakia lost its independence fifty years ago. We felt a similar sense of loss when the Prague spring was followed by Soviet invasion in 1968. But you taught us that seasons are cyclical, that spring always returns. In 1989, the Velvet Revolution rejuvenated the entire world.

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Please join me in a toast to the President of the Czech Republic, Vaclav Havel [VAHTS-loff HAH-vul].

# # #
President William Jefferson Clinton
Remarks Welcoming President Vaclav Havel
Of the Czech Republic
The White House
September 16, 1998

[acknowledgments: President Havel (HAH-vul), Mrs. Havlova (HAH-vloe-vah)]

President Havel, it is a joy to welcome you to the United States and to the White House. Your remarkable life holds a precious lesson – that people who love their country can act to shape it and that a single individual can humanize all of us. You have reminded us that words are powerful instruments of change ... that words and deeds are together the mainstays of freedom.

Ten years ago, the world was a very different place. Like half of Europe, Czechoslovakia lay shrouded beneath an outdated ideology. Aspirations were suppressed. Debate was stilled. You yourself spent years in jail for expressing beliefs in liberty and human rights ... most of us take for granted. For articulating an elemental belief in freedom of speech, you were denied that same freedom.

Today, we celebrate the dramatic progress from that very different world, not so long ago. We celebrate your freedom and the aspirations of all people who insist on the right of self-determination. We celebrate ideas, not ideologies. From South Africa to South Korea to South America, societies are redefining themselves, removing barriers to the imagination, and cultivating the limitless resources of their people. That is a universal phenomenon – neither American nor European – but it owes a great deal to the inspiration provided by a single man,
Vaclav Havel [VAHTS-loff HA-vul], who for years spoke up when it mattered - often at great personal cost.

We are now poised to build the new world of the new century. More people than every before are free to pursue their own destinies. We are grateful for the unprecedented achievement of the century we are leaving. But we are also aware that far too much of the 20th century saw division and dislocation ... nowhere more so than in the heart of Europe.

In the last decade, Europeans have gone far toward repairing the physical damage wrought by a century of war. But no less important has been the job of repairing the continent's spiritual architecture - unifying the hopes and dreams of people who were arbitrarily separated for too long. No person has done better work toward this end than President Havel.

Since assuming office, you have provided a voice of dazzling eloquence to the debate over the Europe's future and the future of our world. A voice of humility and also of great power. You have addressed issues small and large, regional and global, material and spiritual ... but universally human. You have articulated a politics of hope. You have reminded us that all nations, small and large, form a community. You have spoken forcefully about our collective obligation to our children and their children. For their sake, we must do all we can to preserve our world and our community - backing up words with real deeds.

Since 1989, the Czech people have taken enormous strides to build a better world. You have made concrete contributions to the search for peace in Kosovo and Bosnia, where your soldiers
stand watch with ours. You have strengthened cooperation with your neighbors, and taken steps to heal past wounds with Germany and Russia. You are providing humanitarian assistance to Chernobyl victims in Ukraine and sharing with other states the lessons you have learned in building a vibrant, free market democracy. You have stood with the community of nations against military aggression in the gulf, sent peacekeepers to Africa and the former Soviet Union, and promoted efforts to control the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. And soon you will be members of the most successful alliance in history – NATO. Together, we are building a stronger foundation for peace and prosperity.

At the end of your historic speech to Congress in 1990, you remembered that the people who founded America were bold in word and in deed. Mr. President, there is not a leader on earth whose words and deeds have meant more than your own. They will live on forever in the hearts and minds of all people who care about human dignity and the power of the imagination to shape our world. On behalf of all Americans, I am honored to welcome you to the White House.

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"Economic challenge"
9/15/98 11:20 am

PRESIDENT WILLIAM JEFFERSON CLINTON
TOAST TO PRESIDENT VACLAV HAVEL OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC
THE WHITE HOUSE
SEPTEMBER 16, 1998

[acknowledgments: President Havel (HAH-vul), Mrs. Havlova (HAH-vloe-vah); friends from the Czech Republic; fellow Americans]

Mr. President, it is an honor to welcome you to the White House. It is difficult to decide which
has been more dramatic ... your distinguished career as a playwright or the high drama of the
Velvet Revolution and the remarkable leadership you have brought to the Czech Republic over
the last decade. You have restored more than your nation’s future ... you have restored your
history as well.

Most of us would consider it a small exaggeration to say that government and brilliant
intellectual achievement go hand in hand. That is why your presidency has meant so much to so
many. You have inspired people around the world that words matter ... that creativity has a
place in politics ... that a nation’s strength is measured not by its ability to control people, but
rather by the opposite, by its success in empowering them.

For all your achievement, you have never lost the honesty, spontaneity and contagious
friendliness of your writing. I feel certain that no other head of state would have appointed
Frank Zappa as a cultural ambassador. You are obviously an astute student of American popular
culture, and we thank you for the official attention paid to our artists. It is encouraging to think
the Velvet Underground contributed to the Velvet Revolution.
Before you became President, you wrote movingly about human rights and the need to encourage people’s hopes and dreams – and you refused to relinquish your own hopes for the future of your country. Even in the dark days of 1978, the last lines of your essay on “The Power of the Powerless” reflected a remarkable optimism and a belief that I have always shared: “For the real question is whether the ‘brighter future’ is really always so distant. What if, on the contrary, it has been here for a long time already ...?”

Since assuming power, you have never forgotten this question, or the powerless. You have helped establish a vibrant democracy and civil society. You have led the Czech Republic to a place of prominence in the new Europe, and we look forward to your pending accession to NATO. It is a great step forward ... but it also builds on something that existed long before the North Atlantic Treaty ... the friendship that has always united our peoples, and always will.

Together as partners, we have been working in Bosnia and other Balkan trouble spots to repair the ravages of intolerance and injustice. As allies, I hope we can apply a common vision to promote freedom and prosperity throughout Eastern Europe ... using your own success as an example.

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There were also darker moments in our history. Americans shared the world’s despondency when democratic Czechoslovakia lost its independence fifty years ago. We felt a similar sense of loss when the Prague spring was followed by Soviet invasion in 1968. But you taught us that seasons are cyclical, that spring always returns. In 1989, the Velvet Revolution rejuvenated the entire world.

There is an old Czech-American saying ... “too much wisdom does not produce courage.” That is a nice way of saying that writers sometimes spend a little too much time with their books, and not enough time in the real world. Mr. President, you have harmonized the life of the mind with a life of great service to your people. You have moved people not only to think hard about their hopes, but then to act to redeem them.

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Many challenges remain, of course. Economic and political reform do not happen overnight. But together, we are building a stronger foundation for peace and prosperity.

At the end of your historic speech to Congress in 1990, you remembered that the people who founded America were bold in word and in deed. Mr. President, there is not a leader on earth whose words and deeds have meant more than your own. They will live on forever in the hearts and minds of all people who care about human dignity and the power of the imagination to shape our world. On behalf of all Americans, I am honored to welcome you to the White House.

###
Elie Wiesel
Lou Reed?
Wole Soyinka?
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Timothy Carmon Ash
Heinrich Schmieder
Richard von Weizsäcker
FW. de Klerk
Wole Soyinka
Fritz Capra
Elie Wiesel
Henry Louis Gates, Jr.
Shimon Peres

With

HAVEL
Vaclav

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