

THE HERITAGE LECTURES

No. 602

The Importance of NATO
Enlargement to the
Czech Republic

by Vaclav Klaus



Founded in 1973, The Heritage Foundation is a research and educational institute—a think tank—whose mission is to formulate and promote conservative public policies based on the principles of free enterprise, limited government, individual freedom, traditional American values, and a strong national defense.

Heritage's staff pursues this mission by performing timely and accurate research addressing key policy issues and effectively marketing these findings to its primary audiences: members of Congress, key congressional staff members, policy makers in the executive branch, the nation's news media, and the academic and policy communities. Heritage's products include publications, articles, lectures, conferences, and meetings.

Governed by an independent Board of Trustees, The Heritage Foundation is a non-partisan, tax exempt institution. Heritage relies on the private financial support of the general public—individuals, foundations, and corporations—for its income, and accepts no government funds and performs no contract work. Heritage is one of the nation's largest public policy research organizations. More than 200,000 contributors make it the most broadly supported in America.

Note: Nothing written here is to be construed as necessarily reflecting the views of The Heritage Foundation or as an attempt to aid or hinder the passage of any bill before Congress.

Note: Nothing written here is to be construed as necessarily reflecting the views of The Heritage Foundation or as an attempt to aid or hinder the passage of any bill before Congress.

The Heritage Foundation
214 Massachusetts Avenue, N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20002-4999
202/546-4400
<http://www.heritage.org>

The Importance of NATO Enlargement to the Czech Republic

by Vaclav Klaus

EDWIN J. FEULNER, JR.: I am pleased to introduce to you today a special friend of The Heritage Foundation—Prime Minister of the Czech Republic Vaclav Klaus.

Vaclav Klaus is a statesman and a conservative economic reformer of international stature. His collision with communism started early: After the invasion of Czechoslovakia by Warsaw Pact forces, Mr. Klaus was forced to leave the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences for political reasons. In the end, he emerged victorious from his fight with communism.

Vaclav Klaus was one of the founders of the Czechoslovak Civic Forum Movement, the country's leading political organization. He was elected Chairman of the Forum in 1990. In February 1991, he was elected Chairman of the Civic Democratic Party at its founding congress.

After 40 years of communist rule, Vaclav Klaus was appointed the first non-communist finance minister of Czechoslovakia. In October 1991, he was appointed Deputy Prime Minister. After victory in the June 1992 parliamentary elections, Vaclav Klaus was appointed Prime Minister of the Czech Republic.

Dr. Klaus's academic achievements are formidable. He holds eight honorary degrees from a number of distinguished institutions on four continents. He is the author of several books, including *Dismantling Socialism: A Road to Market Economy*, *Economic Theory and Economic Reform*, and *The Czech Way*. His views on monetary and fiscal policies, comparative economic systems, and economic transformation have been published in journals in the Czech Republic as well as internationally in many languages. Vaclav Klaus has received numerous international awards, such as the Freedom Award and the Konrad Adenauer Prize. He is a member of the Mont Pelerin Society and a fellow of the Adam Smith Institute in London and Centro de Estudios Publicos in Santiago de Chile.

Ladies and gentlemen, please help me in giving a warm welcome to a most distinguished guest and a dear friend, Vaclav Klaus, for a discussion of the importance of NATO enlargement to the Czech Republic.

Vaclav Klaus was the Prime Minister of the Czech Republic at the time of this speech. Edwin J. Feulner, Jr., is President of The Heritage Foundation.

Dr. Klaus spoke at The Heritage Foundation on November 12, 1997.

ISSN 0272-1155 © 1997 by The Heritage Foundation.

VACLAV KLAUS: There is no doubt that NATO enlargement (and especially including the Czech Republic in it) is in the interest of the Czech Republic. There are many reasons for this. I would stress the following ones.

First, our experience tells us that our country, a small country in the heart of Europe, is not able to guarantee its own security alone and, therefore, it has to search for collective security. This is what we tried to do for centuries, with very mixed results. We were not saved by the Austro-Hungarian collective security system and had to suffer during World War I. We were not saved by various treaties and agreements signed during the 1920s and 1930s. And, as you know, a very strange—I may even say collective—agreement signed in Munich in 1938 led to the end of our sovereignty and to the German occupation of our country during World War II.

Promising developments in the international arena after 1945—the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and GATT [the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade]—were not able to stop Soviet expansionism, which led to the communist putsch in Prague in February 1948 and to our falling under Soviet dominance, including memberships in Comecon and the Warsaw Pact.

We are, of course, aware of the fact that the world in 1997 is different from the world in 1948, but we know as well that we have not yet reached the end of history, the perfect harmony worldwide, the brave new world of deliberately constructed society. We see new dangers, new ambitions, new sources of instability, and we have to react to that. For the Czech Republic, and for the majority of its citizens, membership in NATO has no alternative. We consider other concepts, such as flirting with something like European isolationism or with the idea of neutrality, to be harmful and contrary to our national interests.

We consider the invitation to join NATO as our foreign policy success—as an acknowledgment of our relatively peaceful and successful economic and political development, as a promise of our return to the Euro-Atlantic civilization context to which we have always naturally belonged and from which we were for several decades forcibly removed. And finally, membership in NATO is considered by millions of Czechs to be the last drop, the definitive confirmation that the past is over.

Second, I would like to stress that we are aware of the fact that the new members must make a serious contribution, because the alliance's military effectiveness must be sustained as the alliance enlarges. We know that there is—in NATO—no place for free riders. We know that the new members must be producers of security, and not just consumers. This is, perhaps, self-evident, but it has to be stated explicitly. It is important to say it everywhere, but especially in this country. Even in the past, U.S. taxpayers (and U.S. politicians) had the feeling that Europe was not carrying its full share of the burden of its own defense.

Third, I know that there are arguments pro and con, and that there are supporters and opponents of enlargement in this country. I would, however, suggest that we differentiate between two groups of opponents and, by doing this, make the problem easier to formulate and to solve.

It seems to me that only a smaller group of active participants in this debate is against enlargement, because:

- They don't like the three invited countries, the Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary;
- They are afraid that expanding NATO will draw new lines in Europe;

- They worry that Russia will feel threatened; and
- They are against the costs of enlargement to be paid by American taxpayers.

Such arguments can be, I believe, very easily explained and rejected:

- The invited countries have made enormous progress in developing democratic institutions in the past eight years, and several old NATO members were, at the moment of their accession, at a much lower level of democracy and political pluralism;
- No new lines in Europe will be created—on the contrary, old lines will be erased;
- A partnership with Russia and Ukraine was established; and
- The costs of enlargement are not zero, but the opponents of enlargement use highly excessive predictions; it seems the cost will amount to only one or two-tenths of 1 percent of the U.S. defense budget.

I am afraid that the opponents of NATO enlargement have a different and, in this respect, more fundamental problem: They try to find a new mission for NATO since the Cold War has ended and, as they say, the original mission is lost. NATO is no longer an anti-Soviet alliance, and it seems to me that their problem is that they define NATO by means of enemies. They try, therefore, to select new explicit enemies, which is, in my opinion, a wrong perspective. I keep saying, and it has been quoted quite often, that NATO is about ideas, not about enemies. I try, therefore, to define NATO in more positive terms: as an alliance aiming to promote peace and stability in the whole Atlantic region, aiming to consolidate democracy in Europe, aiming to protect Western interests against potential future threats, aiming to safeguard values and cultural traits connected with our common history with our Euro-American civilization.

Because of that, I am convinced it is in the interest of America to accept this concept of NATO; and, in this way of looking at it, enlargement should be interpreted as a logical and necessary outcome. The debate about enlargement is thus, in my understanding, a debate about NATO itself, and I am convinced that it should have been made explicit.

You asked me to give the Czech view on NATO enlargement. This is the way we see and feel it.