



The American Hungarian Federation

Celebrating 100 Years of Service - Fidelissimus ad Mortem

Remarks of Frank Koszorus, Jr.* on the Occasion of the Policy Reception in Honor of NATO and Its Enlargement, Senate Caucus Room (Russell), March 25, 2009

Your Excellencies, Members of Congress and Distinguished Guests. Having been associated with the Central East European Coalition for over 15 years, it is a great privilege for me on behalf of the CEEC to address you this evening as we honor NATO's enlargement in 1999 and 2004.

Success, it has been said, has a thousand parents, while failure is an orphan. Well, I am proud to say that the CEEC was a strong, persistent and effective voice in support of NATO's enlargement in 1999 and 2004. But it did not quit then, as the CEEC continues to support the open door policy to include countries which are ready, able and willing to join the Alliance and which are democratic and respect the rule of law, including human and minority rights.

Our Coalition includes 18 national membership-based organizations representing more than 20 million Americans who trace their heritage to Central and Eastern Europe. These organizations cooperate in calling attention to issues of mutual concern.

As Americans – and this is one such issue -- we believe that an enlarged NATO – an alliance consisting of democratic, stable and secure countries that adhere to Western values – is in the vital interest of the United States.

I don't believe anyone doubts that threats to European security constitute threats to U.S. security as well. We need only to remember that two hot world wars and the Cold War resulted from aggression emanating from Europe in the twentieth century – aggression that perhaps could have been blunted early if not averted in all instances. Since they were not, America paid dearly both in terms of lives lost and treasure expended.

Indeed, the CEEC supported and supports NATO's enlargement precisely because we believe that the United States must remain engaged in Europe and NATO to secure the Cold War peace on the continent, successfully confront the new security challenges of the 21st century and prevail in the war against international terrorists.

The inclusion of Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic in NATO in 1999 and Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Bulgaria and Romania in 2004 has resulted in the integration of these countries into the transatlantic community of nations. United States policies and support of these countries' NATO membership has been prescient, as they have become staunch American allies.

The CEEC further believes the enlargement process is not over and must continue. Ukraine and Georgia need to be granted entrance into in the Membership Action Plan. Other non-NATO member countries, for example, Armenia, ought to be included in security-oriented projects such as the Partnership for Peace program. And it can be hoped that changes will take place in Belarus that will allow that country to someday be considered for NATO membership.

And let's be clear, NATO as a defensive alliance does not threaten Russia. In fact, stability and democracy on Russia's borders, not spheres of influence which must be unequivocally rejected, translate into greater security for Russia as well.

In closing and on behalf of the CEEC, I would like to thank all those who over the years shared this vision and on a bi-partisan basis contributed to making enlargement a reality. While there are too many to name – otherwise we would be here very late – I must mention three individuals with whom my CEEC colleagues and I had the great privilege of working and who were tireless and effective champions of expansion -- Jan Nowak, Myra Lenard and Cas Lenard.

Thank you for joining us this evening to commemorate NATO and the crucial role it plays and will continue to play in promoting the security of the transatlantic community.

*Mr. Koszorus is the co-president of the American Hungarian Federation, an active member organization of the Central and East European Coalition.