



The American Hungarian Federation

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U.S. Policy Toward NATO Enlargement

Hearing before the Committee on International Relations
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Testimony of Frank Koszorus, Jr.,
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Hungarian American and Central and East European Coalitions

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Mr. Leach. Mr. Koszorus, why don't you begin, please.

Mr. Koszorus. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I am pleased to be with you this afternoon to discuss the importance of NATO enlargement and to express the Central and East European Coalition's [the "Coalition"] support for the NATO Enlargement Facilitation Act of 1996, which we believe will facilitate the enlargement of the Alliance and serve vital geopolitical interests of the United States.

Mr. Chairman, I request that our written statement and the attachment thereto be included in the record.

Mr. Leach. Without objection, so ordered. And the same will apply to Mr. Kosinski.

Mr. Koszorus. The Coalition comprises, as you noted, Mr. Chairman, 18 national grassroots organizations representing 22 million Americans who trace their heritage to that part of the world.

The Coalition strongly believes that the long-term national security and fiscal interests of the United States require a strong commitment to the transition of Central and East European countries to fully democratic and free-market nations. That commitment requires an active U.S. engagement in that part of the world.

Now, this morning and early afternoon, we have heard considerable testimony and questions about the costs of this commitment.

In this century alone, the United States was called upon to fight two World Wars and a 45-year cold war — conflicts which emanated from the heart of Europe — in furtherance of our geopolitical interests. Both the institutionalization of democracy and market economies in Central and Eastern Europe and the prevention of any large power dominating any part of Europe are the best means of guaranteeing that there will be no further European conflicts which will entangle the United States.

We believe that with the collapse of communism and the Soviet Union, the objectives of peace, stability and democracy in Europe are achievable. Success, however, requires continued engagement, support and assistance of the United States and the West. Admittedly, that support involves significant costs. Nevertheless, such costs pale in comparison to the costs in terms of lives and treasure that we Americans have had to incur this century as we protect our interests in Europe.

Among the most visible forms of our engagement is our involvement in the security issues of the region. We believe that the general stability and security of the region can best be accomplished through the expansion of NATO.

The coalition endorses H.R. 3564 because it addresses the heretofore glacial pace of NATO's expansion. The collapse of the Soviet Union has left a dangerous security vacuum in Central and Eastern Europe. That region must be rapidly reintegrated with the West to provide it with a sense of security and to snore up the new democracies. Rapid expansion of NATO to include countries which are committed to the concepts of democracy, market economies, civilian control of the military, and human and minority rights would serve this objective, as well as the foreign policy interests of the United States, by ensuring Europe's overall stability.

In January 1994, the Clinton administration committed itself to the integration of the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe into the defensive structure of the Atlantic community. More than 2 years later, the questions posed by the President, when the process of NATO enlargement will begin, and who will join, remain largely unanswered.

If the unanimous decision of the 16 NATO allies and ratification of their respective Parliaments are to be achieved when the Alliance finally begins to consider new members, the United States must now take the initiative and unequivocally support its commitment.

We must not permit Central and Eastern Europe to languish in a security vacuum. Russian interests are not threatened by the expansion of a defensive alliance. Moreover, stability and economic growth on the borders of Russia can only benefit Moscow. In fact, Mr. Chairman, I believe NATO has already expanded when the two Germanys united. And, in fact, that expansion has not threatened Russia; it has benefited Russia considering the significant assistance Germany has provided Russia.

Russia should not be isolated, and mechanisms such as a treaty between NATO and Russia or a permanent body to implement security arrangements on the continent should dispel any lingering concerns Moscow may entertain about an enlarged NATO. Russia, however, should under no circumstances be permitted to veto NATO's enlargement.

Western indecisiveness will encourage Russian nationalists to assert expansionist tendencies and cause the United States and the West to lose credibility. Moreover, since 1990 there has been no apparent response to Russia's escalating threats relating to the enlargement of the Alliance.

We, the Coalition, recognize that the expansion of NATO will proceed...

Mr. Leach. I would like to ask you to suspend for a moment, and I apologize, because this is one of the most thoughtful statements the committee has received. We have 5 minutes for a vote, and so I am going to ask for a recess at this time. But at that point I want you to continue with your statement, and then we will turn to Mr. Kosinski.

I also want to express an apology that I have a long-standing personal commitment that is going to interrupt, and so there will be a new Chair when we return. But I expect this recess to be at least 30 minutes, and again, I apologize for the discombobulation of the circumstance, and particularly because of the depth of feeling that I know is represented on these statements. There are issues and issues before Congress, and this is a very profound one. So the committee will stand in recess subject to the vote.

[Recess 12:40 p.m. to 1:20 p.m.]

Chairman Gilman. The committee will come to order.

Mr. Koszorus, would you be kind enough to continue with your testimony. I regret the interruption due to the votes.

Mr. Koszorus. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I fully understand.

We recognize that the expansion of NATO will proceed in stages. Although this should not result in a division of Central and Eastern Europe into protected and unprotected countries, the process must at long last begin. NATO should remain open to states emerging from Communist domination which are not included in the first stage of enlargement.

There has been considerable discussion regarding drawing lines in Europe and that the effect of enlarging NATO would, in fact, draw new lines. The Coalition, however, believes that continued Western hesitation in enlarging NATO and in failing to respond to Russian threats will redraw the lines imposed by Stalin and signal Russian expansionists that they, in fact, enjoy a sphere of influence in Central and Eastern Europe.

The consequences of such an action would be contrary to U.S. geopolitical interests in a stable, secure, integrated and democratic Europe. Enlargement of NATO to include countries which desire to join the Alliance and meet the criteria of NATO membership is an inexpensive, yet vital, insurance policy for the United States.

H.R. 3564 and its Senate counterpart are welcome first steps in this direction. We commend Chairman Oilman and the other members of the committee for their leadership in introducing this important bill. We hope that this bill will receive substantial bipartisan support in both chambers, as well as support of the President.

The passage of these bills must be followed by concrete steps, eligibility lists, criteria, and unambiguous timetables for NATO enlargement in 1996-1997. As we approach the 21st century, we simply cannot afford to squander a historic opportunity to safeguard peace and democracy. With vision and leadership, we will not have to pose the question, who lost Central and Eastern Europe the second time this century?

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Gilman. Thank you, Mr. Koszorus. Thank you, Mr. Kosinski, and I want to thank Mr. Koszorus, too, for both of your statements in support of our proposal. It's good to know that we have broad-based support out there.