

[From the Washington Post, July 19, 2009]
 A LETTER FROM EUROPE—U.S. LEADERSHIP IN
 THE POST-SOVIET AGE IS NEEDED TO FACE
 NEW CHALLENGES

Twenty years have passed since the revolutions that restored freedom to what had been the captive nations of Central and Eastern Europe. That many Americans no longer give much thought to that part of the world testifies, in part, to the region's success. The eastward expansion of NATO and the European Union helped bring security, stability and growing prosperity; more important, the countries themselves have nurtured democratic and free-market institutions that in 1989 would have seemed unreachable.

Yet an impressive collection of former presidents and ministers from the first two decades of post-communism warn, in a letter released last week, that long-lasting success should not be assumed. "All is not well either in our region or in the transatlantic relationship," they caution. Since the signatories are staunch allies of the United States and of democracy—ranging from Vaclav Havel and Alexandr Vondra of the Czech Republic to Lech Walesa and Alexander Kwasniewski of Poland to Vaira Vike-Freiberga of Latvia and Valdas Adamkus of Lithuania—they merit a hearing.

The global recession has given room to "nationalism, extremism, populism, and anti-Semitism" in some of their countries, the former leaders acknowledge. At the same time, they say, "NATO today seems weaker than when we joined" while "Russia is back as a revisionist power pursuing a 19th-century agenda with 21st-century tactics and methods. . . . The danger is that Russia's creeping intimidation and influence-peddling in the region could over time lead to a de facto neutralization of the region."

In response, they say, the Obama administration should recommit to NATO as a defense alliance, not just an expeditionary force with duties in Afghanistan and beyond. It should support pipelines that will diminish the region's dependence on Russian oil and gas. It should take care, as it evaluates planned missile-defense installations in Poland and the Czech Republic that Russia opposes, to consult closely with the governments that have the most at stake. It should invest in relationships with younger generations that do not remember communism or the struggle against it.

None of this will come as news to President Obama, who has made clear, in Moscow and elsewhere, that the United States will not recognize a privileged Russian sphere of influence in the former Soviet Union or Warsaw Pact. Vice President Biden, who first delivered that message for the administration in a speech in Munich in February, presumably will reiterate it during his upcoming visit to Ukraine and Georgia. The administration nonetheless should take the letter to heart, not as a rebuke but as encouragement. Nations clamoring for a stronger U.S. relationship, built on the ideals of freedom and alliance, are not so numerous that Washington can afford to take them for granted.

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, I voted against Senator LIEBERMAN's amendment to immediately authorize a significant increase in the size of the Army because I did not believe it was in the best interest of our troops or our national security. There is an incredible strain on the force right now, including multiple deployments and insufficient dwell time, due to our failure to promptly and fully redeploy from Iraq. Rather than spending billions of dollars to increase the size of the

Army, we should promptly redeploy from Iraq so that we can focus on the global threat posed by al-Qaida and so that we can reduce the strain on our troops. Indeed, the Iraqi Government has asked us to remove our troops from Iraqi cities, and as a result many U.S. servicemembers, including Wisconsin soldiers, are sitting on their bases with no mission.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ORDER FOR STAR PRINT—S. 1474

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that S. 1474 be star printed with the changes at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ORDERS FOR THURSDAY, JULY 23, 2009

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 9:30 a.m. tomorrow, Thursday, July 23; that following the prayer and pledge, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, the morning hour be deemed expired, the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day, and the Senate resume consideration of Calendar No. 89, S. 1390, which is the Department of Defense authorization bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

PROGRAM

Mr. REID. Mr. President, for the information of all Senators, the filing deadline for first-degree amendments to the Defense authorization bill is 1 p.m. tomorrow.

Senators should expect rollcall votes throughout the day as we work through amendments to the bill.

ORDER FOR ADJOURNMENT

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that following the remarks of Senator DODD, the Senate adjourn under the previous order.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMENDING WOMEN AIRFORCE PILOTS

Mr. BROWNBACK. Mr. President, today I am honored to recognize an exceptional group of women who served in World War II. When their country needed them, they answered the call and chartered a bold new course for women in the military. Sixty-seven years ago, over 1,000 courageous women became the first in United States history trained to fly an American military aircraft. These women are known as the Women Airforce Service Pilots, the WASPs. Today we offer them our sincere admiration and deepest thanks.

These women came to be known as the "Fly Girls." They were patriots, they were pioneers, but above all they were pilots. They flew the same planes as their male counterparts, learned the same skills, and served the same country. They were among the first to fly the B-26 Martin Marauder and the B-29 Super Fortress. The Fly Girls, however, served as civilians rather than as members of the Armed Forces. Civilian status prevented the Fly Girls from being recognized with their military counterparts. And the 38 brave women who died during their service were not honored with flag-draped caskets, nor could their families hang gold stars in their windows.

Today we pause to recognize these women and their families with an honor that is long overdue and much deserved. I am proud to have been a co-sponsor of S. 614, which authorized the awarding of the Congressional Gold Medal to the Women Airforce Service Pilots of World War II. This bill sailed through Congress in 3 months and on July 1, 2009, President Barack Obama signed Public Law 111-40, granting the highest civilian award to this deserving group of women.

I am particularly proud of the Kansas women who served in this unique military force. Today we honor all those Kansas WASPs who have gone before us and recognize the two surviving Kansas WASPs, Meriem Anderson of Eureka, KS, and Marjorie Rees of Prairie Village, KS.

The WASPs have never asked for our praise. When Rees was asked how she felt about being overlooked for so many years she simply responded, "We didn't resent that we were ignored so long. We've thought for years how very lucky we were to fly those wonderful airplanes." Her words express a quiet heroism, and remind us that the noblest act of sacrifice is the one that expects nothing in return. The accomplishments of these women, and the manner in which they have continued to conduct their lives, is a testament to their remarkable character. The thanks and recognition we offer them today pales in comparison to the gift they have given us—freedom.

Their strength has inspired many other women to also look to the skies. MAJ Gina Sabric, an F-16 fighter pilot, voiced her appreciation to the WASPs when she said, "Women in aviation has definitely been a stepping-