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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

January 24, 1990

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
TO LEADERS OF NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS
LENDING ASSISTANCE TO POLAND

Room 450
Old Executive Office Building

11:57 A.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Welcome. Please be seated -- all you Points of Light out there. (Laughter.) Thank you all very much for coming, and I understand you've had some discussion with our -- I guess all three -- John, have they all three been on? John Robson -- let me salute him for the job he's doing on this; and Larry Eagleburger, of course, and Mike Boskin. We've got three of our strongest players reflecting the interest that we all feel in Eastern Europe and trying to help figure out where various people in the United States can fit in to helping in this change.

So I just came over for what is known in the trade as a "cameo appearance," -- (laughter) -- to salute you and to welcome your interest in Eastern Europe.

As I look back over my shoulder into 1989, I expect I have the same feeling that everybody here does -- admiration at the astonishing change that took place in Eastern Europe, wonder as to how things are going to turn out, but confident that freedom and democracy cannot be rolled back in these countries. And so we're at the end of one era, at the beginning of another one. And everywhere, from Sofia to Warsaw to wherever -- to Prague -- the new Eastern European agenda is a democratic agenda. And everywhere, though, there are extraordinary difficult changes out there ahead.

The United States has an enormous success in the -- an enormous stake in the success of these democratic movements -- some of them further along than others, as you know. America's role in Europe depends importantly on how well we meet the challenges of Eastern Europe. And the government is now -- our government has now committed more than \$1 billion to assist Poland and Hungary, and we are now actively considering additional support for the other countries of the region as they move down the path of democratic reform.

But the government alone simply cannot get the job done. Don't have the resources, cannot do it. And we need the private sector -- nonprofit and profit -- to engage its vitality and resources in this exciting process that's underway in Eastern Europe. This was my message at an earlier symposium last July in the White House on the eve of the visit that I took to Poland and Hungary. The response -- I should say your response -- has really been encouraging. And the nonprofit sector can play -- is playing a particularly important role.

I'm not sure the people in Europe understand that yet. I noticed a comment by a citizen in Romania that says the United States has only done, and had a price tag -- I can't remember what it was -- next to what we'd done. And there was one volunteer organization alone, in this case taking medical supplies -- Americare is well known to some of you here -- that had already taken in \$1.2 million or a \$1.3 million. So I don't worry about credit, but if we can be of more assistance in getting the totality of the message out, we want to be. I recognize that we're just in the very early stages of this, but when you add the interest of everybody sitting in this

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room, it's an enormous potential for helping alleviate human suffering and helping solve the problems of how best to assist in this inexorable move towards democracy.

So many of you here, I'm told, are already involved in Eastern Europe doing work that the government could not possibly begin to do on its own, but there's more, much more to be done at this decisive moment in history. So what I'd hoped that this symposium, which I understand continues into the afternoon, will do is to give you a better sense of how and where you can help, how the government can support your efforts in a partnership for Eastern Europe.

We will continue to work with these emerging governments, including Mr. Gorbachev and others in the Soviet Union. I learned at Malta that we have a long way to go before we're even on the same plane in terms of how private markets work or how the private sector can involve itself in the solution to the problems that face these countries, but I will do my best to be sure that on the Soviet side that we continue on whatever exchanges that we have going to help increase the understanding. I think we're doing -- in some of the countries of Eastern Europe we're ahead of where we are in others -- but isn't it exciting to be here even discussing how we facilitate democracy and freedom in Eastern Europe in January of 1990. I think it's an amazing time of challenge, and I'm just very grateful to each and every one of you for taking the time to -- the time and giving it the attention that it needs to get this -- to get the problem done.

I just do not want to see things slip back. I think some countries are going to move ahead a little faster than others, but I don't see a chance to put the genie back into the bottle -- that kind of Socialist-Marxist bottle out of which the genie has sprung.

And that's the good news. So let's work together to try to facilitate the change. And, Carol, thank you for your role in bringing this distinguished group together.

That is the end of the cameo appearance, except one more time, thank you very, very much. I'm very grateful to you.
(Applause.)

END

12:04 P.M. EST