

# Speech by Andrzej Jaroszynski

At Berlin Conference, 26 April, 2007

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am representing Poland – a country which has suffered tremendously in its history. More than a century of foreign domination, two world wars, and forty years of communist regime is a part of our heritage. But thanks to the Solidarity movement and the efforts of our democratic opposition, we have carried out successful political and economic transformation. Today, Poland is a member of the European Union and the NATO, actively co-operating with its partners in building friendly relationships with all the countries of the world, based on equality, mutual respect.

As a country that has suffered the consequences of a dictatorial and repressive system we are profoundly attached to the ideals of human rights and civic freedoms such as freedom of speech, press, gatherings and belief. That is why we are deeply concerned about the situation in Cuba which is worrying. There are hardly any attempts to begin economic and social reforms which are needed to raise the level of every day life of Cuban people. We regret to say that there has been no improvement in the situation of human rights on the Island. The Cuban people are still denied the right to freely express their opinion, to carry out political and social activities without being punished for having views differing from the official standpoint. There are still many people remaining in jails because of attempts to express their political views in a peaceful manner. Other kinds of repression – intimidation, short arrests, menaces and the so-called acts of repudiation – have not been stopped.

Certainly, Poland does not support the policy of interfering into internal affairs of sovereign states. Each country and each nation has the right to decide on their own future and to build its political, economic and social system, as well as to have a government freely and independently elected by the citizens – on the condition that, precisely, the elections are free and the political will of the citizens is respected. We reiterate that the Cubans themselves should freely decide on the political, economic and social reality of their country. But is it possible to achieve economic progress and social development without political freedom and respect for

human rights? In order to achieve prosperity, development in all the spheres of life, Cuba cannot stand alone, Cuba cannot be isolated.

As Pope John Paul II, a great Pole and an advocate of human dignity, has said: “Cuba should open to the world and the world should open to Cuba”. For us, it is the best guideline for our policy and, I believe, for all those who choose freedom over domination and development over stagnation.

Certainly, Poland would like to build a normal and friendly relationship with Cuba. As a country that has succeeded in a peaceful political and economic transition, we are ready to share our experience with all the sectors of Cuban society. Moreover, we strongly believe that Cuba needs SOLIDARITY, needs assistance from international community. There are many like-minded countries which share such basic values as democracy, rule of law, and respect for human rights. These principles have created a foundation for co-operation among the European nations, Latin American states and for the bioregional co-operation between EU and Latin America as well as between the EU, Latin America and the United States. All those partners have a long tradition of extensive contacts based on mutual openness and understanding.

Having this in mind, I see no reason whatsoever why Europe, Latin America and the United States should not work together to find a common approach in their policy towards Cuba. There is already a common ground in our policy – the commitment of the European, Latin American nations and the people of the United States to free market economy, democracy, and especially protection of human rights. In order to assist Cuba in building a pluralistic society, we should undertake more dynamic steps to implement our policies towards Cuba, aiming at maintaining normal contacts with the Cuban authorities and developing intensified dialogue with the opposition and civil society.

I am deeply convinced that we have efficient instruments at our disposal. We only need to show more flexibility and courage in our individual policies, and to make them more open in order to elaborate common standpoint towards Cuba. Together, we can achieve much more in a relatively short period of time. Our success will become at the same time the success of the Cuban people.