Dear citizens of Pilsen, distinguished guests, dear friends

Today we recognize the 75th anniversary of the end of one of the most tragic events in human history – WWII. We are here in the beautiful town of Pilsen where the mood is almost as cheerful as I imagin it must have been back then.

As you all well know it is no coincidence that I have been invited to speak here on behalf of the United States. 75 years ago the Allied troops moved relentlessly across Europe to defeat the last vestiges of fascism. It was the U.S. Third Army under the leadership of General George Patton that crossed the borders of Bohemia on April 18 1945; and in the three weeks that followed Patton's army was welcomed here with relief and tears of joy and no doubt also some great Czech beer.

The war was a bleak chapter in the history of the 20th century. It affected everyone, and no one was immune from its impact. Whether it be the men and women called up to serve; families separated from each other; or people asked to take up new roles and skills to support the war effort, all had a part to play.

Many people laid down their lives in that terrible conflict. They fought so we could live in peace, at home and abroad. They died so we could live as free people in a world of free nations. They risked all so our families and neighbourhoods could be safe. We should and will remember them.

It makes me immensely proud to know that my fellow countrymen and women were among them, fighting for freedom and a better future for us all.

Yet May 1945 did not bring freedom to all of Europe. After a brief interlude the Iron Curtain fell and once again Europe was divided, once again, it was us against them. And suddenly we found ourselves on the opposite sides of the divide.

For many decades, numerous Europeans from the central and eastern part of the continent sacrificed their lives striving for freedom, as millions were deprived of their rights and fundamental freedoms. Once again brave men and women of Europe desperately sought a path to democracy and independence.

In 1989 came liberation. But this time it was not on the tanks of a foreign army, it was on the outstretched hands and open hearts of Czechs and Slovaks. Thirty years ago you won back your freedom and I am happy that since then US Ambassadors have been a staple of VE Day celebrations in both Pilsen and Prague.

Humbly following in this wonderful tradition, I want to remember the courage and bravery of those who fought and sacrificed their lives to protect the values we all share. We thank the liberators who seventy-five years ago fought and died here in that noblest of causes.

I am proud to stand here with you today, as we stand once again, side by side, united, as friends.

Thank you