

Former Polish Prime Minister speaks at Furman

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Poland's entrance into the European Union three years ago was no small feat for the country.

Its entry was pivotal not only in moving the country past its years under Soviet control but also in spurring economic growth, former Polish Prime Minister Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz told over 300 students during his address on March 23 at the Younts Conference Center as part of the Riley Institute's European Union Conference.

Cimoszewicz, who served as Prime Minister from 1996 until 1997, later served in other foreign ministry positions within the government. Before his tenure, he also assisted in executing Poland's first democratic elections in 1990 and founded the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) political party.

In his address at Furman, Cimoszewicz was critical of diverging foreign policy philosophies within the EU, particularly with regard to the U.S.-led mili-

tary campaign in Iraq. Instead of questioning U.S. motives, the EU should have supported military action, said Cimoszewicz, calling the United States Poland's "closest ally."

Differences between the EU and the U.S. endanger the success and stability of the EU and could be costly in the future, said Cimoszewicz.

"Europe needs a common foreign policy," Cimoszewicz said. "All other national states plan and implement their own ideas. But Europe is not able to exploit its full potential because of this. It is not able to play an equal role to the U.S."

Cimoszewicz believes that the economic growth his own country has seen as a new EU member state has been the most positive aspect of its acceptance into the union. However, before Poland could join the 50-year-old alliance, other problems within the country had to be addressed.

First on Poland's list was gaining entrance into the North American Treaty Organization as quickly as possible.

"After the collapse of the Soviet Union, security had to be our first priority so that we'd never be alone again," said Cimoszewicz.

The next step Cimoszewicz mapped out was entrance into the EU. "It was our best way to secure not only our economic but broader political structures."

Even with these two monumental achievements, Poland has had to be cautious not to overly accelerate growth and overlook other problems within the country.

"You have to train thousands of people, prepare an administration to function and negotiate conditions of membership," Cimoszewicz said of Poland's plans before entry into both NATO and the EU.

Despite the battles, the benefits of EU membership for his country have far outweighed the initial struggles. Cimoszewicz cited more educational opportunities through EU universities, the adoption of English by many citizens and a broader acceptance of European ideals.

Cimoszewicz also noted in-



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Former Polish Prime Minister Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz addresses an audience at Younts on March 23. Cimoszewicz was brought by the Riley Institute as part of its European Union Conference.

creased U.S. investment in industry and active involvement in European security as crucial to both Polish and EU future success. However, he believes the

EU must also work together to solve their common problems.

"We can't solve our problems alone," he said.

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