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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT  
TO REPRESENTATIVES OF THE  
GREATER MILWAUKEE ETHNIC ORGANIZATIONS

MADER'S RESTAURANT

12:55 P.M. CST

THE PRESIDENT: First, let me express my appreciation for your being here, and after I make a few prepared remarks I will look forward to the opportunity to responding to any questions, whether it is on the subject matter that I am speaking on or any other subject, whether it is domestic or international matters.

I am reminded, as I see some of the faces here, of the meeting that we had, with some of you at least, in the Cabinet Room at the White House on July 25, as I recollect. At that time some 30 leaders of the Eastern European community met with me to discuss problems relating to Western Europe and related matters. I understand, however, that that was the very first time that a President of the United States met with leaders representing the interests of so many Americans concerned about Eastern Europe.

I think on our Bicentennial Anniversary it is particularly appropriate that we in Government recognize the great contributions of our citizens from Eastern Europe. Before the departure for the European Security Conference in Helsinki last July I stated my policy very categorically in reference to Eastern Europe, and at this time let me reiterate that statement. I worked on it myself, I am very proud of it and I think oftentimes it is not read in proper context.

It goes like this: It is the policy of the United States and it has been my policy ever since I entered public life to support the aspirations for freedom and national independence of the peoples of Eastern Europe with whom we have such close ties of culture as well as blood by every proper and by every peaceful means.

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I stated my hope and expectation that my visits to Poland, Rumania and Yugoslavia would again demonstrate the friendship and the interest in the welfare and progress of the fine people of Eastern Europe. This remains my policy, regardless of what any Washington experts or anti-Washington experts may say or write.

On July 29, 1975, in the market square of Krakow, Poland, I told a good many thousands who were assembled there that I was standing only a very few feet from the flag marking where General Kosciusko stood and took his famous oath to fight, to regain the independence of Poland and the freedom of all Poles. I said I was very proud to be in a place so rich in Polish history and so closely associated with the Polish hero in our own struggle for independence in the United States.

During my visit to Belgrade I said that Americans particularly admired Yugoslavia's independent spirit. I said whenever independence is threatened, people everywhere look to the example of Yugoslavian people throughout their history. They take strength and they take inspiration from that example.

America's interest in Yugoslavia's continued independence, integrity and well-being, expressed often in the past, remains undiminished.

In the Joint Communique which President Ceausescu and I signed in Rumania we emphasized our support for a just and equitable international order which respects the right of each country regardless of size or political or economic or social system to choose its own destiny free from the use or threat of force.

When I returned from Europe, I told the American people that I was able to deliver in person a message of enormous significance to all Europeans. My message was very clear: America still cares. And the torch and the Statue of Liberty still burns very brightly. We stand for freedom and independence in 1976 just as we stood for freedom and independence in 1776.

I have recalled these events because they underline the fact that my policy, America's policy, toward Eastern Europe is fully, clearly and formally documented. It is a creative and cooperative policy toward the nations of Eastern Europe. It is the policy that embraces our most important ideals as a nation. It is a policy that I have repeated in messages to Americans of Estonian, Lithuanian and Ukranian ancestry, and I add the Latvian people whom I know so well in my hometown of Grand Rapids, Michigan, know of my deep concern and devotion. and friendship with them.

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What it amounts to -- there is no secret Washington policy, no double standard by this Government.

The record is positive, consistent, responsive to your concerns, and I say it is indisputable. The United States strongly supports the aspirations for freedom, for national independence of peoples everywhere, including the peoples of Eastern Europe. I have followed this policy in my visits to Eastern Europe and in my meetings with Eastern European leaders here as well as overseas. Our policy is in no sense -- and I emphasize this -- in no sense accept Soviet dominion of Eastern Europe or any kind of organic origin.

Nor is it in any way designed to permit the consolidation for such dominion. On the contrary, the United States seeks to be responsive to and to encourage as responsibly as possible the desires of Eastern Europeans for greater autonomy, independence and more normal relations with the rest of the world.

This is the policy that I will continue to pursue with patience, with firmness and with persistence -- a policy from which the United States will not waiver.

Thank you very, very much.

END

(AT 1:10 P.M. CST)