

OCTOBER 8, 1976

POOL REPORT - Ford at Impromptu News Conference in Parking Lot Behind Glendale City Hall.

"Let me make an observation and comment. Perhaps it could have been more precise in what I said about the Soviet domination of Poland. I fortunately had the opportunity of being in Poland in 1975. No Democratic president has ever visited Poland while in office. So I had the opportunity to see the Polish people and get their reaction of an American president, and I was there for the purpose of indicating to the thousands upon thousands of Polish people that the United States believes in their desire for freedom and independence. I recognize that there are Polish -- or in Poland that there are Soviet divisions. But anybody who has looked straight in the eye of thousands of fine Polish people knows that their desire for liberty and freedom is just as great as the desire for liberty and freedom of the American people. It's tragic that the Soviet Union does have some divisions in Poland. It's a tragedy that I hope in the future the Poles will be able to find another solution because the unquenchable spirit of the Polish people is something that I admire and respect. And I join the Polish-Americans in this country who know that their ancestral home is a home that, where for centuries, there was freedom. We want freedom for their relatives, their loved ones, and their people from the land that they came."

President Ford does not believe that the Polish people over the long run, whether they're in Poland, whether they're Polish-Americans here, will ever condone domination by any foreign force.

QUESTION: Does the Soviet Union have military dominance?

ANSWER: As I said the other night, the Soviet Union does not have domination of Yugoslavia. The Soviet Union does not militarily dominate Rumania. I was perhaps not as precise as I should have been. I recognize that there are Soviet divisions in Poland. I regret it. And I am very proud of the courageous attitude of the Polish people who want freedom, who have the aspiration for liberty just as we do in the United States. And I fully support their hopes and aspirations. There are several other countries in Eastern Europe that tragically have Soviet military forces in their country. That's not what President Ford wants, and that's not what the American people want.

QUESTION: ...has this caused you any political trouble?

ANSWER: "I have no way of knowing. I firmly believe that the Polish-Americans in this country know of my strong support over the years, not just recently for the captive nations resolution that was enacted frequently in the Congress of the United States. And I always supported it. So any Polish-American or any other ethnic American who knows of President Ford's record of full support for the captive nations resolution knows where I stand."

QUESTION: Did you come out to put an end to this misunderstanding?

ANSWER: "I hope and trust that my observations this morning will put an end to a misunderstanding. It was a misunderstanding and I hope and trust that my very deep and firm convictions have now been said again as they have over the years.

Nyhan - Boston Globe
Compton - ABC
Osborne - New Republic

#