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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AND
QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

THE CITY HALL

1:05 P.M. PDT

THE PRESIDENT: Let me make an observation or comment. Perhaps it could have been more precise in what I said concerning 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, to get their reaction from an American President.

And I was there for the purpose of indicating to the thousands and 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 there are Soviet divisions, but anybody who has looked straight in the eye at 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 is tragic that the Soviet Union does have some divisions in Poland. It is 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.

I join the Polish-Americans in this country who know that their ancestral home is the home that where for centuries there was freedom, and we want freedom for their relatives and their loved ones and their people in the land that they came from.

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

QUESTION: Mr. President, today in virtually all of Eastern Europe, does the Soviet Union have military dominance?

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(OVER)

THE PRESIDENT: As I said the other night, the Soviet Union does not have domination of Yugoslavia. The Soviet Union does not militarily dominate Romania. I was perhaps not as precise as I should have been. I recognize 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 aspirations 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 is not what President Ford wants and that is not what the American people want.

QUESTION: Mr. President, has this caused you any political trouble?

THE PRESIDENT: 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. It 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?

THE PRESIDENT: 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.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Mr. President.

END

(AT 1:10 P.M. PDT)