

PUBLIC OPINION ON REAGAN'S BERLIN TRIP 'NEGATIVE'

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[Janusz Moszczanski commentary: "At Westerplatte and the Brandenburg Gate"]

[Text] We have carefully and respectfully followed the trail of Pope John Paul II's third Polish journey, which also led to the territories won by Poland after centuries of German oppression.

So the reaction by Polish opinion to the West Berlin speech by U.S. President Ronald Reagan against the background of the third visit by the head of the Catholic Church to his homeland is all the louder and more negative.

On the day when the Polish pope stood at Westerplatte and delivered a major patriotic appeal to Polish youth, the U.S. President came to West Berlin for 4 hours and, speaking at the Brandenburg Gate and facing the Reichstag, called this sinister building "the embodiment of German unity."

The President of the United States, a power that fought against German expansionism and German plans to subjugate Europe and the world in both world wars and paid the great sacrifice of hundreds of thousands of soldiers' lives, presented a peculiar feeling for history at the Brandenburg Gate.

To him, the Reichstag is a symbol of unity.

To us Poles, and to all the peoples of Europe who experienced the cruelties of war and occupation first hand, the rebuilt Reichstag is a sinister monument to pan-Germanism, the pan-Germanism which, first in a Bismarck version and then in a Hitler version, caused two horrendous world wars that cost the world over 70 million lives.

We on the Vistula also read the name Brandenburg Gate differently from the chief of the present U.S. administration.

To him it is merely a symbol of "division" -- a confirmation that the so-called German question is still open.

President Reagan regarded it appropriate to use the podium in front of the gate to make a speech that FRG revanchist forces and supporters of tension in Western Europe can only interpret as an encouragement for themselves. And these circles are not ceasing to forward demands vis-a-vis Poland, Czechoslovakia, and the Soviet Union. They are not coming to terms with the postwar political-territorial order and are trying to poison the climate of cooperation in Europe and halt the implementation of CSCE.

The U.S. President's stay in West Berlin in the company of the FRG's highest state dignitaries is a further violation of the 1971 four-power agreement forbidding the Bonn government to perform state functions there.

Using language that seemed to be taken straight out of the "cold war" period, Ronald Reagan criticized the USSR and GDR and maintained the myth about an alleged military threat from the East. [paragraph continues]

Once again he clearly presented himself as an advocate of politics from a position of strength, which he thinks might help in the disarmament talks. At the same time, the White House chief appeared in a role in which he should feel strange -- the role of a humanitarian and defender of human rights, forgetting of course the curse of unemployment haunting the young generation in the West. Neither did he remember that during this very period, another U.S. missile supplied to the Dushmans in Afghanistan has knocked down another Afghan passenger aircraft in which over 50 civilians, including children, died.

One could polemize a long time with Ronald Reagan's West Berlin speech, so many of its features arouse objections. There was also immediate sharp criticism not only in Moscow, Warsaw, or Berlin but also in Bonn, where there was a protest march with more than 100,000 people. In West Berlin itself, over 50,000 young people expressed their disapproval.

The U.S. President's West Berlin detour coincided with the end of the summit of the Seven in Venice and with the foreign ministers' meeting in Reykjavik. Both these Western meetings have brought certain, though still not definite, signs of realism. President Reagan's West Berlin speech resounded with all the greater discord against this background.

Moscow PRAVDA has called this a "provocative game." We remember the sinister "Drang nach Osten" ["Push to the East"] under various names. There have been marches to the East for the sake of propagating new religions and expanding living space, and in the name of world civilization, in other words Western civilization. Now the slogan is different -- to tear down the Berlin Wall for the sake of freedom, independence, and human rights. That is to say, rights in the U.S. sense of the word. Polish opinion cannot fail to react to a show of propaganda like this in a sensitive European spot like West Berlin.

As a nation that made a great contribution in blood and fighting in the struggle against the Hitlerite invader, we have the right and duty to issue a warning. And this we are doing with a full sense of responsibility, remembering where both world wars stemmed from and where the first shots by Hitlerite aggression fell in September 1939.