

Let's Talk About That Warsaw Speech Again

Before I write this defense of Donald Trump in Poland, let me remind readers—from the right and the left—that I come to this subject with some credibility. Not only have I written many articles and even books on the likes of John Paul II and Poland but I've been highly critical of Donald Trump, especially his past statements on NATO and Russia. My biggest concern about Trump in foreign policy was precisely this area. His gullibility toward Vladimir Putin and the Russians on the campaign trail in 2016 appalled me. I was very fearful (and still am) of a President Trump being manipulated by the Kremlin in a damaging way we haven't seen from a Republican president. We conservatives have come to expect Democratic presidents to be dupes to the Kremlin, from Franklin Roosevelt to Jimmy Carter to Barack Obama. But we expect better from a Republican president.

In fact, it was exactly this time last year, in July 2016, that Trump revealed Roosevelt-like pretenses when he glowed in one of his silliest Tweets: "Putin likes me." That was same the language FDR had used about Stalin as Stalin exploited him. ("He likes me," Roosevelt boasted to Churchill on March 18, 1942, grinning in self-satisfaction over warm feelings he felt from his pal "Uncle Joe.")

Trump's naïveté was not limited to Twitter outbursts. Shortly after that July 25, 2016 Tweet, he appeared on ABC's "This Week," where he again engaged in humiliating self-flattery regarding Putin: "He has said nice things about me over the years," Trump cooed. "I remember years ago, he said something, many years ago, he said something very nice about me."

Those were just two of many troubling statements by Trump regarding Putin and Russia and NATO allies in 2016, from his

soft assessments of Putin's annexation of the Crimea to his outrageous statement last July giving the fatal impression that he might not defend certain NATO member countries if they were invaded.

Once Trump was elected, my glimmer of hope was that such awful statements would give way to shrewd advisers that would set him along a firmer policy path and more sensible statements toward our friends in Poland and the Baltic region—the very survivors of the Soviet communist onslaught whose liberation we sought.

Well, that brings me to Trump's speech in Warsaw last week.

The Donald Trump in Warsaw in July 2017 was so much better than the Trump of July 2016. In fact, I must go further: Trump's speech in Poland was outstanding.

It is important to understand that I came to that conclusion after reading every line of the speech unfiltered, without listening to a single reaction. I was tasked to analyze the speech by a Polish publication with an immediate turnaround deadline. I didn't consult anyone. I didn't gaze at the talking heads on CNN and MSNBC and Fox. Thus, when I later glimpsed the hysterical, warped, vicious rants by people on the left—losing their minds over alleged Trump grunts about “Western civilization”—I shook my head in disgust. Especially appalling was the charge that Trump was blowing “white-nationalist dog whistles” in Warsaw.

It literally pains me to waste time and ink responding to these tirades, which outdo some of the worst examples of Trump's own hyperbole. They are totally out-of-line and utterly undeserving of a response.

The truth is that this was an excellent speech that Trump made in Poland—and that's because the speech was on Poland. It was about Poland.

Here's a stunner for you: Click a link to the transcript and see if you can find the phrase "Western Civilization." It isn't there. (Yes, it has several references to the "West.") By contrast, words like "Poland," "Polish," and "Poles" appear nearly 70 times. John Paul II was mentioned three times, and thus three times more than Western civilization was mentioned. Copernicus and Chopin and Pulaski and Kosciuszko and George Washington and Ronald Reagan and the Katyn Woods and the Miracle at Vistula were each mentioned more than Western civilization. The Warsaw Ghetto and Warsaw Uprising and the saving of Jews were mentioned 12 times by this loathsome *white-nationalist dog-whistler*—who paused to hail the special guests in the audience who rescued Poland's Jews.

Enough of the left-wing hokum and hand-wringing. What we're hearing there is less about Trump and Western Civ than the left and Western Civ liberals despise Western Civ. They've annihilated it in their universities. They refuse to teach it. It is firmly fixed in their crosshairs.

You want a dog whistle? Here it is: Commend Western Civ, and then watch liberals go barking mad. It's precisely that university-trained ideological perversity that prompts miseducated college students in Indiana to mistake a Dominican friar for a Klansman. (Think I'm exaggerating? Click here.) It's what prompts an Ivy-League graduate to look at the American Founding and think not of the laws of nature and nature's God but of *trans-phobia*.

Enough. Let's not dignify these political-ideological obsessions. Let's not take the bait. Now, on to the speech.

The text of Trump's remarks is roughly 3,600 words, interrupted several times by sustained chants of "Donald Trump! Donald Trump! Donald Trump!" That's no surprise for anyone who knows anything about Poland, as President Trump's speechwriter clearly did. If you understand the 20th century crucible that was Poland—the "martyred nation of Poland," as

Ronald Reagan called it—the earthly hell that the Polish people went through, then you’ll appreciate why Poles were so moved by this speech.

It started with the opening, where President Trump called it a “profound honor” to be in Warsaw and in “a Poland that is safe, strong and free.” He told Poles that America “is eager to expand our partnership with you.” It was, he noted, his first visit to Central Europe as president, and specifically to “this magnificent, beautiful piece of land.” He called Poland “the geographic heart of Europe” and the Polish people “the soul of Europe.”

He connected to Poland’s suffering: “Your nation is great because your spirit is great and your spirit is strong. For two centuries, Poland suffered constant and brutal attacks. But while Poland could be invaded and occupied and its borders even erased from the map, it could never be erased from history or from your hearts. In those dark days, you have lost your land, but you never lost your pride.” He affirmed: “Despite every effort to transform you, oppress you or destroy you, you endured and overcame.”

Trump saluted various Polish “great heroes” and patriots who joined American soldiers from the American Revolution all the way through Afghanistan and Iraq. Said Trump: “The story of Poland is the story of a people who have never lost hope, who have never been broken and who have never, ever forgotten who they are.”

It truly is. At this point, Trump honored Poland’s remarkable history:

This is a nation more than 1,000 years old. Your borders were erased for more than a century and only restored just one century ago.

In 1920, in the Miracle of Vistula, Poland stopped the Soviet Army bent on European conquest.

Then 19 years later, in 1938 [sic], you were invaded yet again; this time by Nazi Germany from the west and the Soviet Union from the east. That's trouble.

That's tough.

Under a double occupation, the Polish people endured evils beyond description: the Katyn Forest Massacre, the occupation, the Holocaust, the Warsaw Ghetto and the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, the destruction of this beautiful capital city and the deaths of nearly one in five Polish people.

A vibrant Jewish population, the largest in Europe, was reduced to almost nothing after the Nazis systematically murdered millions of Poland's Jewish citizens, along with countless others during that brutal occupation.

In the summer of 1944, the Nazi and Soviet armies were preparing for a terrible and bloody battle right here in Warsaw. Amid that Hell on Earth, the citizens of Poland rose up to defend their homeland.

I am deeply honored to be joined on stage today by veterans and heroes of the Warsaw uprising.

What great spirit.

We salute your noble sacrifice and we pledge to always remember your fight for Poland and for freedom. Thank you. Thank you. [...]

From the other side of the river, the Soviet armed forces stopped and waited.

They watched as the Nazis ruthlessly destroyed the city, viciously murdering men, women and children. [...]

The Polish martyr Bishop Michal Kozal said it well: "More horrifying of a defeat of arms is a collapse of the human spirit." Through four decades of Communist rule, Poland and

the other captive nations of Europe endured a brutal campaign to demolish freedom, your faith, your laws, your history, your identity; indeed, the very essence of your culture and your humanity.

Yet through it all, you never lost that spirit.

Your oppressors tried to break you, but Poland could not be broken.

Anyone who dares to discern racist “white-nationalism” among these wonderful words of praise to a people who richly earned them needs serious help.

Trump next spoke of Poland’s most famous native son, Karol Wojtyla, who came to Warsaw as the first-ever Slavic pontiff and spoke at Victory Square on June 2, 1979, the start of nine days in Poland that changed history. Trump noted how Poles then had cried out, “We want God”:

The people of Poland, the people of America and the people of Europe still cry out, “We want God.” Together with Pope John Paul II, the Poles reasserted their identity as a nation devoted to God.

Here were good words from an American president—words unheard by Polish ears over the previous eight years under President Barack Obama. And here, mercifully, was a new president who openly called out the “threat” of “radical Islamic terrorism,” here characterized by President Trump as another “oppressive ideology” that, like the “specter of communism,” seeks to “export terrorism and extremism all around the globe.” The 45th president asked for Poland’s help in defeating that “menace.” He said that “a strong Poland is a blessing to the nations of Europe ... a blessing to the West and to the world.”

Trump wrapped up the speech with stirring words that evoked John Paul II’s renowned thoughts of preserving Polish

identity, culture, and memory:

Our freedom, our civilization and our survival depend on these bonds of history, culture and memory. And today, as ever, Poland is in our heart, and its people are in that fight.

Just as Poland could not be broken, I declare today for the world to hear that the West will never, ever be broken. Our values will prevail, our people will thrive, and our civilization will triumph. [...]

So together let us all fight like the Poles, for family, for freedom, for country and for God.

Thank you. God bless you, God bless the Polish people, God bless our allies and God bless the United States of America.

A powerful message.

Even then, President Trump could have said more. For instance, he gave only a passing nod to the NATO joint security commitment, saying clearly but all-too-briefly: “we stand firmly behind Article V, the mutual defense commitment.” That was good to hear, but more needed to be said, especially from this particular speaker in light of his poor statements about NATO on the campaign trail.

Trump also should have said more about bringing Poland back into the joint U.S. missile-defense rubric that Obama dropped on September 17, 2009, the 70th anniversary of Stalin’s Red Army invasion of Poland—one of Obama’s shameless moments of accommodation of Vlad and the Russians. Trump said only, “we applaud Poland for its decision to move forward this week on acquiring from the United States the battle-tested Patriot air and missile defense system, the best anywhere in the world.”

Acquiring? As in, what, *buying*? The heck with that, man, build

a joint missile shield with Poland! Stop the silly “financial obligation” baloney. This is a matter of serious national security, not silly populism for Fox News watchers.

More needs to be said on this from our president.

And likewise, Donald Trump didn’t exactly torch Vladimir Putin in this speech. There was only this small statement on Russia: “We urge Russia to cease its destabilizing activities in Ukraine and elsewhere and its support for hostile regimes, including Syria and Iran.”

That was it.

But alas, this speech was clearly intended to be less about drawing out policy than re-forging a bond between the United States and Poland, one that was ripped by the previous president his first year in office.

To be sure, Donald Trump was obviously so vastly better talking about Poland and NATO here than on the campaign trail in 2016 because he was scripted. He was reading words prepared for him by intelligent speechwriters and researchers.

In all, a great speech in Poland, on Poland and about Poland.

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