

PROFESOR ZBIGNIEW BRZEZIŃSKI'S ADDRESS

Adam and Ms. Wanda,

Thank you for the diploma that I'll always hold in high regard.

Mr. Minister [to Stefan Meller], thank you for your words of appreciation. They're very special to me, as they come from a person whose international activities I deeply respect.

Adam, I didn't know that you have digested my various writings so much but I was listening to your statements with appreciation and if I had to assess them, like a professor assesses a student, I'd say that you had taken a very good approach.

But first of all I'd like to note that this award is very special to me not only because of the earlier recipients of it but mainly because I know who I'm receiving it from - from Adam and Helena.

I remember my first meetings with each of them. Adam mentioned that we met 42 years ago. It was after Janek Nowak [Jeziorański] had popped in and said: "You must meet that fantastic young man from Warsaw. He's a brilliant political mind and a real fighter." So we met and made contact immediately. We are good evidence to the saying that those who squabble are fond of each other, as we often disagree. We have always had lively political debates, sometimes even sober, but always heated, emotional.

I remember my first meeting with Helenka. I don't know if she remembers it, but it was in the early 1980s, when something very special was taking place in Poland, and she was on a mission to Washington. I contributed a little to accomplishment of that mission, and that might have had some impact here.

So, I'm thinking: I'm a man of the year; I don't exactly know why this year but I'm a man of the year. But for me Adam and Helena are people of one great, groundbreaking decade and for that I'm very grateful to both of them.

I must also mention the anniversary of Gazeta Wyborcza, not only because of the present role it plays here, in Poland but first of all because of its origins. That was the beginning of free press in Poland. And there is no democracy without free press. And here the role of the Gazeta Wyborcza is really crucial. Let me share with you two, very simple conclusions on the subject, even if the approach I take is not very smart or very scientific. What would have happened if the situation had been different? And: what will happen if the situation is different? I refer to what we had in common from the very beginning with Adam, and also with Helenka. For many years we all had dreamed that Poland were Poland. That was the dream of millions of Poles after 1945. And thousands had died with that dream in their hearts. But how and when that dream could have been met? Could it have happened when America had nuclear weapon and Russia not yet - in the 1940s? Or when Stalin died and soon the Berlin case blew up? Or maybe during the Hungarian uprising in the 1950s, or the Berlin crisis or following it Cuban one - in the 1960s?

And imagine, please, that this has happened. The empire breaks up. Soviets are in retreat. And what next? In the West, the main ally to the United States was then West Germany. At that time neither America nor West Germany recognized the Oder-Neisse border. Thus the atmosphere of uncertainty. Maybe a part of people would run away chaotically from western lands of Poland and at least part of the displaced Germans would come back. And then - what would happen in the East? New battle for Lvov? Or maybe a march on Vilnius? And what about Poland herself? Where to take democracy, real democracy, from? At the time of continuing struggle for power with still alive Bierut supporters or even with Gomułka himself? What institutional source of democracy and culture of democracy was then in a country which had been under the blood-bathed, largely foreign dictatorship over 15 or 20 years?

So my first conclusion is - liberation in 1989 occurred in optimal historical conditions. After the Oder-Neisse border had been recognized by America, and other Allies, Germany included. Thus, our

possession in the West was not endangered. And in the East? Peaceful disintegration of the empire. And suddenly independent Ukraine needed support from Poland, and an independent Lithuania referred to Polish-Lithuanian traditions.

And in Poland - revival of civil society, growth of political culture and stimulation of society for a number of years by Solidarity democratic liberation movement, that was a real school of democracy. And soon after independent Poland became a member of NATO, and European Union. Great dominance in the world of America - optimal historical situation. Exceptional, quite exceptional coincidence which was really nothing short of a miracle. And of course the Pope. That was optimal historical setting.

But what will happen when the situation changes? Today the optimal situation of Poland results from the course of three realities, geopolitical realities. First of all from America's dominance in the world. For the second, from establishing of a broader and slowly uniting Europe that is linked to America. And for the third, post-imperial Russia turning over into a national state, although it is still suffering from imperial nostalgia. But is that exceptional geopolitical situation permanent, is it really permanent?

If America gets involved deeper and deeper into the political and religious conflict with the Islamic world, the involvement becoming more and more bloody, not only in Iraq and Afghanistan but also maybe - which I hope won't happen - in Iran or maybe Pakistan, where it can burst out any day, then won't America lose its dominance in the world?

And in particular, won't America lose its position when it stops to be faithful to America, to what America has ever been to the world? How coherent will Europe be then? Europe which Poland is now an institutional part of. But Europe which would be feuding with America and left alone to face Russia? And what would then happen to Ukraine? The situation may again become bad for Poland. These are the grounds for my second conclusion, and I will end here.

Poland must consciously, on purpose, and consequently use its present optimal situation to prevent such a scenario for the future. And does Poland do it? Maybe not quite. Poland is not located on the moon, it's between the Oder-Neisse and Bug rivers. Poland is to some extent the America's ally, but let's not exaggerate, she's not America's neighbor.

The starting point in assuring permanence of the present optimal situation is Polish-German reconciliation, friendly and really anchored in history, despite the fact - and just because of the fact - that Poland needs it much more than Germany.

The Polish-German reconciliation is not only a springboard for better relations with Russia, that will come sometime in the future, but also a springboard that is necessary. It's also necessary for keeping close allied relations with America because Germans are currently main ally of America in Europe. And at the same time Russia is a necessary partner for America.

A reconciliation, every reconciliation, requires work, effort, patience and especially broader historical perspective, and not mainly painful historical memory. You must convince your friends to your reasons but you mustn't discourage them with a tone of moral superiority. Maintaining and strengthening the optimal situation needs also a Polish state that consciously deepens social democratic culture.

Moderation in political activity, ability to compromise - and here I would like to add that the term "compromise" shall be redefined in Polish political culture - establishing fixed coalitions based on moderate variants of right-wing or left-wing parties, coalitions which exclude every extremities from political life, oscillating from one extreme to the other and back again - these are the necessary requirements of strengthening Poland governed by law, valued by Europe and recognized as an integral part of its common future, broader Europe which together with Poland will then influence America, in order to make America stay America. Because only then the situation will not change.