

News from Senator

BOB DOLE



(R - Kansas)

2213 Dirksen Building, Washington, D.C. 20510

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
MONDAY, JUNE 11, 1979

CONTACT: BOB WAITE, BILL KATS
202-224-8953, -8947

POPE'S VISIT PROVES THAT THE RELIGIOUS ASPIRATIONS OF POLES ARE ALIVE AND WELL

WASHINGTON -- Following is a floor statement by Sen. Bob Dole (R-Kan.)
on Pope John Paul II's visit to Poland:

"The visit of Pope John Paul II to his native Poland has re-affirmed the commitment of the Polish people to the spiritual values of the Catholic church.

"The enthusiasm of the crowds that turned out to greet the pope undoubtedly demonstrated the pride of a people welcoming the return of an illustrious native son. Subtle harassment of the crowds, as reported by the Washington Star on June 7, did not have the predicted effect of dampening the manifestations of personal warmth repeatedly shown the pope on his triumphant tour.

"More than pride and joy, however, the Polish people were conveying a message to their government in demonstrating a religious fervor that has remained undaunted by an official policy bent on suppressing what is seen, in totalitarian regimes, as a challenge to the power monopoly without which they cannot continue to exercise absolute control over a people.

"The first Pole to be elected Supreme Pontiff of the Roman Catholic Church can help to re-establish the ancient ties that once bound Poland to the Vatican and to the West. John Paul II has risen to the challenge in calling for religious freedom in Poland and elsewhere in Eastern European nations. In the 15th century, Copernicus daringly revolutionized medieval thinking by his theories on astronomy. In confronting the powers that be, the pope has followed in the tradition of his countryman.

"In the 12th century, a Polish king, Casimir the Great, in a move of religious tolerance no longer in vogue in the rest of Europe, invited exiled Jewish populations to settle in Poland. Perhaps remembering the past while looking toward the future, the pope set an example of tolerance towards other faiths by commemorating the Jewish dead in a moving visit to Auschwitz and Birkenau. This gesture was a most profound sign of the truly ecumenical spirit initiated by another great man of the church, John Paul I. The symbolic meaning of the name assumed by John Paul II upon his election was revealed significantly.

"It is my sincere hope that the pope's visit to his native land, in making clear to the Polish government that the religious aspirations of its people are alive and well, will help break down the barriers to freedom of religion that have been erected through the use of restrictions and restraints.

"Book burning is an ineffectual weapon against the strength of human spirit. In congratulating the pope on his visit and on his safe return to the Vatican, I join my voice to those of millions of Poles in expressing the wish that churches be allowed to be built, priests to be ordained, and religious literature be made available for those who want to partake of it, starting with the renowned and respected Catholic "Tygodnik Powszechny." Freedom allows the human mind to flourish -- and nations to prosper. Tyranny causes both to wither."