

Address Before the Assembly of the Republic of Portugal in Lisbon

May 9, 1985

I'm sorry that some of the chairs on the left seem to be uncomfortable. [Laughter]

[The President was referring to a walkout by Communist Party Assembly members prior to his address.]

I'm deeply honored to be with you distinguished ladies and gentlemen here in this assembly that is so rich in history, where the voice of the Portuguese people is heard.

For us, a long journey is ending now, but one fruitful in results and rich in memory. World leaders in summit conference, the youth of modern Germany, warm welcomes at the European Parliament and in Spain—all these things we have seen and been grateful for. We have seen, too, memorials to the devastation of the past, to the memory of war, and to the cruelty of totalitarian rule. Yet we have also seen the prospering cities and nations of the modern Europe and experienced the warmth of her free people. Let there be no doubt that these things too are monuments, monuments to the future and to the human spirit—its capacity for hope and change, its passion for peace and freedom.

And now, at last, we have the honor of coming here to Portugal, a particularly fitting place for an American to make farewells as well as bring greetings. For as the history books of America's schoolchildren teach them, it was from these shores that the first maritime explorers departed, the scientists and adventurers whose skill and courage would lead someday to the discovery of a new world and a new nation.

And I hope, by the way, that you'll not think it impertinent of me to mention that anyone who's had the two careers I've had—in Hollywood and in Sacramento, the capital of California—owes the Portuguese people a special debt. It was, after all, your countryman of five centuries ago, Joao Rodrigues Cabrilho, who discovered a very long stretch along the North American coastline that came to be known as California. In fact, some in my country claim I've been around so long that my ranch in the Santa Ynez Mountains was originally sold to me by Cabrilho himself. [Laughter]

But I know it's customary for Presidents and statesmen to talk of your nation's great maritime discoveries, to speak of your past. And it's certainly no surprise that, gazing back across time, many look with wonder at a small nation in the 15th century that refused to go the way of other war-ravaged European nations—that spurned conflict and turned its talents instead to exploration, to adventuring into new realms, to daring to dream, to believe in themselves and in the future. And this vision eventually doubled the size of the known world and is rightly thought of as a signal event in human history.

So, this old and glorious heritage of your country forms a distant yet close bond between our lands and fills any American who comes here with humble gratitude and admiration for all the achievements of your people. Although I'm not sure we would catch every allusion to Greco-Roman mythology, I do know that most Americans—not a few of them Portuguese-Americans—would share the sentiment of your epic, "The Lusíadas: Let us hear no more then of Ulysses and Aeneas and their long journeying, no more of Alexander and Trajan and their famous victories. My theme is the daring and renown of the Portuguese . . ."

But we must do more than today celebrate the daring and renown of the Portuguese past. For the events of the last decade suggest that you're once again embarked on an adventure, a great adventure that all the world is watching closely. Once again you're charting a new course, not just for Portugal but for all others, especially those peoples of the Third World with whom your long-established ties permit you to speak with a special trust, wisdom, and candor.

In little more than a decade, your nation has moved rapidly through stages of development that illustrate the history of this century—from far-flung empire and dictatorship to a confrontation with totalitarian ideology to a decisive turn to democratic self-rule. While it's always hard to distinguish between the ripples of daily events and the great tides of history, I will still venture a prediction.

Future historians will recognize in Portugal's journey the journey of our time, the journey of our century. For you, the people of Portugal, have chosen freedom. You have elected to embark on a great adventure in democracy. And let me assure you today that 237 million of my countrymen and many millions more who will find in your example their own way to freedom salute your decision and celebrate again in the words of "The Lusíadas," your

"daring and renown."

Your adventure is important to our century, a century of so much promise and so much tragedy. I must state it that starkly. I have come from seeing places that remind us of the havoc and wrong that human hatred can cause. But here in the new Portugal and throughout Europe, we see our century's promise, a promise not just of material progress—a time when mankind's age-old enemies of hunger and disease and poverty are things of the past—but also the promise of progress in the human spirit as well. A progress toward the day when each man, woman, and child on Earth will live in freedom and have a right to a voice in their own destiny.

So, in these final miles of our journey across Europe, a journey into the future as well as the past, let me tell you what I think we've discovered. Whether one regards it as revealed truth or only as a great story, we learn in Genesis of a moment when humankind lived in harmony with itself and with God. Some have said the meaning of history is found in the unfolding story of our return to such a time, a journey painfully and frequently broken by heartbreak and suffering. Well, for now, I will leave such thoughts to the theologians and the historians. But this much I do know—I've seen in these past days reminders of the tragedy and the grandeur of our time. I've heard the voice of the 20th century; it is humanity's voice, heard in every century, every time. And the words are unmistakable. They call out to us in anguish, but also in hope: Let the nations live in peace among themselves. Let all peoples abide in the fellowship that God intends.

But tragically, this great longing felt by every people in every time has not always been shared by their governments, especially those modern governments whose leaders and ideologies glorify the state and make a cult of personal power. At the end of the last World War, Europe and all the world hoped that we'd at last seen an end to conflict and armaments. It wasn't to be so. But at least we didn't repeat the mistake of an earlier time, the mistake that eventually led to world war, the mistake of believing it is enough only to wish for peace. Instead we accepted reality. We took seriously those who threatened to end the independence of our nations and our peoples, and we did what peoples who value their freedom must do—we joined together in a great alliance. And we rearmed, but we did so only so that never again would we be forced under the weight of our betrayed illusions to resort to violence.

No one knows better than the people of Portugal, who have with Great Britain the oldest mutual defense treaty in European history, the value of such alliances and such readiness in preventing aggression and war. And so, we've labored together—Old World and New World, Europe and America, Portuguese and American. And NATO has worked; we have kept the peace for 40 years. Let us keep the peace another 40 years and another after that.

Today Portugal's contribution to the Western alliance remains of critical importance. Your geographic location is strategically vital, your armed forces are modernizing to expand their role in NATO—all of this further testimony that martial skill and a love of national independence are more than just parts of the Portuguese past.

Yet even your contributions to the alliance are superseded by the example of what you're doing now. Yes, democratic Portugal has faced political problems and social problems and economic problems, and, no, democracy, particularly in its earlier years, does not always go smoothly.

But this is true of any nation and especially any democracy. In my country, we've learned over and over again that democracy can only work when it is judged not in the short run but over the long term, when we keep in mind the principles upon which it is based and remember how right Winston Churchill was to remind us that democracy truly is the worst form of government, except for all the others.

The essential truth at the heart of Portuguese and American democracy is our belief that governments exist for the sake of the people and not the other way around. And this belief is based on an essential insight of our civilization—the dignity of man, the value of the individual. My own nation's forefathers justified our revolution with these words in the Declaration of Independence: "... all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

Well, it is this trust in the individual—the right to speak, to assemble, to publish, and to vote, even to walk out—that is the meaning of democracy. Our democratic governments are not built on the proposition that the people are always right; indeed, within the structure of our governments there are safeguards against the whims or passions of the majority. But democratic government is built on the proposition that there resides in the common people an uncommon wisdom, that over the long run the people and their right to political self-expression are the best protection against freedom's oldest and most powerful enemy—the unchecked growth and abuse of the power of the state.

Now, this belief is not always easy to preserve, especially when the ship of state is buffeted by storms. There will always be those who lose faith and preach panic; you've sometimes heard their voices. But I believe that here in the nation of navigators there is a respect for the wisdom of holding fast to the course that has been charted. We know there will always be answers if we trust in the people, if we go to them, give them the facts, and rely on them to make the right decisions.

In my own country we have learned this lesson many times. No one had more right to question this belief than one of our great Presidents and founders of my own political party, Abraham Lincoln. Even facing a civil war and powerful voices that told him that people could not be trusted with such momentous issues, Lincoln, with his typical backwoods wisdom, eloquently explained why over the long run democracy is the most pragmatic form of government. He said, and every American knows the words: "You can fool some of the people all of the time, and all of the people some of the time. But you cannot fool all of the people all of the time."

Portugal and her people are moving forward. You have handled during the past few years enormous problems, yet your democracy is strong and intact. You are embracing the free market; you are entering the Common Market; you are beginning to grow economically; you believe, as we do, that freedom works.

This democratic experience and economic development go hand in hand. History shows a strong, unbreakable link between political freedom and economic growth, between democracy and social progress. And in our own time—a great revolution is underway in the world, a great longing for personal freedom and democratic self-rule that surfaces again and again, even in Communist countries. At the start of this century there were only a handful of democracies, but today more than 50 countries—one-third of the world's population—are living under democratic rule. One of the engines of this progress is the desire for economic development, the realization that it is free nations that prosper and free peoples who create better lives for themselves and their children. This realization is growing throughout the world, and in some nations it's causing conflict and disorder. In a sense, then, Marx was right; economic progress is leading to clashes with old entrenched political orders. But Marx was wrong about where all this would occur, for it is the democratic world that is flexible, vibrant, and growing—bringing its peoples higher and higher standards of living even as freedom grows and deepens. It is in the collectivist world that economies stagnate, that technology is lagging, and that the people are oppressed and unhappy with their lives.

So, everywhere we turn, there is an uprising of mind and will against the old clichés of collectivism. Throughout the world the old cries of "power to the state" are being replaced by cries of "power to the people." Throughout the world we can see movement toward a time when totalitarian rule and the terrible suffering that it causes is only a sad and distant memory. That's why what you are doing in your country is so important. First at the British Parliament in 1982 and then again in Strasbourg yesterday, we've called for concerted action—for a global campaign for freedom, an international strategy for democratic development.

I can think of no more fitting place to renew that call to the world than here in Portugal, and I can think of no people better equipped to advance the cause of democratic development and human freedom than the Portuguese. Let Portugal again lead the world, and let the Portuguese again cross small seas and great ones bearing news of science and discovery, the new science of democracy, the discovery of freedom—that it works, that it prospers, and that it endures.

And I hasten to add that freedom can guarantee peace. Let us never forget that aggression and war are rarely the work of a nation's people, for it is the people who must bear the brunt and endure the worst of war. No, war and aggression in our century have almost always been the work of governments, one of the militarists and ideologues who may control them. And that is why war and aggression have a tiny constituency. Let democracy spread, let the people's voice be heard, and the warmongers will be made outcasts and pariahs. Let us not be afraid that in our crusade for freedom to proclaim to the world that the cause of democratic government is also the cause of peace.

This pursuit of peace has occupied much of our efforts on this journey and in our broader diplomatic efforts. Important negotiations are now underway in Geneva, negotiations that can lessen the chance of war by producing verifiable agreements and the first real reduction in nuclear weapons. So, too, the United States is moving forward with technological research that we hope someday will lessen the chance of war by reducing dependence on a strategy based on the threat of nuclear retaliation.

I know you share my hopes that our efforts to reach negotiated solutions will succeed. And I know, too, that you understand working toward this goal means remaining strong in our alliance and in our resolve to protect our nation's freedom and independence. Our agreement on this point is why we

can be hopeful that a century that has seen so much tragedy can also be a century of hope. In the United States and here in Portugal, in Europe and throughout the world, we have rediscovered the preciousness of freedom, its importance to the cause of peace and to restoring to humanity the dignity to which it is entitled.

This belief in human dignity suggests the final truth upon which democracy is based—a belief that human beings are not just another part of the material universe, not just mere bundles of atoms. We believe in another dimension—a spiritual side to man. We find a transcendent source for our claims to human freedom, our suggestion that inalienable rights come from one greater than ourselves.

No one has done more to remind the world of the truth of human dignity, as well as the truth that peace and justice begins with each of us, than the special man who came to Portugal a few years ago after a terrible attempt on his life. He came here to Fatima, the site of your great religious shrine, to fulfill his special devotion to Mary, to plead for forgiveness and compassion among men, to pray for peace and the recognition of human dignity throughout the world.

When I met Pope John Paul II a year ago in Alaska, I thanked him for his life and his apostolate. And I dared to suggest to him the example of men like himself and in the prayers of simple people everywhere, simple people like the children of Fatima, there resides more power than in all the great armies and statesmen of the world.

This, too, is something the Portuguese can teach the world. For your nation's greatness, like that of any nation, is found in your people. It can be seen in their daily lives, in their communities and towns, and especially in those simple churches that dot your countryside and speak of a faith that justifies all of humanity's claims to dignity, to freedom.

I would suggest to you that here is power, here is the final realization of life's meaning and history's purpose, and here is the foundation for a revolutionary idea—the idea that human beings have a right to determine their own destiny.

I hope you'll forgive me if I leave you with one story about our early days as a democracy. At a critical moment in our history when disunity and discord prevailed on every side, a man celebrated as an inventor and scientist interrupted the proceedings of the Constitutional Convention, trying at the time to formulate the Constitution of the United States. It was Benjamin Franklin who rose to say to his fellow delegates that he had lived a long time and that he had learned above all that not the smallest bird falls from the heavens without the knowledge of God. It is said that he then knelt and asked the delegates to kneel with him and seek a guidance greater than their own. And from then on, every constitutional meeting opened with prayer.

A great democracy was born after those words, just as a great democracy was born in Portugal. It was born because the Portuguese are a people who love freedom and peace, who are willing to sacrifice for a better life for their children. But most of all it was born because the Portuguese are unafraid to acknowledge a higher law that operates in the affairs of mankind, that higher law dictates human freedom and dignity.

There is a word in your language I remember using in a speech during my first year in office, a very useful word evoking the remembrance of things past—I hope I get it right—*saudades*. Even in the short time Nancy and I have been with you in Portugal, we've developed a deeper appreciation for that word's meaning. We shall miss you; we shall miss Portugal. And we hope someday you will permit us to return, to visit with you again, and, as you say, *muitas saudades*.

Until then, on behalf of the American people, we extend our warmest wishes—we look with hope toward your future and ours, a future we know will be one of democracy and freedom. One in which we also know the Portuguese people will write another great and inspiring chapter in history. Thank you, and God bless you all.

Note: The President spoke at 12:30 p.m. in the Assembly chamber.

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