

Radio Address to the Nation on Foreign Policy

September 24, 1988

My fellow Americans:

In just 2 days, on Monday morning, I will have the honor of representing you and our country when I appear before the General Assembly of the United Nations. This will be my seventh and final appearance as President before the U.N. And on each of these occasions, as with each time I've represented America in my trips overseas, whether to the Berlin Wall or the demilitarized zone in Korea, to the canals of Venice or the Palace of Versailles in France, to the Great Hall of the People in Beijing or St. George's Hall in Moscow—yes, whenever I've carried our flag into meetings with foreign leaders I have felt a special pride. We Americans have so much of which to be proud, so much that others can only dream of, most of all our freedom and our democracy; and we stand for so much that is good and decent and honorable in the world.

When I step up to the podium on Monday, I will see before me the representatives of nearly all the countries on Earth. Some, like Western European nations, Canada, and Japan, are longstanding democracies, major industrial powers, and good friends. Others, like the Philippines, South Korea, and many countries in Latin America, are fledgling democracies with economies that hold great promise, even if—as is the case in the Philippines right now—those economies are troubled. Others struggle toward democracy or economic strength, or both. And too many others still live in lands that know neither. My message this year to the delegates of the United Nations will be a message of hope.

For 8 years, around our nation and around the world, I've been saying that the key to world peace and human freedom is the strength and determination of the great democracies. This year, as we survey the scene one last time, we can see that our strength has indeed proven to be the engine of peace and hope in the world.

Nowhere is this clearer than in U.S.-Soviet relations. just 8 years ago, our critics at home were calling our plans to restore America's strength a threat to world peace. These were often the same people who later criticized our rescue mission in Grenada, when we freed that tiny island nation from the grip of a Communist tyranny, or who were to condemn our strike against Qadhafi's Libya. And, yes, in the fall of 1983, when the Soviets walked out of the Intermediate-Range

Nuclear Forces talks in Geneva, many of these same critics said we were to blame. Our firm stance in negotiations and the resolve of our allies precipitated the breakdown in the talks, they said. And they criticized our zero-option proposal that called for the elimination of an entire class of U.S. and Soviet ballistic missiles. They said it was unrealistic and a sign that we were not serious about arms reductions.

Well, as you know, we continued to hold firm; and finally the Soviets returned to the bargaining table. just a few months ago, Soviet General Secretary Gorbachev and I stood in the gilded splendor of one of the Kremlin's most splendid rooms and exchanged the instruments of ratification for the INF treaty, a treaty that will, for the first time in history, eliminate an entire class of U.S. and Soviet nuclear missiles.

At the U.N. on Monday, I'll talk about this and other successes for our philosophy of peace through strength. A firm show of strength by America and its allies has kept the vital international shipping lanes of the Persian Gulf open and was a key factor in pushing one of the bloodiest wars of this century to a cease-fire. From Cambodia to Afghanistan to Angola, our strength, our assistance to those who would fight for freedom, has given both peace and freedom a new breath of life and given the people of those countries new hope. Yes, the world today is filled with realistic hopes for peace and freedom that would have seemed totally utopian just 8 years ago. After all, 8 years ago, who would have thought that a President of the United States could stand before an assembly of students in the Soviet Union and speak to them about the wonders of freedom?

The great question now is: What next? Where does the world go in the next 8 years and the next 80 years? What are the steps we might take toward a safer, better, freer world? And I'll have some thoughts of my own on Monday.

One thing is certain. If we're to continue to advance world peace and human freedom, America must remain strong. We must turn a deaf ear to those born-again patriots who talk about strength while serving up the same old menu of weakness. If we have learned anything these last 8 years, it's that peace through strength works.