

## Remarks at the Heritage Foundation Anniversary Dinner (Excerpts)

April 22, 1986

Recently I've asked a few conservative audiences to reflect on that change, to think back to 1980 and ask themselves: Who would have thought that in a few short years even our political opposition would be calling for an end to deficit spending and voting for a de facto balanced budget amendment, known as Gramm-Rudman? Or who could have predicted that a House of Representatives supposedly under liberal leadership would spontaneously repeal the Clark amendment, the amendment which prevented us from helping the freedom fighters in Angola?

But these changes in American domestic politics reflect a wider international trend. Since our first days in office, our administration has tried to defend our way of life not just by increasing the defense budget, but by pointing to the world of ideas and the revolution now going on there. We've talked about the decadence of Marxist-Leninist ideology. Early in 1981 I mentioned to Mrs. Thatcher (Prime Minister of the United Kingdom) that totalitarian ideology had lost its force and energy and perhaps the time had come for the democracies to plan for a world where that ideology was no longer a dominant force. A little later at Notre Dame, we called communism a spent force, a sad, bizarre chapter in human history whose last pages even now are being written. And in Westminster, I noted that statism had lost the intellectuals. Our call was for a forward strategy for freedom, a crusade to promote and foster democratic values throughout the world.

Much of this at the time was viewed skeptically. But here we are a few years later; democracy is prospering in many nations where it's never before been seen. In Latin America and the Caribbean alone more than 50--or 90 percent of the people live in nations that are democracies or headed in that direction. What a change from a few years ago. And we've seen the insurgencies in Afghanistan, Cambodia, Nicaragua, Angola, and elsewhere, vivid evidence that the romance of revolution is no longer on the side of the totalitarians. It's telling proof that the eighties is a break with the past, that the eighties is truly the decade of the freedom fighters.

There are those, of course, who are a little slow to catch on to all this. And it probably won't surprise you

that a good many of them reside here in Washington. *[Laughter]* But even this is changing. The old politics, the post-Vietnam syndrome, the partisans of "Blame America First," are fading fast.

So, let me make a prediction. I think there's a growing recognition that the idea of self-government and the commitment to democratic rights is on the march everywhere in the world, and especially in Central America. Those who've been naive about the dangers of communism in the past, those who've been wrong about the nature of Communist regimes in Vietnam, Cambodia, Grenada, and El Salvador are uneasy now with their views on the Sandinistas and the freedom fighters. So, here is my prophecy: We're going to get the freedom fighters the help they need, and we're going to get it to them soon. But it's going to happen because I know you and I are going to redouble our efforts over the next few weeks.

And let me make one other prediction. We must never forget that totalitarian regimes are as fragile as they are powerful. Time magazine recently did a story on scholar Robert Leiken, who went to Nicaragua and, much to the distress of some of his liberal colleagues, concluded that opposition to the Sandinistas is very deep and very strong in that nation. So, let's remember this, too: The vast majority of the people in Nicaragua want nothing to do with communism or the militarism it engenders. The day is coming when the democratic promises of the revolution of 1979 will be fulfilled and Nicaragua will be free.

The only point I'm making here is this: We've been talking about the idea of freedom, about expanding its frontiers, since the beginning of this administration. So no one should be surprised that our policies and programs have followed suit. Freedom is on the march; we pledge solidarity to those who seek to make it their own.

In much the same way, no nation-friend or foe, ally or adversary-should be surprised by the events of last week and the United States Government's determination to protect American lives and the world from terrorism. I could recite here a long list of speeches and statements by myself and Cabinet officers outlining the terrorist danger, presenting the evidence of collaboration among certain terrorist States and making

clear to those States that we would not tolerate what amounts to acts of war against the American people. Only last summer, in an address to the American Bar Association, I outlined the terrorist network, citing evidence the United States Government had accumulated as well as private scholars in the field such as Dr. Avigdor Haselkorn. I carefully outlined the interconnection among those terrorist States and issued the most solemn warnings to their leaders.

And yet, even at the start of the administration, people like Jeane Kirkpatrick were offering some pretty broad hints that things would be different. "How will the Reagan administration change American foreign policy?" she was asked early in 1981 at the United Nations. She answered correctly. She said, "Well, we've taken down our 'Kick Me' sign." And then someone said, "Well, does this mean that if the United States is kicked it will kick back?" "Not necessarily," she said. "But it does mean we won't apologize." [Laughter] Well, we haven't been apologizing. Things are different. And perhaps you've noticed. I know Colonel Qadhafi has.

And by the way, these two issues we've discussed here this evening—the march of freedom, especially in Central America, and the fight against terrorism—are directly related. In that American Bar Association address, I pointed out the strong ties of the Sandinistas to the international terror network. The Sandinistas have provided refuge for all sorts of international terrorists. Members of the Italian Government have openly charged that Nicaragua is harboring some of Italy's worst terrorists. And we have evidence that in addition to Italy's Red Brigades, other elements of the world's most vicious terrorists groups—West Germany's Baader-Meinhof gang, the Basque ETA, the PLO, and the Tupamaros—have found a haven in Nicaragua. They have actively supported the Salvadoran rebels and have frequently used terror, including the killing of four of our marines in a cafe last summer. And these are the same rebels who celebrated

the *Challenger* explosion and said our astronauts were war criminals and deserved what they got.

That picture making the rounds showing Daniel Ortega standing with Mu'ammarr Qadhafi and raising his fist in a gesture of solidarity is very much to the point. I hope every Member of Congress will reflect on the fact that the Sandinistas have been training, supporting, and directing, as well as sheltering terrorists; and in this sense, they're trying to build a Libya on our doorstep. And it's the contras, the freedom fighters, who are stopping them. So, you see it goes back to what Richard Weaver has said and what Heritage is all about: Ideas do have consequences, rhetoric is policy, and words are action.

And just in case the meaning of last week's events are still unclear to those who would terrorize and murder Americans, let me explain once more, and, believe me, far from being belligerent or warlike—clearing up misunderstanding on this point is precisely the way to avoid conflict, not cause it.

Yes, we Americans have our disagreements, sometimes noisy ones, almost always in public—that's the nature of an open society. But no foreign power should mistake disagreement for disunity or disputes for decadence. Those who are tempted to do so should reflect on our national character, on our record of littering history with the wreckage of regimes who've made the mistake of underestimating the will of the American people, their love for freedom, and their national valor. "The American people are slow to wrath," Teddy Roosevelt once said, "but when their wrath is once kindled it burns like a consuming flame." So, tonight I speak for a united people. Let me say simply to those who wish us ill: We are Americans. We love our country, we love what she stands for, we will always defend her. We live for freedom—our own and our children's—and we stand ready always to protect our birthright and guard our patrimony, as our fathers did before us. Thank you. God bless you.