

Ronald Wilson Reagan (1911-2004)

## Televised Address by Governor Ronald Reagan "A Strategy for Peace in the '80s"

*October 19, 1980*

Good Evening.

Three months ago, in accepting the nomination of my party to be its presidential candidate, I said: "Of all the objectives we seek, first and foremost is the establishment of lasting world peace."

Since I spoke those words, I have had the chance to visit with Americans like you, all across the nation. I have brought  
5 that same message of peace as our primary goal.

But it hasn't all been one-sided. I have had the chance not only to talk with you but also to listen to you about the course you believe our country should take. We have, in a way, been holding a national conversation together on the future of our country.

Tonight, I want to continue my part of that ongoing conversation, and offer what I believe are ways in which peace  
10 can be assured for every American family and for the world.

But before I do, I'd like to speak to you for a few moments now, not as a candidate for the Presidency, but as a citizen, a parent – in fact, a grandparent – who shares with you the deep and abiding hope for peace.

I revere, as I know you do, the American tradition of free and reasoned discussion of our complex issues. That is why I have participated in six debates since I became a candidate for President. And that is why I have stated my  
15 willingness to engage President Carter in his first debate.

The great tradition of reasoned exchange of views has not exactly characterized all the rhetoric of this campaign. My own views have been distorted in what I can only conclude is an effort to scare people through innuendoes and misstatements of my positions.

Possibly Mr. Carter is gambling that his long litany of fear will somehow influence enough voters to save him from  
20 the inevitable consequences of the policies of his administration which have brought so much human misery.

I am confident he will lose that gamble. I think the American people know – to paraphrase Franklin Roosevelt – that the only thing the cause of peace has to fear is fear itself.

Let us base our decisions about peace and security on the facts, on what we need to know and not on what we are told we must fear.

25 There can be no doubt about what is the major issue in this campaign concerning the question of peace.

It is whether you believe Mr. Carter's words and deeds have brought the United States closer to or further away from the goal of peace based on confidence in the strength of our nation.

As a presidential candidate four years ago, he said: "...it is imperative that the world know that we will meet obligations and commitments to our allies and that we will keep our nation strong."

30 Did he keep his promise? That's the real peace issue in 1980. And that's an issue for you to decide. Has he kept our nation strong? Are you willing to risk four more years of what we have now? Has the registration and the possible draft of your sons and daughters contributed to your peace of mind? Is the world safer for you and your family?

Whatever else history may say about my candidacy. I hope it will be recorded that I appealed to our best hopes, not our worst fears, to our confidence rather than our doubts, to the facts, and not to fantasies.

35 And these three – hope, confidence, and facts – are at the heart of my vision of peace.

We have heard the phrase "peace through strength" so often, its meaning has become blurred through overuse.

The time has come for America to recall once more the basic truths behind the familiar words.

Peace is made by the fact of strength – economic, military, and strategic.

Peace is lost when such strength disappears or – just as bad – is seen by an adversary as disappearing.

40 We must build peace upon strength. There is no other way. And the cold, hard fact of the matter is that our economic, military, and strategic strength under President Carter is eroding.

Only if we are strong will peace be strong.

Throughout Scripture, we see reference to peace-makers – those who through their actions – not just their words – take the material of this imperfect world and, with hard work and God's help, fashion from that material peace for the  
45 world.

In recent weeks you've been hearing from a lot of other people as to what they say I believe about peace. Well, tonight let me tell you what I believe.

Understanding of how peace is obtained – through competence and hard work, confidence, and patience – must guide and inspire this nation in the years ahead.

50 And at the center of such peace-making is the need to restore our historic American tradition of bipartisanship.

The cause of peace knows no party. The cause of peace transcends personal ambition. The cause of peace demands appeals for unity, not appeals to divisiveness.

These are truisms – which Mr. Carter has forgotten – or chosen to ignore.

Senator Ted Kennedy said earlier this year, in reference to him, that "no president should be reelected because he  
55 happened to be standing there when his foreign policy collapsed around him."

I cannot believe this administration's defense policies reflect the thinking of millions of rank-and-file Democrat party members. The Carter administration, dominated as it is by the McGovernite wing of the party, has broken sharply with the views and policies of Harry Truman, John Kennedy, and many contemporary Democratic leaders.

A great American tradition of bipartisanship – where domestic political differences end at the water's edge – has been  
60 lost at a time when we are faced with growing instability and crisis abroad. I believe the bipartisan tradition is too deep and sound to be destroyed by one man in the space of four years, but still, damage has been done and it will take a determined effort to repair it.

I pledge, if elected President, to take every step necessary to restore the bipartisan tradition in American national security and foreign policy; to work with congressional leaders of both parties to design and conduct a truly bipartisan  
65 tradition in American national security and foreign policy. And, I intend to have this bipartisan spirit reflected during my presidency in key foreign and defense policy appointive positions. As in the past, our domestic differences will end at the water's edge.

In the next few minutes, I would like to outline for you nine specific steps that I will take to put America on a sound, secure footing in the international arena. Working closely with the Congress, I propose to accomplish these steps with  
70 the support of an informed American public. Here are the steps:

1. An improved policy-making structure;
2. A clear approach to East-West relations;
3. A realistic policy toward our own Hemisphere;
4. A plan to assist African and Third World development;
- 75 5. A plan to send our message abroad;
6. A realistic strategic arms reduction policy;
7. A determined effort to strengthen the quality of our armed services;
8. Combating international terrorism;
9. Restoration of a margin of safety in our defense planning.

## 80 **Reorganizing the Policy-Making Structure**

The present administration has been unable to speak with one voice in foreign policy. This must change. My administration will restore leadership to U.S. foreign policy by organizing it in a more coherent way.

An early priority will be to make structural changes in the foreign policy-making machinery so that the Secretary of State will be the President's principal spokesman and adviser.

- 85 The National Security Council will once again be the coordinator of the policy process. Its mission will be to assure that the President receives an orderly, balanced flow of information and analysis. The National Security Adviser will work closely in teamwork with the Secretary of State and the other members of the Council.

My goal also will be to build and utilize a diplomatic corps with language proficiency, and organizational and professional skills, and to insure the safety of our representatives on duty overseas. We can restore pride and  
90 effectiveness in our foreign policy establishment by putting an end to kidnapping and murder of our public servants in service abroad.

### **Relations with Friends and Adversaries**

With effective machinery in place, we must first address the conduct of our relations with our allies, with the Soviet Union, and with the People's Republic of China.

- 95 Confidence and trust in the United States has fallen to an all-time low. This must be reversed. The United States has an important leadership role, and this role can be effective only if our alliances are cemented by unity of purpose and mutual respect.

Worldwide, our allies are stronger, most are robust and healthy. But the challenge of the 1980s is to assemble that strength in a manner which allows us to pursue the objective of peace together. If our alliances are divided, only our  
100 adversaries benefit.

With our allies, we can conduct a realistic and balanced policy toward the Soviet Union. I am convinced that the careful management of our relationship with the Soviet Union depends on a principled, consistent American foreign policy. We seek neither confrontation nor conflict, but to avoid both, we must remain strong and determined to protect our interests.

- 105 Our relationship with the People's Republic of China is in its beginning stages. It is one that can and will grow, and I repeat my intention to assist its rapid growth. There is an historic bond of friendship between the American and Chinese peoples, and I will work to amplify it wherever possible. Expanded trade, cultural contact and other arrangements will all serve the cause of preserving and extending the ties between our two countries.

### **A Realistic Policy for the Western Hemisphere**

- 110 No area of the world should have a higher priority than the place where we live, the Western Hemisphere. My administration will forge a new, more realistic policy toward our own Hemisphere as an integral part of my program for peace.

In four years, Mr. Carter's administration has managed to alienate our friends in the Hemisphere, to encourage the destabilization of governments, and to permit Cuban and Soviet influence to grow.

- 115 We must take steps to change the Carter administration's sorry record of vacillation, alienation, and neglect in the region.

Our relations must be solidly based on shared economic and security interests, not upon mutual recrimination and insult.

- We will initiate a program of intensive economic development with cooperating countries in the Caribbean. Many of  
120 these countries were given their independence and then promptly forgotten. In their natural resentment, some have turned to extremist models – fertile ground for Cuban meddling. Our programs will assist them both financially and technically to make the best use of their resources in agriculture, industry, and tourism.

Closer to home, I have spoken before of my belief that we should work toward a North American Accord with our

immediate neighbors, Mexico and Canada. This would take the form of broadened, more open lines of communication  
125 between us to seek ways in which we can strengthen our traditional friendship. If Canada and Mexico are stronger, our  
entire Hemisphere benefits.

### **A Policy to Assist African and Third World Development**

Our relationship with what has often been called the "Third World" must form an important part of any program for  
peace. A strong American economy and the spirit of our free enterprise system have a great deal to offer the poorer,  
130 less developed nations of the world. Africans, for example, look to us and our industrial allies for the dominant share  
of their export markets, for their investment capital, for official aid, and for technical know-how.

Yet, the flow of American investment to Africa continues at only a trickle, and our export promotion has been  
neglected.

My administration will recognize that investment from the private sector – know-how, technology, and marketing  
135 assistance – is the key to African development. Government will help promote this, not intervene to make it more  
difficult.

### **Sending the American Message**

Proclaiming the American message is a vital step in the program for peace.

I will strengthen the United States International Communication Agency, including the Voice of America. We will  
140 also strengthen Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty. Compared with other costs of our national security, the dollar  
amounts involved in this are small. What is needed most is a sense of conviction, the conviction that by carrying the  
American message abroad we strengthen the foundation of peace.

The current administration has permitted these vital efforts to decline.

For instance, the United States has been unable to broadcast to a majority of the Afghan people during these critical  
145 years, yet all the while Soviet-sponsored broadcasts were stirring up hatred toward America throughout the Islamic  
world.

For our long-term strategy, the communication of our ideals must become part of our strategy for peace.

We have a story to tell about the differences between the two systems now competing for the hearts and minds of  
mankind. There is the poverty and despair in the emerging nations who adopt Marxist totalitarianism and, by contrast,  
150 the freedom and prosperity of free market countries like Taiwan, South Korea, and Singapore.

### **A Realistic Strategic Arms Reduction Policy**

As the next requirement for a program for peace, I would assign a high priority to strategic arms reduction. I have  
repeatedly said in this campaign that I will sit down with the Soviet Union for as long as it takes to negotiate a  
balanced and equitable arms limitation agreement, designed to improve the prospects for peace. To succeed at arms  
155 control, however, we must first be honest with ourselves so that we can be convincing with the Soviets.

We must honestly face the facts of the arms competition in which we are caught. And, we must have a view of the  
world that is consistent with these facts and that does not change to suit different audiences. The Carter administration  
told Congress that the Soviet Union has long been investing about three times as much as we have in strategic arms  
and is expected to continue doing so, with or without SALT – the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty.

160 The Senate Foreign Relations Committee, controlled by a Democratic majority, in a narrow vote came out for the  
Treaty, but only after more than 20 changes had been made. Then, on December 20, 1979, the Senate Armed Services  
Committee, also controlled by a Democratic majority, voted 10-0 with seven abstentions to adopt a report which  
concluded – and I urge you to listen closely to these words: "that the SALT II Treaty as it now stands, is not in the  
national security interests of the United States of America." Finally, Mr. Carter could not even muster the necessary  
165 votes to pass his SALT Treaty in the United States Senate – yes, controlled by a Democratic majority – even before  
the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan.

It would appear that members of his own party are trying to tell Mr. Carter something is flawed in his approach to

arms limitation.

Please listen to the following statement:

170 "I must admit that I am not at all pleased that those of us expressing reservations and concern regarding the Treaty are characterized by some as warmongers."

Ladies and gentlemen, that statement was made by a Democratic Senator, a Marine veteran, a former astronaut, and a man who, in 1976, Jimmy Carter considered for his vice-presidential running mate – John Glenn of Ohio.

I think it's time that you, the American people, heard some straight talk about Mr. Carter's SALT II Treaty. The real  
175 truth about that Treaty is that Mr. Carter himself doomed its fate from the moment it was negotiated. It has been effectively blocked, not by Ronald Reagan, but by the United States Senate – your elected representatives from all over the nation, fulfilling their constitutional obligation to advise and consent on treaties. It has been critically denounced by dozens of the most eminent scholars and knowledgeable analysts, Democrat as well as Republican.

As president, I will make immediate preparation for negotiations on a SALT III Treaty. My goal is to begin arms  
180 reductions. My energies will be directed at reducing destructive nuclear weaponry in the world – and doing it in such a way as to protect fully the critical security requirements of our nation.

The way to avoid an arms race is not simply to let the Soviets race ahead. We need to remove their incentive to race ahead by making it clear to them that we can and will compete if need be, at the same time we tell them that we prefer to halt this competition and reduce the nuclear arsenals by patient negotiation.

### 185 **Restoring the Quality of our Armed Forces**

Restoring a sense of pride in their careers for the men and women in our armed services is another important element of my program for peace. We must direct our attention to the urgent manpower needs of our services. In defense matters, we hear much about hardware, not enough about people. The most important part of our military strength is the people involved – their quality, their training, and their welfare. We must do all in our power to make sure they are  
190 well-trained and well-equipped, that they feel proud and secure in their jobs and that their economic sacrifice is not out of proportion to what we ask of them. The economic policies of the Carter administration have made life especially difficult for our men and women in uniform and for their families.

We can reverse this situation. We can implement a program of compensation and benefits for military personnel that is comparable to what is available in the private sector. I will ask Congress to reinstate the G.I. Bill, a program which  
195 was directly responsible for the most rapid advance ever in the educational level of our population. Our country must provide our service personnel and their families with the security, the incentives, and the quality of life to compensate for the sacrifices they make on our behalf.

### **Combating International Terrorism**

Let us turn now to the need for the United States to assume a leadership role in curbing the spread of international  
200 terrorism. In sharing the outrage against terrorism, I will direct the resources of my administration against this scourge of civilization and toward expansion of our cooperation with other nations in combating terrorism in its many forms.

Terrorists seek to undermine, paralyze and, finally, destroy democratic governments. Israel has long been the victim of the most wanton acts of terrorism. Our allies in Europe and elsewhere have experienced terrorism with increasing frequency.

205 Terrorist organizations have enjoyed the support – covert and open – of the Soviet Union. In Iran, terrorism has been elevated to the level of national policy in the assault on the U.S. Embassy and the year-long captivity of our fellow-citizens. The tactics and philosophy of the Palestine Liberation Organization are also based on terrorism.

We must restore the ability of the C.I.A. and other intelligence agencies to keep us informed and forewarned about terrorist activities and we must take the lead in forging an international consensus that firmness and refusal to concede  
210 or to pay ransom are ultimately the only effective deterrents to terrorism.

### **Restoring Our Margin of Safety for Peace**

An important step – perhaps the most important of all – in a systematic program for peace is to restore the margin of safety for peace in our defense program by working closely with the Congress on a long-term program designed to meet our needs throughout this critical decade.

215 We must ask ourselves, is America more secure? Are we more confident of peace in the world than we were just four years ago? You know the answer to those questions: it is "no."

President Ford left a long-range defense program designed to keep America strong throughout the 80s. He recognized that, after years of negotiation, the Soviet Union was still bent upon surpassing the United States in overall strategic strength.

220 Wisely, he did not give up on arms control negotiations, but sought to provide us with an "insurance policy" in the form of a balanced program to keep us from falling behind.

But, the Carter administration, in its haste to make good on a reckless campaign promise to cut defense spending by billions of dollars, insisted on a policy of systematic concessions in defense and in arms control negotiations.

Now I've criticized the President, I will admit, for not having kept his campaign promises. But in this case, I'm sorry  
225 to say, he did keep his promise. He has weakened our defense capability and wiped out our margin of safety.

My task as President will be to strengthen our defenses and to lead our allies in a sustained and prudent effort to keep us, and the entire world, secure from confrontation. The preservation of peace will require the best resources we can marshal in this precarious decade. We can marshal them by reaffirming our national purpose, by reasserting our will and determination, and by regaining our economic vitality.

230 But each of these approaches to establishing a real peace must rest on the firm underpinning of a strong American economy.

Tragically, the weakened state of America's economy has significantly affected our ability to have the strongest possible foreign and defense policies. Maintaining our strength requires having our people in productive jobs, not in unemployment lines. It requires having our citizens confident that their future will not continue to be eroded away by  
235 incredibly high inflation and interest rates. It demands a strong dollar that encourages other nations to trust us.

Our inflation has especially undermined the dollar and has upset world markets. Our trading partners now question our reliability. And when they question our economic reliability, they begin to question our reliability as a strong ally.

Our failed energy policies have caused many of our allies to blame the United States for the world's energy problem as much as OPEC. Neglect of energy realities diminishes our diplomatic strength. But worse, our dependence on  
240 imported oil also weakens our strategic position.

We can indeed make peace. We can have the peace we want for ourselves and for our children. We are going to have to work hard and think hard and act with competence and with confidence – but it can be done.

And, as we work, we will have to be inspired by the vision of what our country means to us and to the world.

In recent weeks, I have had that vision of our nation's meaning brought to my attention in a very personal way.

245 The home in which Nancy and I are temporarily living in the Virginia countryside during this campaign is only a relatively short distance away from the home of a great American President, Thomas Jefferson.

In his first Inaugural Address, Jefferson spoke of "the preservation of the general government in its whole constitutional vigor, as the sheet-anchor of our peace at home and our safety abroad." He knew that peace in the world depended on the strength of our nation in its "whole constitutional vigor."

250 Jefferson loved America and the cause of peace too – too much ever to give in or appeal to fear and doubt.

I have known four wars in my lifetime – I don't want to see a fifth. I pray that never again will we bleed a generation of young Americans into the sands of island beachheads, the mud of European battlefields, or the rice paddies or jungles of Asia.

Whether we like it or not, it is our responsibility to preserve world peace because no one else can do it. We cannot

255 continue letting events and crises get out of control, we must – through sound management and planning – be in control so as to prevent being confronted by a crisis. This requires a sound economy, a strong national defense, and the will and determination to preserve peace and freedom.

Recently, I was on the campaign trail in the state where I was born and raised, Illinois.

260 Nancy and I traveled down through the central and southern part of the state by bus and car in a motorcade, stopping at lovely towns; we visited a coal mine typical of our industrial capacity; saw for the first time the tomb of Abraham Lincoln in Springfield. We toured a productive family farm and saw again the amazing gift for technology that the American farmer has and how much he contributes to eliminating hunger in the world. At the end of the day we stood on the banks of the Mississippi beneath that great silver arch there in St. Louis, Missouri.

265 It was a beautiful, crisp autumn day. Thousands of families had come out to see us at every stop. It was a moving experience, but I was most moved, as I always am, by the young people, the youngsters – from the little ones perched on their father's shoulders to the teenagers. You get a rebirth of optimism about our nation's future when you see their young faces.

They are what this campaign is all about. Renewing our spirit, securing their future in a world at peace is the legacy I would like to leave for them.

270 You know, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence said it isn't important that we leave wealth to our children, it is important that we leave them freedom. And we can only have that freedom if we continue to have peace throughout the world.

Thank you and good evening.  
(4297 words)

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