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Captive Nations Week, 1981

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Twenty-two years ago, by a joint resolution approved July 17, 1959 (73 Stat. 212), the Congress authorized and requested the President to proclaim the third week in July as Captive Nations Week.

Last January 20 saw again a change in Administration under our Constitution, the oldest written document of its type in continuous force in the world. The peaceful and orderly transfer of power in response to the sovereign will of our people is sometimes taken for granted by Americans. Yet events in some other areas of the world should remind us all of the vital, revolutionary ideal of our Founding Fathers: that governments derive their legitimacy from the consent of the peoples they govern.

During Captive Nations Week, Americans should realize our devotion to the ideal of government by consent, a devotion that is shared by millions who live in nations dominated today by a foreign military power and an alien Marxist-Leninist ideology.

This week, Americans should recall the series of historical tragedies—beginning with the broken promises of the Yalta Conference—that led to the denial of the most elementary forms of personal freedom and human dignity to millions in Eastern Europe and Asia.

In recent years, we have seen successful attempts to extend this oppression to Africa, Latin America and Asia—most recently in the brutal suppression of national sovereignty in Afghanistan and attempts to intimidate Poland.

During Captive Nations Week, we Americans must reaffirm our own tradition of self-rule and extend to the peoples of the Captive Nations a message of hope—hope founded in our belief that free men and women will ultimately prevail over those who deny individual rights and preach the supremacy of the state; hope in our conviction that the human spirit will ultimately triumph over the cult of the state.

While we can be justly proud of a government that is responsive to our people, we cannot be complacent. Captive Nations Week provides us with an opportunity to reaffirm publicly our commitment to the ideals of freedom and by so doing maintain a beacon of hope for oppressed peoples everywhere.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RONALD REAGAN, President of the United States of America, do hereby designate the week beginning on July 19, 1981, as Captive Nations Week.

I invite the people of the United States to observe this week with appropriate ceremonies and activities and to reaffirm their dedication to the ideals which unite us and inspire others.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 30th day of June, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-one, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and fifth.

Ronald Reagan