

## **Remarks at a Reception for Members of the American Community in Beijing, China**

April 28, 1984

And they thought I couldn't erase the deficit. [Laughter] Well, thank all of you for a very warm welcome. Nancy and I are delighted to be with you this evening. We've come to Beijing to strengthen America's ties, as you know, with China, something that each one of you has been doing very well already.

Now, about this honorary presidency: I greet it with mixed emotions -- [laughter] -- because once about 25 years after I'd gotten out of my alma mater, they had me back at commencement and gave me an honorary degree. And on that occasion, a sense of guilt that I'd been nursing for 25 years rose up and almost choked me, because I'd figured the first one they gave me was honorary. [Laughter] Now, if it's this easy, where will you all be along about next November? [Laughter]

Well, I'm sure that sometimes life as an American in Beijing can present challenges. But whatever difficulties you may face here, each of you is making history.

For more than two decades, as you know, the United States and China had no relations whatsoever. And then in 1972, President Nixon's trip to China and the Shanghai Communique broke that long silence. Our relationship since that time has been a force for peace in the world and will continue to serve that end. But at the same time, China and the United States recognize that we have many other areas of mutual interest, particularly since 1978, when Chinese leaders decided to foster the growth of the Chinese economy and open more to the West.

Since then, we've expanded our cultural exchanges. Last year, 150,000 Americans, as you probably know better than I do, visited China, and today more than 10,000 Chinese students are studying in the United States. And I had the pleasure of meeting with a small group of those just before coming here, and they were fine young people.

Just as significant, we've begun to form new economic bonds. Today more than a hundred American firms have offices in Beijing, and the Bank of China has an office in Manhattan. Just a few years ago, both would have been unthinkable.

Our visit here is intended to demonstrate the maturing of U.S.-China relations through four American administrations, and I think it's doing just that. Thursday, I met President Li; Friday, I had meetings with Premier Zhao and General Secretary Hu. And earlier today, I had extensive discussions with Chairman Deng.

While respecting the differences between us, the Chinese leaders and I have agreed to focus on all that unites us -- our determination to resist foreign threats, the fundamental desire of our people to earn their livings and raise their families in prosperity and peace. The Chinese have made it clear that they want to multiply the economic ties between us.

And we, in turn, have sought ways to promote the equitable export of high technology to China and work to promote more Chinese-American joint ventures.

When I return to the Great Hall on Monday morning, we'll have important new agreements to sign. And when I leave this country on Tuesday, the U.S.-China partnership will be stronger than ever.

Each of you is playing a vital role in this new and historic relationship. The diplomats among you are seeking new areas of agreement between our two countries and implementing the many agreements that we've already made. And those of you in business are making possible the export of raw materials and manufactures from China to America and the shipment to China of many American goods including products of our technology.

Many business people are involved in joint ventures like this dazzling new hotel. The expansion of these commercial ties is due in no small part to the efforts of the National Council for U.S.-China Trade.

Those of you who are teachers or students are helping the Chinese to understand not just the strength and prosperity of the United States but the open and peace-loving character of the American people. Day by day, each of you is helping to build a firm friendship between the most prosperous nation and the most populous nation on Earth. On behalf of all Americans, believe me, I thank you.

Now, I know that many of you haven't been home in some time, so I thought you'd like to hear that it's beautiful springtime in America. The magnolias are out in Washington. The azaleas are in full bloom in California. Of course, you know that that doesn't mean all that it sounds like, because those of us who are Californians know the truth of a statement made by the great comic, Joe Friscoe, once. Joe said that ``California is the only place in the world," he said, ``where you can fall asleep under a rosebush in full bloom and freeze to death." [Laughter]

Well, earlier this month, I threw out the first ball at the opening game of the Orioles in Baltimore. Then the Orioles lost the game. [Laughter] Since then, I haven't had any offers to turn pro. [Laughter]

The economy is still expanding briskly with leading indicators showing the expansion is here to stay. And polls tell us the national mood is the brightest that it's been in 5 years. Americans this springtime are proud of themselves, their jobs, and their country, and they're facing the future with confidence and courage.

So, as you go about your work here in this great city, you can rest assured that folks back in the States are doing just fine. And you can take pride in the knowledge that, although you're far from home, you're advancing the causes of world peace and international prosperity that are so close to your country's heart.

Before I leave, I just have to tell you a little incident. You all know, of course, about the Grenada rescue mission. And, incidentally, to those who have been trying to call it something ulterior like an invasion or something else, we had the great thrill -- Nancy and I -- of having several hundred of those medical students from Grenada who were rescued by our Armed Forces at the South Lawn of the White House and some of the first returnees among the troops of all four branches who were part of that rescue mission there.

And it would have put a lump in your throat to see these young people -- and many of them frankly telling you that they were from an era where they didn't look with kindness on the uniform; they didn't take to it. But they couldn't keep their hands off those youngsters their own age there on the South Lawn, and they would come hug them, come back and tell us, "They saved our lives" and all.

Well, some days later, I got a message from the Armed Forces Journal in the Pentagon. They'd received a letter from a young marine pilot of a Cobra helicopter who had been at Grenada and then went on to Beirut. And after he got there, he wrote back to the Armed Forces Journal. And he said that every story that he read in the press about that incident, in every story, they said Grenada produces more nutmeg than any other spot on Earth. And he decided it appeared so often, it was a code. And he was going to break the code.

So, he wrote back to say he had broken the code. He said Grenada does produce more nutmeg than any other spot on Earth. The Soviets and the Cubans are trying to take Grenada. He said, "You can't have good eggnog without nutmeg." [Laughter] And he said, "You can't have Christmas without eggnog. So, the Soviets and the Cubans were out to steal Christmas." [Laughter] And his sixth and final point was, he said, "We stopped them." [Laughter]

I know that we have to move on here, but this has been most wonderful, and I thank you very much for the honor that you've done me and for giving me the seal. And now, just as soon as I find out from the Treasury, I'll settle some other problems -- [laughter] -- that have been bothering us.

Thank you all very much, and God bless you.

Note: The President spoke at 7:10 p.m. in the atrium at the Great Wall Hotel. Attending the reception were members of the American Club, a group of Americans living in China. The President was introduced by William Clarke, president of the club, who presented the President with a chop bearing the official American Club seal.

The President's opening comment regarding the deficit was in response to Mr. Clarke's remark that the President could issue orders and have access to the club's treasury with the chop.