



Captive Nations Week, 1989

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Each July, we Americans celebrate our Nation's independence and the blessings of self-government. As we give thanks for the rights and freedoms that citizens of this Nation have enjoyed for more than 200 years, we also recall our obligation to speak out for oppressed peoples around the world. We thus pause during Captive Nations Week to remember in a special way those peoples who suffer from foreign domination and from ideologies that are inimical to the ideas of national sovereignty and individual liberty.

Today, the leaders of the Soviet Union and other Communist governments are discovering that the voices of those who long for freedom and self-determination cannot be silenced. Around the world, men and women in captive nations are calling for recognition of their basic human rights. Their calls—the undeniable expression of just aspirations—are beginning to be heard.

In Afghanistan, the nightmarish years of Soviet occupation are over, and the Afghan people's demand for self-determination is drawing closer to realization. Unfortunately, a decisive end to the Afghans' long ordeal remains elusive while a puppet regime in Kabul continues the proxy devastation of their war-ravaged homeland.

In Africa, the people of Angola have a real chance to find peace after years of violent struggle against the ruling Marxist-Leninist regime. Our hopes for national reconciliation in Angola will remain tempered, however, as long as armed Cuban mercenaries continue to stalk the forests and veldt of that land and other countries on the African continent.

Communist expansionism has been frustrated in Southeast Asia, and today there is new hope that the people of Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam will regain some day their long-denied political and religious freedom. Such hope has also returned for many of our neighbors to the south. In Nicaragua and other Latin American nations, popular resistance to attempts at repression by local dictators—as well as resistance to political and military interference from Cuba and the Soviet Union—has proved to be formidable.

In Eastern Europe, even as we see rays of light in some countries, we must recognize that brutal repression continues in other parts of the region, including the persecution of ethnic and religious minorities.

This week, we recall with deep sadness the infamous Molotov-Ribbentrop pact between Nazi Germany and the U.S.S.R. that doomed Poland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania to dismemberment and foreign domination. The United States refuses to accept the subsequent incorporation by the Soviet Union of the Baltic States during World War II. Since their forcible annexation in 1940, the people of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia have faced political oppression, religious persecution, and repression of their national consciousness. But decades of oppression have not broken the great spirit of the Baltic people and other victims of Soviet domination.

Hundreds of thousands of men and women around the world continue to demonstrate publicly their desire for liberty and democratic government, demanding freedom of speech, assembly, and movement, as well as the freedom to practice their religious beliefs without fear of persecution.

Their voices are being heard; there have been improvements in human rights practices by the ruling regimes in many of these countries. But justice demands that more positive steps be taken. The fundamental rights and dignity of individuals must be recognized in law and respected in practice; the peoples living in captive nations not only ask for but are entitled to lasting protection of their God-given rights.

The United States shall continue to call upon all governments and states to uphold the letter and the spirit of the United Nations Charter and the Helsinki Final Act until freedom and independence have been achieved for all captive nations.

Affirming all Americans' determination to keep faith with those who are denied their fundamental rights, the Congress, by Joint Resolution approved July 17, 1959 (73 Stat. 212), has authorized and requested the President to issue a proclamation designating the third week in July of each year as "Captive Nations Week."

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE BUSH, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim the week beginning July 16, 1989, as Captive Nations Week. I call upon the people of the United States to observe this week with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities, and I urge them to reaffirm their devotion to the aspirations of all peoples for justice, self-determination, and liberty.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this sixth day of July, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-nine, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and fourteenth.

George Bush