

to celebrate their rich cultural heritage and our Nation's continued friendship with the people of the Emerald Isle.

Barbara joins me in sending our best wishes to all for an enjoyable and memo-

rable St. Patrick's Day. God bless you.

GEORGE BUSH

Note: An original was not available for verification of the content of this message.

Remarks Upon Presenting the Presidential Medal of Freedom to Margaret Thatcher

March 7, 1991

The President. Welcome, welcome, Margaret. Please be seated. Ladies and gentlemen and so many distinguished guests, and members of this administration, and friends of what is indeed a special relationship. Particularly to Sir Denis Thatcher and Mark and Diane Thatcher, and above all, the greengrocer's daughter who shaped a nation to her will.

America's highest civilian award is the Medal of Freedom. And we're here to present it to one of the greatest leaders of our time. For over 11 of the most extraordinary years in British history, she helped freedom lift the peoples of Europe and the world. Former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, we are delighted you are with us today.

She's been called the Iron Lady—irrepressible, at times incorrigible, always indomitable. [*Laughter*] And she summoned the best in the human spirit, speaking for our values and our dreams. Once she said, "Turn if you like; the lady's not for turning." And she wasn't. Instead, the free world turned to her—for counsel, for courage, for leadership that proclaimed a belief in right and wrong—not a devotion to what is popular.

It has been said that great leaders reflect their time. Margaret Thatcher did. She also transformed her time as few leaders ever have. Consider the 1980's and early nine-ties—a golden age of liberty. Remember what she meant and how she mattered. Hers was not merely among Britain's finest hours. She helped mold perhaps democracy's finest era.

Think first of what she meant to the place

that Shakespeare called "this blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England." She didn't create spirit in the British people; it's been there for a millennium. But Margaret Thatcher believed in it and once again unleashed it.

She cherished human dignity and self-determination. So, when an antidemocratic military moved against the Falkland Islands, Britain met the challenge. And she sought to decrease what government must do and increase what the individual may do. So she put private roofs over British heads—and restored economic pride to British hearts. Like her successor, John Major, she believed passionately in free enterprise. And so she used it to renew British initiative and national pride. Margaret Thatcher didn't merely make Britain a leader in the new world order; she defined the essence of the United Kingdom.

Think next of what she meant to us—what she meant to America. Mrs. Thatcher understood the ties that bind our nations—moral and economic, political and spiritual—so she defended America, helped inspire it. No country could have had a more valiant comrade in arms. No President—as another great leader, Ronald Reagan, could attest—could ask for a better friend.

We will never forget her courage in helping forge a great coalition against the aggression which brutalized the Gulf. Nor will I forget one special phone conversation that I had with the Prime Minister. In the early days of the Gulf crisis—I'm not sure you

remember this one, Margaret—in the early days of the Gulf crisis I called her to say that though we fully intended to interdict Iraqi shipping, we were going to let a single vessel heading for Oman enter port down at Yemen—going around Oman down to Yemen—let it enter port without being stopped. And she listened to my explanation, agreed with the decision, but then added these words of caution—words that guided me through the Gulf crisis, words I'll never forget as long as I'm alive. "Remember, George," she said, "this is no time to go wobbly." [Laughter]

Those who work with me in the White House know we use that expression often and have used it during some troubling days. And never, ever will it be said that Margaret Thatcher went wobbly. [Laughter]

Finally, think of what Margaret Thatcher meant to the world. Her resolution and dedication set an example for all of us. She showed that you can't lock people behind walls forever when moral conviction uplifts their souls. And she knew tyranny is powerless against the primacy of the heart.

Margaret Thatcher helped bring the cold war to an end, helped the human will outlast bayonets and barbed wire. She sailed freedom's ship wherever it was imperiled. Prophet and crusader, idealist and realist, this heroic woman made history move her way.

Prime Minister, there will always be an England, but there can never be another Margaret Thatcher. Thank you for all you've done.

And now I have the great privilege to ask Commander Ross to read the citation on the Medal of Freedom. We're delighted you're here.

Commander Ross. The President of the United States of America awards this Presidential Medal of Freedom to the Right Honorable Margaret Thatcher. Three times elected Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Margaret Thatcher led her country with fearlessness, determination, integrity, and a true vision for Britain. In over a decade of achievement, she extended prosperity at home and made signal contributions to transatlantic partnership, the unity of the West, and overcoming the postwar

division of Europe. With a strong sense of her nation's history and of the principles which brought it to greatness, she restored confidence to the British people.

The United States honors a steadfast and true ally and a firm friend of political and economic freedom throughout the world.

Signed, George Bush, The White House, Washington, DC, 7 March 1991.

Mrs. Thatcher. Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen, I am so very honored to receive the Presidential Medal of Freedom of the greatest country in the free world. And thank you, Mr. President, for the wonderful things you have said, including that wobbly bit. [Laughter]

It's a double honor to receive this medal from the hands of a President whose steadfast leadership has just won the victory of freedom that will rank with the greatest in history. And I am especially moved to receive it in the White House, which in addition to its powerful historical association has many sterling memories for me personally. It was here with you and your predecessor that I embarked on the adventure of restoring the economy and the defenses of the free world against the many threats that faced us a decade ago.

We've overcome many difficulties since those early days and faced many crises. The onward march of freedom is not inevitable; it has its enemies, as we know. But when in our time freedom came to be tested, there were no faint hearts in the White House—only great hearts. Great hearts who had been wise enough to keep their sword and armor in case of danger. Great hearts who had harnessed the genius of scientists so that your armed forces had the very best equipment. Great hearts who knew that the sovereignty of freedom and justice had to be upheld not by pious sentiments or platitudes but by staunch and valiant deeds of men and women.

The decision to use force is not easy to take, either for politicians or for generals, for whose performance in the campaign I have boundless admiration.

I've been involved in taking three such decisions, some of which you referred to, Mr. President. First, it fell to me to send armed forces 8,000 miles to recover the

Falkland Islands from an earlier aggressor. And then with President Reagan, to allow the use of air bases in Britain for the raid on Libya. We in Britain have experienced and still experience terrorism and knew someone had to stand up against it. And then, third, Mr. President, I was with you at Aspen when you made the historic decision that Saddam's seizure of Kuwait would not stand.

I wish only that the Iraqi dictator could have seen your somber determination on that occasion. Much grief to his countrymen, much pain to his neighbors and to us might then have been avoided.

Like you, Mr. President, I hate violence. And there's only one thing I hate even more—giving in to violence. We didn't give in to it. The battle of Desert Storm has not only liberated Kuwait and her people; it has sent an awesome warning to any other dictator who sets out to extinguish the rights of others for his own evil gain. The sanction of force must not be left to tyrants who have no moral scruples about its use.

I want to pay a grateful tribute on behalf of myself, the British people, and the British soldiers who fought in the field, to the statesmen and generals who conceived, planned, and executed a great victory with a minimum of allied casualties. We and the world are in their debt.

But freedom has won victories in peace as well. The way of life and prosperity of Western Europe was a constant reproach to the poverty of communism in Eastern Europe. Now that the shackles of communism have been removed from Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Bulgaria, they are now free to rejoin Western Europe—something which would have seemed impossible 2 or 3 years ago.

The great principles of freedom, justice, and democracy, which are the inheritance

of both our countries, find their most eloquent expression in the American Declaration of Independence. As one of your statesmen pointed out, it was not a document designed for one generation, but, and I quote, "For posterity unlimited, undefined, endless and perpetual." And so it has been. And so it may ever be.

Mr. President, once again, its truths have been upheld. Once again, the strong bond between our two countries in peace have been reaffirmed as it has been in war. The peoples of the alliance you, sir, formed will feel proud not only because the battles they fought were won but because they know that what you did was morally right. Their victory will bring hope to other oppressed peoples that they, too, one day may be free.

It is in that spirit, Mr. President, that I accept this award—not on behalf of myself only but on behalf of my country and remembering the people struggling toward freedom in the Baltic States, remembering those striving to make freedom work in Eastern Europe, and those trying to negotiate a free South Africa in peace. And on behalf of those throughout history who never having known freedom have, nonetheless, died for it. And for us here today.

Mr. President, this is a very proud day. May I thank you for this award. May I say that we salute America and we salute you, Mr. President, and all the things you stand for. Thank you.

Note: The President spoke at 5:30 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. During the ceremony, the following persons were referred to: Sir Denis Thatcher, husband of former Prime Minister Thatcher, and their children, Mark and Diane; Prime Minister John Major of the United Kingdom; Jake Ross, Navy aide to the President; and President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.