

(In Los Angeles)
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Excerpts of remarks by the Hon. Ronald Reagan,
 former Governor of California,
 to the Southern Republican Conference Banquet,
 Albert Thomas Convention Center, Houston, Texas,
 Saturday, December 13, 1975.

"It's a pleasure to be here this evening. We go back a lot of years
 and a lot of campaigns. I've spoken in most of your states and know that
 we share the same basic beliefs and philosophy of government.

"Those beliefs have persuaded me to enter this race for our Party's
 Presidential nomination.

"We are at a point where the basic tenets of our Republican philosophy
 must be restated with clarity and in positive terms. Eleven months from
 now, the people of America will make a choice between our candidate and one
 selected by the other party to represent its point of view.

"Too often in recent years we have glossed over the differences that
 separate our two parties. Too often the people have been offered only a
 choice between Tweedledum and Tweedledee. And there have been those who
 have unkindly said there have been times when the choice has been between
 Tweedledum and Tweedledum.

"Some years ago, I left the Democratic Party because it no longer stood
 for things I could believe in. The Republican Party did, and I hope it will
 continue to do so.

"A political party dies when it forsakes its basic beliefs. Our party
will die if it becomes a 'yes, but' version of the Democrats -- a party that,
 instead of saying 'no' to the social tinkering and the excesses of the
 Democrats, says 'Yes, but a little slower', or 'Yes, but a little less', or
 'Yes, but we can do those same things better'. The people of this nation
 are looking for more than that today.

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be leveled and the earth plowed and sown with seed so it would never again be planted.

"It must be our commitment to spend whatever is necessary to remain strong to consider our nation's own self-interests first in international dealings. Not at the expense of others and not without generosity to those who need a helping hand, but always with the realization that our self-interests must not be cast aside just for the sake of making a deal.

"This is not jingoism or gunboat diplomacy. It is common sense recognition of the need in a hostile world for self-protection. It means keeping the Panama Canal, which we have managed with fairness to all the world and which is essential to the defense of the Western Hemisphere against those who might have designs on us or intentions for global domination. In short, we bought it, we paid for it, it is sovereign U.S. territory and we should keep it. Our stewardship has been beneficial to all and more so than the people of Panama, who, because of it, enjoy one of the highest standards of living in all of Latin America. The U.S. presently has plans for a billion dollar modernization of the canal which would mean a great stimulus to the economy of Panama and an increased prosperity for the Panamanian people.

"All of this is being held up by a pro-communist dictator who seized power eight years ago by overthrowing the duly elected government of Panama. In eight years, there have been no elections and no civil rights. There has been instead censorship of the press, poverty for the people and totalitarianism.

"We have a sovereign right to the canal zone, affirmed by our own Supreme Court and acknowledged by an elected government of Panama. We also have a responsibility to the free world to keep that canal out of the hands of a ruthless and irresponsible dictator.

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best interest, nor in the interest of freedom to ease our restrictions on trade and diplomatic relations with Castro's Cuba until we see positive signs that he no longer will allow his nation to be a convenient Caribbean outpost for the Soviet Union's military machine and that he will no longer plot trouble in the Americas and in new third world nations such as Angola.

"Speaking of Angola, it is ironic that the same Soviet Union that talked loftily of the rights of other nations at the Helsinki conference is today pouring millions of dollars worth of ammunition and supplies to communist forces in that newly-freed land. It seems to me the cause of freedom would be well served if we and our allies would grant recognition to the non-communist regime of Angola providing it with the legitimacy it needs in the eyes of its neighbors.

"We cannot abdicate our free world leadership even though it was not sought by us. Nor can we deny our interest in protecting the fragile peace in the Middle East. We are, and must remain, committed to a strong NATO alliance in Europe and to the fact that we are a power in the Pacific.

"To those who say we shouldn't be interfering in the problems of other nations around the rim of the Pacific Basin, the answer is -- in years past we did interfere and by so doing caused some of those very problems.

"It was in the days of Camelot -- the New Frontier -- that the U.S. used its power to force the anti-communist government of Laos to give in to communist insurgents and accept them as part of a coalition government. Now, in the long established communist pattern, the coalition is no more. Without regard to treaties and agreements, the communist Pathet Lao has taken over that country. Once again the curtain has come down on freedom.

"If now there is to be talk of extending an olive branch to Hanoi, well so let it happen only after there has been a full accounting of our men missing in action. And we might well ask assurance that the rights of our erstwhile alive will be guaranteed. Basic morality demands that we reaffirm our determination to stand

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