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Ronald Reagan

*Remarks on Arrival at Shannon Airport*



delivered 1 June 1984, Shannon, County Clare, Ireland

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President and Mrs. Hillery, Prime Minister and Mrs. FitzGerald, distinguished guests, and I want to add with the greatest of pleasure -- I'll try -- A chairde Gaeil [Irish friends]. How did I do? But on behalf of Nancy and myself, thank you very much for your warm and wonderful Irish welcome.

We're beginning a mission to strengthen ties of friendship and cooperation among the world's leading democracies. It's our deepest hope and our earnest conviction that we can make genuine progress together toward a safer world, a more prosperous world, a far better world.

To be able to begin our journey on this isle of wondrous beauty, with a countryside green as no other place seems to be, to be able to stand on the soil of my ancestors among all of you is, for me, a very special gift. I want you to know that for this great-grandson of Ireland, this is a moment of joy.

And I'm returning not only to my own roots, I'm returning to America's roots. So much of what America means and stands for we owe to you -- to your indomitable spirit and generosity and to your impassioned love for liberty and independence.

There are few people on Earth whose hearts burn more with the flame of freedom than the Irish. George Washington said, "When our friendless standard was first unfurled for resistance, who were the strangers who first mustered around our staff? And when it reeled in fight, who more bravely sustained it than Erin's generous sons?" You did.



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America has always been a haven of opportunity for those seeking a new life. They, in turn, have given to us, they have shaped us and enriched us. And from the beginning, when that first large party of your ancestors arrived at Newport News in 1621, your Irish blood has enriched America.

With courage and determination, you helped our struggling colony break free. And then, day by day, by the sweat of your brow and with an ache in your back, you helped turn our small, undeveloped country into a great and mighty nation. Your hearts and minds shaped our literary and cultural history. Your smiles, mirth, and song lifted our spirits with laughter and music.

And always, you reminded us by your deep faith that wisdom and truth, love and beauty, grace and glory begin in Him -- our Father, our Creator, our loving God. No wonder -- No wonder we've been blessed all these years by what some call "the luck of the Irish."

Today, the sons and daughters of our first Irish settlers number 40 million strong. Speaking for them, and even for those not so fortunate, may I say: We're still part of you; we have and will remain true to your values; long live Irish-American friendship.

The challenges to peace and freedom that we face today are neither easy nor free from danger. But face them we must, and surmount them we can, providing that we remember the rights of individual liberty, and of government resting on the consent of the governed, are more than the sole position of a chosen few; they are universal rights, gifts from God to men and women everywhere. And those rights are a crucial anchor for stability in a troubled world, a world where peace is threatened by governments that oppress their citizens, renounce God, and prey on their neighbors. Edmund Burke's warning of nearly two centuries ago holds true today: "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing."

Well, Ireland today is undertaking important responsibilities in international councils, and through your peacekeeping forces, to help reduce the risks of war. The United States bears a heavy burden for strengthening economic development and preserving peace, and we're deeply grateful for Ireland's contributions.

Americans are people of peace. We've known and suffered the trauma of war, witnessed the fruits of reconciliation. And that is why we pray tolerance and reconciliation will one day unite the Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland in a spirit of communion and community. And that is why those who advocate violence or engage in terrorism in North Ireland will never be welcome in the United States.

Looking to the future, I believe there's reason for optimism and confidence. America's economic expansion can and should bring more jobs and opportunities to your people. And the more than 300 United States companies that are based here demonstrate our clear commitment to a future of peace and well-being for all the people of Ireland, North and South.



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So, thank you, again, for making Nancy and me feel so welcome. And may I speak for so many of your families and friends in America when I say the words:

"Ireland, oh, Ireland . . . Country of my fathers . . . Mother of my yearning, love of all my longings, home of my heart . . ."

God bless you.