

Remembering the Attacks 10 Years Ago

Contributed by George Landrith
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When Ronald Reagan was asked what his plan was for dealing with the communist threat, he responded, "We win, they lose." Those four words led to an impressive victory for human freedom around the world. To this day, there are boulevards named after Reagan all over the world in nations that were once dominated and enslaved by communism's hatred of freedom and lust for control.

In an extemporaneous moment at ground zero, President George Bush said, "I can hear you! The rest of the world hears you! And the people who knocked these buildings down will hear all of us soon!" Because reasonable people can argue in good faith with some of Bush's decisions in his efforts to protect America, it is perhaps too easy to forget some of the unassailable truths we learned or were reminded of on September 11, 2001. When Ronald Reagan was asked what his plan was for dealing with the communist threat, he responded, "We win, they lose." Those four words led to an impressive victory for human freedom around the world. To this day, there are boulevards named after Reagan all over the world in nations that were once dominated and enslaved by communism's hatred of freedom and lust for control.

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First, America has enemies because America stands for freedom. We can waste time in self-flagellation trying to figure out why evil terrorist troglodytes hate us and we can even blame ourselves for their hateful, murderous actions. But we should accept the undeniable truth is that we attract the hatred of those who hate freedom.

Second, America must actively defend itself from those who hate freedom and therefore hate us. We have the right to do so. We do not need to die at the hands of cowardly terrorist madmen to prove we are the champions of freedom. They are working relentlessly to destroy us. Are we working tirelessly to defend ourselves and defeat them?

Third, we must be patient and be prepared for a long battle on the way to victory. Because America responded correctly after the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 and mobilized to protect itself and the cause of freedom, the course of history was changed for the better. America was the beacon of hope to freedom loving peoples in every oppressed land. After a long struggle, Soviet communism collapsed, the world became safer, and Russians and Eastern Europeans began to enjoy more freedom.

Likewise, the events of September 11, 2001, or more precisely, how we respond to those events, will shape the 21st Century and beyond. Defeating communism took more than four decades. Defeating this new variant of murderous freedom-hating thugs will likely take as long and could take longer -- this enemy does not have obvious national boundaries and the movement of its troops cannot be traced by satellite.

Fourth, there are those in the world who are not obviously troglodytes, but who quietly support and aid these murderous neanderthals. We must stop them from lending aid. Those who aid the troglodytes toward their goal must be stopped -- diplomatically if possible, with force, if necessary.

To President Reagan, it was clear that America is exceptional and that we have an extraordinary role to play in the world if the cause of human freedom is to advance. Sadly, in contrast, Obama does not see America in the same light. Sure, America has its flaws, but Obama seems far too quick to apologize for imagined foibles and too reluctant to acknowledge

our true strengths and virtues. In his own words, Obama believes "in American exceptionalism, just as ... Greeks believe in Greek exceptionalism"; -- which is to say that he does not believe that America is exceptional in any important way.

America is exceptional! Part of the reason for that exceptionalism is that America has not only defended its own interests, but it has also championed freedom for others. Today, Russians and Eastern Europeans enjoy freedoms they could not have dreamed of when President Reagan was first elected. These once oppressed peoples were not Reagan's enemy. They, too, longed for freedom. They were victims of communism. Reagan understood this. And his battle was not with the oppressed, but with their oppressors.

Likewise, today Americans understand that Arabs and Muslims are not our enemy. But their oppressors -- Al Qaeda, Hamas, the Muslim Brotherhood, Hezbollah, and other terrorists -- are. America has no quarrel with Muslims or Arabs. Many of our brave fighting men and women are of Arab descent. Like the Russians and Eastern Europeans who now enjoy more freedom, the Arab world will experience greater freedom and opportunity when the oppressive troglodytes are finally defeated.

We look back on the "greatest generation" with admiration because they faced the enemies that confronted them and soundly defeated them even at great personal sacrifice. Will future generations will look back on us as another "greatest generation" because we defeated the barbarians at the gate no matter how long it takes -- or as unworthy laggards of the American dream of freedom and opportunity because we lost interest in defending freedom?

We must maintain the purpose and resolve we felt on September 11, 2001. We cannot allow that day to become a distant memory or merely a footnote in history. It must continually motivate us to champion freedom and to defeat those who intend to rule the world with fear and violence and who plan to subjugate our children to their intolerant, violent ideology of hatred.