

# Ronald Reagan Presidential Library

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Speech Drafts: Records, 1981-1989

**Folder Title:** Luncheon with Regional Editors &  
Broadcasters on Budget & Nicaragua (Rohrabacher/White)  
04/18/1985 (2 of 2)

**Box:** 201

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*Last Updated: 04/08/2025*

*MAS*

(Rohrabacher/BE)

April 16, 1985

5:00 p.m.

PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS: LUNCHEON WITH REGIONAL EDITORS  
AND BROADCASTERS ON BUDGET AND NICARAGUA  
THURSDAY, APRIL 18, 1985

Thank you and welcome to the White House. I'm always pleased to be able to meet with you who operate in a business in which every minute counts, where everyone struggles to maintain the highest quality, while at the same time fighting against an ever-approaching deadline.

Making a decision under the pressure of a deadline can be helpful. America is facing a deadline of sorts in the form of an ever-increasing national debt.

With the pressure on to come to grips with this problem, we have an opportunity to make real progress cutting spending, progress that should have been made long ago. It's not going to be easy. We went the extra mile to reach an agreement with the Republican leadership of the Senate. I agreed to compromise concerning defense and other domestic spending issues. It may be hard to do, but it's about time everybody gritted their teeth and started being part of the solution rather than the problem.

The choice is not, as some would have us believe, between cutting spending and raising taxes. The public doesn't want tax increases and, more to the point, tax increases will not lower the level of deficit spending. Tax increases will not reduce Government's demand on the private economy, which is the core of the problem. Tax increases would only serve to kick us back into recession, leading to higher deficits.

When it comes to taxes, what we need is simplification and reform, not increases. I think we can and will simplify the system and significantly reduce personal and corporate tax rates. We can lay the foundation for lower deficits and a vigorous, expanding economy. I see a consensus building on the idea of tax simplification. If we can also agree on reasonable cuts in spending, there is every reason for optimism about America's economic future.

The news media is a vital part of decisions like this. Through you, people are made aware of the issues at hand, the alternatives, and the consequences.

Your function is vital to the viability of democracy. Without a free press, democracy won't work and all of our other rights are in jeopardy. Thomas Jefferson is often quoted as saying, ". . . if it were left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers, or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter." Jefferson, of course, said that before he was President.

One of the first institutions to be attacked by tyrants, whether they be dictators of the left or right, is the press. We've seen this happen far too often -- it is happening in Nicaragua today.

It should not be forgotten that the one incident that precipitated the uprising against the Somoza dictatorship was the assassination of Pedro Chamorro, editor of La Prensa, the nation's largest and fiercely independent newspaper. Yet control of the press under the Somoza dictatorship, which was decried by

the Sandinistas, was miniscule compared to the iron-fisted censorship now endured today by Nicaraguan journalists.

A book entitled, "Nicaragua: Christians Under Fire," authored by a former editorial page editor of La Prensa, details this tragedy. It describes attacks by Sandinista mobs, official closings, the censorship of the news, the kidnapping and beatings of reporters. It should be on the reading list of every journalist.

Pedro Chamorro, Jr., who took his father's place as editor of La Prensa, could no longer stomach the insidious destruction of press freedom and the suppression of other fundamental human rights. He fled the country. Today, news in Nicaragua is as controlled as that in any Eastern European state. Even the broadcast of religious services has been interfered with. The papers are filled with what the communists consider to be good news. And as Senator Pat Moynihan once observed, countries with newspapers filled with good news are likely to have jails filled with good people.

And the jails are being filled with good people. Recently, 10 or 11 members of the Social Christian party were rounded up and imprisoned, charged with being counter-revolutionaries. To force them to confess, more than a hundred family members of these political prisoners were also arrested. That's a tactic the Sandinistas learned from Cuba. That's the kind of country the Sandinistas are building.

Nicaragua is following a pattern we've seen before. Bigger jails are being built. They're called relocation camps.

Refugees are pouring out of the country. What we are witnessing in Nicaragua is the imposition, with ever-increasing intensity, of a pro-Soviet dictatorship, serving as a base camp for the spread of communism in our hemisphere.

Three years ago, there was honest disagreement by some over the nature of the Sandinista regime. That regime had been keeping its true goals secret, deceiving its own supporters, and using a reformist cover to lull the press and potential adversaries. But, by now, there have been too many incautious statements, leaked memos, and secretly recorded speeches to deny the violent character and intent of this dictatorship.

The Miami Herald, which only 8 months ago refused to come to this conclusion, recently editorialized that the Sandinistas are indeed trying to establish another Cuba and that this is a severe threat to the people of Central America and to our own national security.

If we permit the Soviets, using the Sandinistas, to establish a beachhead on the American mainland and to spread their subversion, the free world will face a major shift in the geopolitical balance of power. Economic instability, political terrorism, and a flood of refugees will likely be the price of our paralysis. We could turn around one day and find a string of anti-American dictatorships in Central America and a military threat on our southern border. Congress had better come to grips with just how high the stakes are if we ~~lose~~ Central America. <sup>is lost.</sup> I am asking Congress to work with me, to support those who are

struggling for democracy and peace, to see that it doesn't happen.

And I'd like to request something of you as well. I am not asking for stories in support of my program in Central America. I only hope that the news media takes the time and effort to present both sides of the issue at hand. The communist disinformation machine is hard at work. What we face is too important not to be handled with the greatest of care and professionalism. There has been some reason for concern on this account about charges against the Freedom Fighters.

For example, the falsehood that the democratic resistance is mainly composed of ex-backers of Somoza is patently untrue. Yet when made by sympathizers to the Sandinista regime, that charge often goes unchallenged.

Last week, a major publication disclosed that, in <sup>reporting</sup> publishing <sup>the</sup> details of alleged crimes committed by the Nicaraguan democratic resistance, it relied on information thought to be from an "independent investigation." As it turned out, the supposed investigation had been carried out by people closely aligned with the Sandinistas and was done in close collaboration with the regime. One national publication had the courage to admit the mistake of giving credence to the report. How many other broadcast and print journalists didn't bother to correct the record and just shrugged off the whole incident?

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count on you. That is what freedom is all about. I appreciate your being here. Perhaps I can take a few questions.



# WHITE HOUSE STAFFING MEMORANDUM

DATE: 4/16/85 ACTION/CONCURRENCE/COMMENT DUE BY: NOON - Wed., 4/17/85

SUBJECT: PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS: LUNCHEON WITH REGIONAL EDITORS AND BROADCASTERS ON BUDGET AND NICARAGUA (4/16 - 5:00 pm draft)

	ACTION FYI			ACTION FYI	
VICE PRESIDENT	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	OGLESBY <i>add</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
REGAN	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	ROLLINS <i>more</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
DEAVER	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	SPEAKES	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
STOCKMAN <i>none</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	SVAHN <i>at none</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
BUCHANAN	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	TUTTLE	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
CHEW	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	VERSTANDIG	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
FIELDING <i>none</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	WHITTLESEY	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<del>FRIEDERSDORF</del>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	RYAN	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
HICKEY	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	DANIELS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
HICKS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	ELLIOTT	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
KINGON	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
McFARLANE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## REMARKS:

Please send comments, edits, recommendations directly to Ben Elliott with a copy to me by noon tomorrow. Thank you.

## RESPONSE:

David L. Chew  
Staff Secretary  
Ext. 2702



(Rohrabacher/BE)

April 16, 1985

5:00 p.m.

Received SS

PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS: 5:24  
LUNCHEON WITH REGIONAL EDITORS  
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(Rohrabacher (BE))  
April 16, 1985  
5:00 p.m. SS

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THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

April 17, 1985

MEMORANDUM FOR BEN ELLIOTT  
DEPUTY ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT  
AND DIRECTOR OF SPEECHWRITING

FROM: SHERRIE M. COOKSEY *smc*  
ASSOCIATE COUNSEL TO THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Presidential Remarks: Luncheon  
With Regional Editors and Broadcasters  
on Budget and Nicaragua

We have reviewed the above-referenced draft Presidential remarks and have no legal objections to them.

cc: David L. Chew

## WHITE HOUSE STAFFING MEMORANDUM

DATE: 4/16/85ACTION/CONCURRENCE/COMMENT DUE BY: NOON - Wed., 4/17/85SUBJECT: PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS: LUNCHEON WITH REGIONAL EDITORS AND BROADCASTERS ON BUDGET AND NICARAGUA (4/16 - 5:00 pm draft)

	ACTION FYI			ACTION FYI	
VICE PRESIDENT	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	OGLESBY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
REGAN	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	ROLLINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
DEAVER	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	SPEAKES	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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BUCHANAN	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	TUTTLE	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
CHEW	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	VERSTANDIG	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
FIELDING	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	WHITTLESEY	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
FRIEDERSDORF	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	RYAN	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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HICKS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	ELLIOTT	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
KINGON	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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## RESPONSE:

*Budget Comments could be strengthened. See Page 4 for requested changes.*  
*in Response*

David L. Chew  
 Staff Secretary  
 Ext. 2702



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(Rohrabacher/BE)

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*Congress isn't the only body that needs convincing. See next paragraph.*

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# WHITE HOUSE STAFFING MEMORANDUM

DATE: 4/16/85 ACTION/CONCURRENCE/COMMENT DUE BY: NOON - Wed., 4/17/85

SUBJECT: PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS: LUNCHEON WITH REGIONAL EDITORS AND BROADCASTERS ON BUDGET AND NICARAGUA (4/16 - 5:00 pm draft)

	ACTION FYI			ACTION FYI	
VICE PRESIDENT	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	OGLESBY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
REGAN	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	ROLLINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
DEAVER	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	SPEAKES	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
STOCKMAN	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	SVAHN	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
BUCHANAN	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	TUTTLE	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
CHEW	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	VERSTANDIG	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
FIELDING	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	WHITTLESEY	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
FRIEDERSDORF	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	RYAN	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
HICKEY	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	DANIELS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
HICKS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	ELLIOTT	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
KINGON	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
McFARLANE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## REMARKS:

Please send comments, edits, recommendations directly to Ben Elliott with a copy to me by noon tomorrow. Thank you.

RESPONSE: No comments.

David L. Chew  
Staff Secretary  
Ext. 2702

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

April 17, 1985

MEMORANDUM FOR BEN ELLIOTT

FROM: JOHN A. SVAHN *JAS*  
SUBJECT: Attached Draft  
(Presidential Remarks: Luncheon with  
Regional Editors and Broadcasters on  
Budget and Nicaragua)

We have reviewed this draft and have no comments or suggestions.

cc: David Chew

(Rohrabacher/BE)  
April 16, 1985  
5:00 p.m.

PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS: LUNCHEON WITH REGIONAL EDITORS  
AND BROADCASTERS ON BUDGET AND NICARAGUA  
THURSDAY, APRIL 18, 1985

Thank you and welcome to the White House. I'm always pleased to be able to meet with you who operate in a business in which every minute counts, where everyone struggles to maintain the highest quality, while at the same time fighting against an ever-approaching deadline.

Making a decision under the pressure of a deadline can be helpful. America is facing a deadline of sorts in the form of an ever-increasing national debt.

With the pressure on to come to grips with this problem, we have an opportunity to make real progress cutting spending, progress that should have been made long ago. It's not going to be easy. We went the extra mile to reach an agreement with the Republican leadership of the Senate. I agreed to compromise concerning defense and other domestic spending issues. It may be hard to do, but it's about time everybody gritted their teeth and started being part of the solution rather than the problem.

The choice is not, as some would have us believe, between cutting spending and raising taxes. The public doesn't want tax increases and, more to the point, tax increases will not lower the level of deficit spending. Tax increases will not reduce Government's demand on the private economy, which is the core of the problem. Tax increases would only serve to kick us back into recession, leading to higher deficits.

When it comes to taxes, what we need is simplification and reform, not increases. I think we can and will simplify the system and significantly reduce personal and corporate tax rates. We can lay the foundation for lower deficits and a vigorous, expanding economy. I see a consensus building on the idea of tax simplification. If we can also agree on reasonable cuts in spending, there is every reason for optimism about America's economic future.

The news media is a vital part of decisions like this. Through you, people are made aware of the issues at hand, the alternatives, and the consequences.

Your function is vital to the viability of democracy. Without a free press, democracy won't work and all of our other rights are in jeopardy. Thomas Jefferson is often quoted as saying, ". . . if it were left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers, or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter." Jefferson, of course, said that before he was President.

One of the first institutions to be attacked by tyrants, whether they be dictators of the left or right, is the press. We've seen this happen far too often -- it is happening in Nicaragua today.

It should not be forgotten that the one incident that precipitated the uprising against the Somoza dictatorship was the assassination of Pedro Chamorro, editor of La Prensa, the nation's largest and fiercely independent newspaper. Yet control of the press under the Somoza dictatorship, which was decried by

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(Rohrabacher)  
April 16, 1985  
2:00 p.m.

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Thank you and welcome to the White House. Having been in the profession I was prior to running for political office, and then having been Governor of California and now my current position, I've developed many close relationships with people in the news fraternity -- it's a fraternity made up of a wide variety of individuals.

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Seriously, though, not many of you have been in that situation, but you do operate in a business in which every minute counts, where everyone struggles to maintain the highest quality, while at the same time fighting against an ever-approaching deadline.

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One of the first institutions to be attacked by tyrants, whether they be dictators of the left or right, is the press. We've seen that far too often and it is what is happening in Nicaragua today.

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Booked  
rules  
Moynihan  
office

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Nicaragua is following a pattern we've seen before. Bigger jails are being built. They're called relocation camps. Refugees are pouring out of the country. What we are witnessing in Nicaragua is the imposition, with ever-increasing intensity, of a Marxist dictatorship, a base camp for communist aggression.

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If the Sandinistas are permitted to consolidate their power, if they succeed, through subversion, in spreading their revolution without borders, the free world will face a major shift in the geo-political balance of power. The United States will experience a flood of refugees. We could turn around one day and find a string of anti-American dictatorships in Central America and a military threat on our Southern border. Congress had better come to grips with just how high the stakes are if we lose Central America. I am asking Congress to work with me to see that it doesn't happen.

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(Rohrabacher) *OR*  
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(Rohrabacher)  
April 16, 1985  
2:00 p.m.

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