



PALABRAS DEL PRESIDENTE DE LA REPÚBLICA
ENRIQUE BOLAÑOS GEYER

AWARD CEREMONY FOR FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
H.E. GEORGE H.W. BUSH

Houston, November 6, 2003



1. Mister President: Recalling a little piece of history –the true one, not bedtime stories for grown ups– is always a good place to start events like this one in which the President of Nicaragua, on behalf of his people, wishes to acknowledge the respect and appreciation for your efforts to help us achieve peace in the Central American Region, and specially in Nicaragua. This took place 13 years ago.

2. Let me briefly recall some of the events. Well... we all know how the Sandinistas, the Marxist Leninists I may say, came to power in Nicaragua in 1979. About 20% of our population fled the country because we already knew our future by reading the Cuban past. Eleven years lasted that dark night, as called by His Holiness John Paul II.

3. President Reagan did what he thought was right to do at that time, including a courageous stand backing the Freedom Fighters, and accepting with pride to call himself a “contra”. This posed a burden on the Marxist-Leninists whose grip and economic system was beginning to collapse.

4. In February 13 and 14 of 1989, the Central American Presidents: Oscar Arias of Costa Rica; José Napoleon Duarte of El Salvador; Vinicio Cerezo of Guatemala; José Azcona of Honduras; and Daniel Ortega of Nicaragua, held in Costa del Sol, El Salvador, another Presidential Summit. The main topic was, as usual, Peace in Central America disturbed by Nicaragua. During this Summit, Daniel Ortega made a surprising and outright promise to hold free elections in February of 1990 –eight months before the legal time. We couldn’t believe it.

5. On December of that year –1989– Mr. Gorbachov flew to Malta from Italy where he had just met His Holiness John Paul II promising Him to grant freedom of religion in the Soviet Union.

6. You, Mr. President, had made arrangements to meet Mr. Gorbachov near Malta –in the Mediterranean– to encourage Mr. Gorbachov’s Perestroika and to discuss world disarmament. You must remember that a storm was coming and that the sea was rough and you agreed to meet Mr. Gorbachov at his War Cruise *Gorky*

7. During that meeting you told Premier Gorbachov that the world would be a better place if Perestroika succeeded, and that Central America was like a big corn in your foot. You presented to him evidence of Cuban weapons sent to the Sandinistas and about the Sandinista backing to the Salvadorean Marxist Guerrilla. There were also discussions about the Philippines, Panama, and Colombia, and disarmament.

8. The following day –Sunday– the storm was gone, the sea was calm and the talks continued with that spirit. All ended well and Mr. Gorbachov accepted to help you pacify Central America, though Nicaragua.

9. I remember that Mr. Boris Yeltsyn came to Nicaragua to deliver Premier Gorbachov's Malta commitment to Daniel Ortega. Elections were held in February 25, 1990, with massive international observers that strengthened our courage to vote for a landslide for democracy.
10. You, Mr. President, from your position as President (1989-1993) and Vice-President of the United States of America (1981-1989), demonstrated to be an unconditional friend of my country, who always gave his firm and resolute support for the construction and strengthening of the democratic process in Nicaragua, and thus, fomented closer ties between our countries.
11. In Nicaragua, we have initiated a fierce battle against corruption. The road has been long and difficult, but we have started to see some results that prove that drive against corruption pays for the benefit of the people.
12. On the other hand, it is important to note that our countries have coincided in giving priority to the strengthening of our commercial ties.
13. Nicaragua is promoting commercial negotiations for the subscription of the Central American Free Trade Agreement with the United States, (CAFTA) which will increase and diversify our trade through investment and job creation, and will reach out and improve the lives and behavior of many institutions in the whole of Central America..
14. We thank President Bush, father, for his efforts during his presidential mandate, in favor of expanding U.S. commercial relations with its main commercial partners, legacy that has been rightly assumed by his son, President George W. Bush, who has also recognized the importance of commerce, in bringing about the well being of his people.
15. For your support of democracy in the world, in particular in Nicaragua, for your notable defense of individual liberties and for your praiseworthy human values and support for the Nicaraguan people, the Government of Nicaragua has decided to present you, this afternoon, a special recognition.
16. On behalf of the Nicaraguan People, who admire and appreciate President George H.W. Bush, I have the great honor of sealing that respect and gratefulness with the Order "*Rubén Darío*" in the grade "Great Cross", to whom has distinguished himself for his tireless efforts in favor of democracy in the world, for his service to the international community and for strengthening the relations between the United States and Nicaragua.
17. The Order "*Rubén Darío*" is a symbol of the nation's highest honor and recognition, presented to nationals and foreigners for relevant services and extraordinary achievements. Without doubt, the noble services of President George H.W. Bush merit such distinction.
18. President Bush: I ask of you to receive this distinction as a sign of a grateful nation and people, who appreciate your support throughout the years in your presidency.
19. May God bless you and your family. May God Bless America and Nicaragua. Thank you.

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