

SPEECH BY THE HONORABLE DICK CHENEY, UNITED STATES
SECRETARY OF DEFENSE, UPON RECEIVING APPEAL OF CONSCIENCE
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Well, thank you very much, Rabbi Schneier. I am, indeed, deeply honored to accept this award and to be here tonight and be selected along with Foreign Minister Genscher and Kay Whitmore. It's also a special pleasure for me to share the podium with an old friend, Henry Kissinger. Henry and I, of course, served together in the Ford Administration when he was Secretary of State and I was White House Chief of Staff. And, one of the by-products of the winds of freedom that are sweeping across the globe is the extent to which we have a large number of new Foreign Ministers. I noticed the other day that all of the Republics of the Soviet Union have their own Foreign Ministers now. I'm not certain, based on my intimate experience with Henry Kissinger, that that constitutes progress. But, it is a mark as to the extent to which the world is changing.

It's meaningful for me to be here tonight given this honor during a year that's seen such tremendous change and such an affirmation of the values that we and our allies have stood for and supported so long. Many of you know, of course, that George Marshall was the architect of the Marshall Plan after World War II, and helped rebuild Europe. Not only was he Secretary of State, he was also one of my predecessors as Secretary of Defense. And, in his office at the Pentagon, he kept a copy of a favorite photograph of his from World War I. Today, you can see a large blow-up of this photograph on one of the building's main staircases in the Pentagon. It's not a picture of a battleground, or any of the other scenes that were witnessed during World War I. But, it is a picture of a group of young soldiers--members of the 317th and 319th Ambulance Companies. They are taking shelter in an empty church at the Front in France. The soldiers in the photograph look pale and tired in heavy, old-fashioned uniforms of that era. Some sit, exhausted on the floor, leaning against a wall. The others are standing--one here, two there, and then a large cluster. And, in the middle of the group, one of the young Americans is seated at the organ. He is playing, and the other men have lifted their heads to sing.

The photograph is dated November 5, 1918, six days before the Armistice was signed. By that time, more than three hundred thousand Americans had been killed or wounded during the course of the war. I wonder how many of those had been

seen and treated by these young corpsman. I have no way of knowing for certain why Marshall kept this picture by him, but I like to think it's because these few soldiers reminded him of the human and spiritual values for which they sacrificed and fought.

Religious freedom has always been one of the first targets of totalitarians in this country in this century. It represents an independent spiritual life that can't be dominated and controlled: the realm of the private conscience. But, religious freedom is more than a matter of private conscience. It is a matter of courage and of action as well. Men and women of conviction have been among the first to stand up for human rights and for liberty. In the annals of Soviet human rights, activists, religious believers, Jewish, Catholic, Russian Orthodox, Baptist, and others, all have earned a respected place. They recognize that individuals must take responsibility if they are to achieve and keep their freedom. They live the answer to Hillel's famous questions: If I am not for myself, who will be for me? If I am only for myself, what am I?

What is true for individuals is true for nations as well. The democratic ideals we and our NATO allies have worked to defend have been at the core of the revival of freedom around the world. Our forty years of commitment to defense have been crucial to containing Communism and the destruction it caused, but our commitment to defense has also been a profoundly

important act of moral leadership--one that offered hope to millions around the world. It has not always been easy or uncontroversial. For years, cynics have told the American people that our democratic ideals were out-dated, that our actions were immoral, or our friendships suspect--that history had somehow passed us by. They said our troops in Vietnam had sacrificed for nothing, and that we had nothing to offer the world.

Today, millions of voices have been lifted up to tell a different story. They have testified to Communism's failure and to humanity's deep desire to be free. In the Soviet Union reformers are snapping up Russian language versions of the Federalist Papers, written by the founders of our Constitutional Republic. In Eastern Europe, newly elected governments are testifying to the importance of individual rights and freedom as an essential protection against the power of the state. And, within the Atlantic Alliance, a once divided Germany is unified and free.

We can be proud of our nation's role in keeping faith with freedom and we can be especially proud of groups like yours which voluntarily step forward to help uphold the rights of conscience all over the world. But, most of all, we must be proud of the young men and women who put on the uniform of our military services and who have gone in harm's way to defend the values on which democracy depends. From the soldiers in that long-ago photograph to the young men and women who fought in the Gulf last Spring--generations of brave Americans have put themselves on the line for all of us. Many have been recognized as heroes of the hour. Tonight, let's recognize that they are also heroes of the spirit, and they deserve our honor and our thanks. Thank you very much.