

The Pennsylvania State University

The Graduate School

Capital College

**WITHOUT MINCING WORDS: PRESIDENTIAL RHETORIC IN THE LATE  
COLD WAR ERA, 1977-1992**

A Dissertation in

American Studies

by

Mary E. Clater

© 2012 Mary E. Clater

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements  
for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

August 2012

The dissertation of Mary E. Clater was reviewed and approved\* by the following:

Charles D. Kupfer  
Associate Professor of American Studies and History  
Dissertation Adviser  
Chair of Committee

John R. Haddad  
Associate Professor American Studies and Popular Culture

Harold B. Shill  
Professor of Political Science

Anne A. Verplanck  
Associate Professor of American Studies and Heritage Studies

David S. Witwer  
Associate Professor of American Studies and History

Simon J. Bronner  
Distinguished Professor of American Studies and Folklore  
Program Director, Doctor of Philosophy in American Studies

\*Signatures are on file in the Graduate School.

## **Abstract**

This dissertation examines presidential rhetoric during the last Cold War era (1977-1992) through an interdisciplinary lens. By highlighting one piece of rhetoric from each of Carter's, Reagan's, and Bush's administration on three related topics and/or themes, this work reveals the necessity of political and rhetorical pragmatism in preparing and delivering public rhetoric. All three Presidents possessed a unique persona, ideology, and speaking style. However, world events necessitated that such characteristics be subservient to the needs of the moment.

Each section centers around a selected topic that had far-ranging implications for the era – Vision for America, Perspectives of Communism, and Views of the Berlin Wall. Each section is then divided into three chapters, one for each President's speech on that topic, and provides an integrated comparative analysis of how the speech's related to each other. Each chapter focuses upon the political, historical, and rhetorical debates surrounding the speech's development, provides a culturally-based rhetorical analysis of the speech as it was delivered, and analyzes the media's and public's immediate response to the speech. Utilizing this approach enables this dissertation to examine presidential rhetoric from a new perspective while revealing important primary source information from Carter's, Reagan's, and Bush's presidential libraries.

## Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION .....	1
Argument .....	1
Approach .....	4
Literature Review .....	14
Methodology .....	18
Section 1: VISION FOR AMERICA .....	23
Chapter 1: Carter: Inaugural Address .....	25
Chapter 2: Reagan: Inaugural Address .....	54
Chapter 3: Bush: Inaugural Address .....	84
Concluding Comparisons .....	118
Section 2: PERSPECTIVES OF COMMUNISM .....	126
Chapter 1: Carter: 1980 State of the Union Address .....	131
Chapter 2: Reagan: Evil Empire Speech .....	175
Chapter 3: Bush: Beyond Containment Commencement Address .....	206
Concluding Comparisons .....	250
Section 3: VIEWS OF THE BERLIN WALL .....	254
Chapter 1: Carter: Town Hall Meeting .....	257
Chapter 2: Reagan: Brandenburg Gate Speech .....	280
Chapter 3: Bush: AFL-CIO Speech .....	310
Concluding Comparisons .....	352
CONCLUSION .....	357
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	360

## Acknowledgements

I believe that the people brought into one's life are there for a purpose. This dissertation is a living testament to that conviction.

Heartfelt thanks goes to the curatorial and research room staff at the Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, the George Bush Presidential Library, and the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library for retrieving the many carts of archival material I requested and answering my numerous questions. In particular, I want to extend my appreciation to Dr. McKenzie Morse at the Bush Presidential Library for helping me locate the necessary files and Ray Wilson at the Reagan Presidential Library for tracking me down in the middle of the museum to tell me that he had found another box of Ken Khachigian's papers that I should examine. I am also grateful to the Student Activities Fund at Penn State Harrisburg for providing much needed funding towards my research trip to the Bush Presidential Library.

I owe a great debt of gratitude to my dissertation committee who devoted hours out of their busy schedules to read and edit this project: Dr. Charles Kupfer (chair), Dr. John Haddad, Dr. Harold Shill, Dr. Anne Verplanck, and Dr. David Witwer. Their thoughtful and challenging critiques have made me a better scholar. I could not have asked for a better committee. A special thanks goes to Dr. John Haddad whose class inspired the first component of this dissertation and who encouraged me to delve deeper into the subject and methodology. Also, I could not have completed this work without the encouragement, mentoring, and guidance of Dr. Charles Kupfer, who first took me under his wing as a master's student.

Finally, to my parents, I offer my sincere appreciation for enduring stacks of books and papers around the house, last minute research trips, and late-night writing. I love you!

## **Introduction**

Ronald Reagan often began his speeches by saying, “I’m going to talk about controversial things.” Despite that warning, he firmly maintained his public belief that America’s best days were yet to come. This description could just as easily describe Jimmy Carter and George H. W. Bush. Although Carter and Bush lacked Reagan’s golden eloquence, their own abilities on the campaign trail supported successful presidential candidacies. Their presidential rhetoric was no less important or substantive than Reagan’s, given the particular moment in time and the general era – the post-Vietnam, later Cold War years – in which they governed. Together, Carter, Reagan, and Bush defined and articulated a distinctive political era spanning the gulf between an infamous American political nightmare and a famous international political triumph – Watergate and the dissolution of the USSR. Carter, Reagan and Bush all held different ideologies and recognized that many people within America and the international community would disagree with their personal messages, but each coped with determined opposition because each one knew that his words would define the era as much as the national and international events which he addressed. Thus, they utilized the “bully pulpit” which their predecessor President Theodore Roosevelt described in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

## **Argument**

The contention maintained herein is that presidential public rhetoric, whether large or small, famous or unknown, is unique in its formation and worthy of examination because each piece of rhetoric provides key insights into the historical and political moment in time in which the President of the United States delivered the words. Second, by examining these

rhetorical works as moments along the historical continuum, the reader is then able to examine the era's progression through points of rhetorical continuity and disagreement, thereby better understanding presidential rhetoric beyond administration boundaries. More often than not, presidential speeches are only considered within the context of a single presidential administration. This is a logical approach given that the man delivering the oratory was the same man holding the office of President. However, the subject matter within presidential speeches is continuous in progression. A given subject did not suddenly dissipate at the very moment in January when the next President took the Oath of Office. Presidents come and go, but the issues often remain.

This dissertation reveals that what one President says is relevant to the words of both predecessor and successor, in order to arrive at a more seamless understanding of presidential rhetoric and its importance. What Carter said and did should be compared with what Nixon said and did beforehand as well as with what Reagan said and did afterward. Only by examining a speech within the social and political context of the era can one fully appreciate its rhetorical and historical significance. This dissertation will do that very thing, using a particular structure which supports the analysis. The first dimension of this project is the general foundation – the selection of a key piece of presidential rhetoric from each of the three administrations relating to the three correlating topics – Vision for America, Perspective of Communism, View of the Berlin Wall. This dissertation then examines each work's developmental processes, making particular note of any political or cultural controversy. The third component is the examination of the public's reaction and input relating to the works before and after their delivery. Finally, each section closes with how

the three works within each topical section relate to one another, define the era as a collective unit, and how this examination has furthered scholastic understanding.

Most importantly, this dissertation argues that although Carter, Reagan, and Bush each faced unique circumstances and possessed their own distinctive rhetorical style and personal ideology, all three faced broad Cold War questions that antedated their administrations. These multidimensional questions took a variety of forms, gave no consideration to the President's position prior to the situation arising, and ignored how the President would have preferred to respond given an ideal environment. Carter, Reagan, and Bush were forced to react to the historical, cultural, and political hurdles sent their way. Furthermore, they were all required to speak to the moment while maintaining the political and diplomatic balances requisite of the office of President of the United States.

Ultimately, this dissertation does not lend itself to a single declarative, one-sentence thesis statement. What it does present are three detailed case studies. This dissertation's primary aim is not to counter a particular scholar's argument. Rather, its goals are: (1) to add a new dimension to existing scholarship; (2) to confirm or contest widely-held assumptions regarding the Presidents, their administrative policies, and their speechwriting teams; and (3) to reveal previously unpublished, primary-source archival research that directly impacts the first two goals. The information contained herein is a blending of the old and the new. The "old" is established scholarship, final drafts of speeches, and pertinent historical information of the time period. This information already exists in the public sphere, but plays an important role in providing a standard to which the new research can relate. The "new" is a fresh examination of each speech from its inception to after its delivery, declassified documents from the presidential libraries, and a unique approach to presidential rhetoric

scholarship. Each reader's background will determine what information is old and what information is new for that individual, but this dissertation contains something new for everyone because few individuals take the time to delve into the archival boxes.

## **Approach**

Why presidential rhetoric? Certainly, modern society features an abundance of politicians spewing forth hours of oratory, much of which is never heard by the majority of Americans. This was the case from the 1970s to the 1990s, before the advent of the Internet Age. Television, radio, and print were the dominant media formats. Yet, no matter how much political talk emanates, when the President speaks, the nation still stops and listens. The President of the United States remains the highest political figure in the country, which is why Theodore Roosevelt understood the unique 20<sup>th</sup> Century possibility for direct communication with the people. Along with a sometimes contentious Congress, the President and his administration set the political tone and establish political policy. An effective White House can strike a unified tone to aid the President in directly impacting American culture at any chosen moment. If one is to examine the cultural development and impact of political rhetoric, the best place to start is at the top.

Carter's, Reagan's, and Bush's words influenced and reflected national public policy due to their prominent political position. But each man entered the political ring from a different personal background, representing different states, with varying life stories. Carter was the peanut farmer from Plains, Georgia; a Naval Academy graduate with a technocratic, good-government reputation. Reagan was a sunny Californian, the unapologetic champion of conservatism. Bush had a patrician demeanor, with abundant experience in national

office. However, each man's speeches address key national and international issues while containing ideological and philosophical parallels with those of the other Presidents.

Without this ideological and issue continuity, the era would read quite differently in today's history texts. Carter, Reagan, and Bush defined political rhetoric, shaped American society, and helped bring the Cold War to an end.

Who, then, were these individuals and what were their respective political backgrounds? James "Jimmy" Carter (1924- ), a Georgia native, holds the distinction of being the first American President born in a hospital. Later in life, as a naval submarine officer, Carter and his family travelled extensively around the country – from Connecticut, to Hawaii, to California, back to the East Coast. After his father's death in 1953, Carter received an honorable discharge so he could return to Georgia to take over his father's business and, in 1962, decided to run for the Georgia State Senate. When Carter lost the primary by a meager 139 votes, he asked for a recount. The Democratic Committee ordered a new election, which Carter won by 831 votes. Eight years later, Carter won the gubernatorial election with 60% of the vote and gained national attention by declaring that "the time for racial discrimination is over" in his Inaugural Address – despite the fact that a devout segregationist, Lester Maddox, was elected separately as his lieutenant governor. Maddox was notorious for wielding an axe handle and arguing for the last-ditch defense of segregation. Carter, on the other hand, embodied a New South. Carter's political career continued forward at a rapid pace. Watergate and associated scandals enveloped Washington, hurt Republicans, and aggravated the electorate. Vice President Spiro Agnew's resignation led to the appointment of Representative Gerald Ford as a replacement. When Richard Nixon resigned the presidency, the nation found itself with President Ford, for whom

the American people had never voted as part of the presidential ticket. Ford's pardon of Nixon became a major political issue, and there was broad sentiment to move past the entire Watergate atmosphere by electing a new candidate from outside the D.C. beltway, one with a fresh background and a reputation for morality. After sweeping many state primaries, Carter won the 1976 presidential election by a slim margin, again – 50% to 48% of the popular vote and 297 to 240 in Electoral College votes.<sup>1</sup>

Carter's election is notable for far more than his slim margin of victory. First, he was the first southern President since Lyndon Johnson (if Texas qualifies since the Lone Star state is also part of the West), or Woodrow Wilson (if his Virginia birth qualifies since New Jersey was where he forged his political career), or Andrew Johnson who took office after Abraham Lincoln's 1865 assassination and finished out the term, enduring impeachment along the way. Carter's "New South" image seemed to put the "Sleepy South" or "Racist South" image to rest. Second, he was a Southern Baptist, which was different and needed some explaining, but was a crucial component of his political identity in the wake of Watergate. Carter seemed like an upright man who could be believed when he promised never to lie to the American people. Third, he represented a break from a political culture that, since the 60s, had worn people out with controversy and scandal. The Democratic Party was wide open – "heirs," like Hubert Humphrey, were old and associated with the scandals of the previous era, whereas Carter was a success from the outside, just what the country craved. His image was The Smile, which was positive; carrying his own luggage made him seem like a breath of fresh air; and his wife's refusal to spend exorbitant amounts of money on clothing sealed the down-to-earth image. Still, Carter was not without his political weaknesses, as the

---

<sup>1</sup> "Jimmy Carter Timeline" *PBS American Experience* (Accessed April 28, 2010), available at <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/carter/timeline/index.html>.

closeness of the general election revealed. His lack of popularity in the West would come back to haunt him four years later.

Ronald Reagan (1911-2004) hailed originally from Illinois but spent most of his life in California as a B-list actor, with *Knute Rockne: All-American* earning him his revered nickname, “The Gipper.” He starred in some high-profile roles as both lead and supporting actor, and rose to serve as President of the Screen Actors Guild, during which time he was considered a New Deal Democrat. Battles with left-wing labor elements in Hollywood played a major role in altering his political views. As President, George W. Bush described this time in his eulogy to his father’s predecessor:

There came a point in Ronald Reagan's film career when people started seeing a future beyond the movies. The actor Robert Cummings recalled one occasion. ‘I was sitting around the set with all these people, and we were listening to Ronnie, quite absorbed. I said, ‘Ron, have you ever considered someday becoming President?’ He said, ‘President of what?’ ‘President of the United States,’ I said. And he said, ‘What's the matter, don't you like my acting either?’<sup>2</sup>

Reagan did not enter politics until late in life, after shifting personal ideologies precipitated his switch from Democrat to Republican. A stint as narrator for a television series entitled, General Electric Theater, kept him in the public eye and left a warm, non-political impression with viewers. Reagan’s publicity received another boost in 1964, when his speech supporting Barry Goldwater’s presidential bid, “A Time for Choosing,” brought him to the attention of the conservative wing of the Republican Party. “The Speech” made him the national spokesman for that rising political movement, which resulted in pressure for Reagan to seek office himself. He served as Governor of California for two terms, from 1967-1975. This put him in Sacramento at a colorful time in the state’s history, giving him

---

<sup>2</sup> George W. Bush, “Eulogy for Ronald Reagan,” Jun. 11, 2004. Available at: <http://www.eulogyspeech.net/famous-eulogies/George-W-Bush-Eulogy-for-Ronald-Reagan.shtml>. Accessed Mar. 3, 2011

the chance to counter much of the cultural momentum coming from Berkeley and San Francisco, and making him an even stronger champion of the American right. In 1976, he challenged Ford for the Republican nomination. The Panama Canal Treaty emerged as a major issue, with Reagan opposing the measure to hand control of the canal to Panama. Ultimately, Reagan lost narrowly to incumbent Ford, but took his challenge all the way to the convention, positioning himself as a favorite for the GOP nod in 1980. Fighting off a host of primary challengers, including George H. W. Bush (who became his nominee for Vice President), Reagan became the 40<sup>th</sup> President of the United States when he defeated Carter in a landslide, 489 electoral votes to 49. Early in his first term, he survived a shooting by a deranged would-be assassin. That tense day showed him as his folksy best, when he uttered two memorable lines. The first quip was to his wife, Nancy: “Honey, I forgot to duck.” The second quip was to his surgical team: “I hope you’re all Republicans.” Reagan’s humor hid what some people, courtesy of media coverage, realized at the time – the America had come perilously close to losing another President. Reagan went on to coast to an easy victory in 1984 over Carter’s former Vice President, Walter Mondale, and served out his second term.

Like the two Presidents before him, George H. W. Bush (1924- ) is a familiar name in modern politics. The second son of the late Senator Prescott Bush, George H. W. Bush grew up within a New England political dynasty. Bush continued in that political tradition after becoming the Navy’s youngest aviator in 1941. Later, as a civilian, he moved to West Texas and, by age forty, earned a fortune in the oil industry. Soon after establishing his oil company, Bush entered the political ring in 1967, commencing life-long service on multiple fronts. His political dossier includes service in the United States House of Representatives, Ambassador to the United Nations, Ambassador to China, Director of the Central

Intelligence Agency, Vice President of the United States, and, ultimately, President of the United States. The Bush political dynasty continued with his sons: James E. “Jeb” Bush served as Florida’s Governor and George W. Bush became Governor of Texas and the 43<sup>rd</sup> President of the United States.

Though not known for his stump prowess, Bush presented rhetoric that was sound in content, with occasional glaring exceptions. For example, as President, Bush succeeded in irritating mothers around the nation while elating countless children in declaring, “I do not like broccoli. And I haven’t liked it since I was a little kid and my mother made me eat it. And I’m President of the United States and I’m not going to eat any more broccoli.” In general, Bush adopted a reassuring and even inspirational tone that lent him success in his 1988 race and thereafter. In 1992, he came up against Democratic candidate Bill Clinton, who demonstrated sparkling rhetorical gifts of his own, terminating Bush’s White House term after four years in office<sup>3</sup>

It is understandable that these three different men would possess unique rhetorical tendencies; but this dissertation’s primary objective is to examine content, not style. This dissertation’s basis is the examination of presidential rhetoric, primarily speeches, from multiple perspectives, including scrutinizing each one’s development, analyzing the final text’s rhetoric, and examining the speech’s cultural impact in the days immediately following its presentation.\* Throughout each section, this dissertation cross-examines the speeches across an era that spans presidential terms. Why take this triple approach? First, presidential

---

<sup>3</sup> “George H. W. Bush Quotes” (Accessed April 4, 2010), available at [www.brainyquote.com](http://www.brainyquote.com).

\* This dissertation will use the term “speech” with regularity in place of “rhetoric” because the foundation of this project is the public speech. However, this dissertation uses the term “speech” in a broad sense rather than limiting it to only formalized public addresses involving a standardized format and length. One may note that one of the rhetorical works examined herein does not fit the traditional definition of a speech – Carter’s town hall meeting in Berlin. This inclusion is not designed as an exception used in lieu of a speech. Rather, as is noted in that particular chapter, it is examined due to the absence of a traditional speech.

speeches are often examined at face-value – what the President actually said to his audience. Such analysis is a worthy endeavor, but it fails to consider how the speech came to be. Examining a speech’s development provides key insights into the inner workings of an administration – from the speechwriting process to the political and policy debates of the time. Each administration has the prerogative of setting up its speechwriting office in the manner that it sees fit, including the speech writing process. But, as is shown within this dissertation, even the most thorough procedures cannot prevent controversy and challenges. The speechwriting office operated in conjunction with other federal agencies, entities that often had differing opinions regarding the speech’s content.

Second, analyzing the finalized text reveals the reality of the moment instead of the possibly inaccurate modern perceptions of what was said. The rhetorical analysis within this dissertation refutes the idea that a speech should only be remembered because of a small sound bite. The speech as a whole is worthy of consideration, and studying the speech as a whole presents new knowledge. This component of the approach also provides a venue for the integration of secondary research and scholarly interpretations of what the President said, thereby adding an additional dimension to the learning process.

Third, by examining the cultural impact of the speech from the days immediately following the speech’s delivery, the reader develops an understanding of the cultural climate of the time. Today’s readers have the benefit of historical hindsight. As is revealed within this dissertation, in 1983, the American people did not know how the Soviets would respond to President Reagan’s “Evil Empire Speech.” The public response to the speech was decidedly mixed because they understood the times. To fully understand the speech, the reader must also have an understanding of the times and how the public inside the United

States (and on appropriate occasions, outside the United States as well) responded to the speech.

Finally, placing speeches on concurrent topics side by side, in order of their delivery, provides its own method of comparison. Cross-examining these speeches provides a needed perspective on American political culture, and also on society in general, during the era. Such steps lend insight into the connectivity of the highest political office-holders, expressing not just official policies, but the ideological foundations of those policies.

Presidential speeches should not be seen as elements in a rhetorical fleet, not as verbal privateers, sailing the political seas alone and without restraint. Too often, analysts concentrate on a particular speech, grading it only for its immediate political effectiveness or lack thereof, usually with an eye to opinion polls. But this elevated form of national discourse should not be interpreted only in terms of temporary expedience, neither as a series of non-connected episodes. Rather, speeches maintain consistent philosophical threads despite the differing occasions and audiences. The discovery and consideration of such threads within one politician's repertoire compared with another politician's repertoire provides greater understanding of political culture, a broad concept comprised of governmental operation, cultural influence, and political eras. I take as a matter of course the connection between ideology and policy. Therefore, since speeches outline presidential ideologies, they can provide insight into the underpinnings of policies. Despite their differences, the speeches examined herein, spanning 1977-1992, maintain thematic similarities within public discourse which directly shaped American policy and public involvement. Just as there is strength in numbers, so too is there wisdom in numbers. The more information one possesses, the more well-developed the answer. Carter, Reagan, and

Bush's decisions remain important within today's society just as they did in the late 1970s to early 1990s. These are the rationales which led me to this dissertation project.

A further rationale is the coherence of the era in which they all served. Despite the habit of dividing history by presidencies, it is clear to me that the world at large is not rearranged every time a new occupant takes up residence in the White House. My research examines the concurrent themes and their cultural ramifications within these three men's speeches, relating to foreign and domestic policy by focusing upon an over-arching question: "How do these different men's words work together to define a unique era of American political culture?"

**Section I** examines each President's "Vision for America" as revealed in his Inaugural Address. I chose the Inaugural Address for two practical reasons. First, by longstanding convention, the Inaugural Address represents a President's formal introduction to the nation. It is a unique chance for a new President to define the upcoming presidency, or at least attempt to do so. Second, the Inaugural also has the benefit of a consistency. By tradition, each new President delivers an address after he takes the Oath of Office. It is one of the few speech settings that is consistent across administrations. Such consistency aids in maintaining the section's scope and prevents conjecture regarding the selection or interpretation of a far wider range of speeches.

**Section II** examines each President's "Perspectives of Communism" as revealed in three notable speeches: Carter's "Address before a Joint Session of Congress on the State of the Union" on January 23, 1980; Reagan's "Address to the National Association of Evangelicals" or, as it more commonly known, the "Evil Empire Speech" on March 8, 1983; and Bush's "Commencement Address at Texas A&M University" on May 12, 1989. I chose

“Perspectives of Communism” because that topic touches the core of each President’s ideological approach to the Cold War, which still loomed large in foreign policy and national security. The crises in Afghanistan, the Persian Gulf, Cuba, and elsewhere all came to be interpreted as linked in some way or another to Communism. Sometimes, the linkage itself was the controversial point. The three speeches examined within this section are very different from each other in setting, tone, and notoriety, but they are all alike in that they contain a notable emphasis upon Communism.

**Section III** examines each President’s “View of the Berlin Wall” as revealed in Carter’s “Berlin, Federal Republic of Germany Question-and-Answer Session at a Town Meeting” on July 15, 1978; Reagan’s “Remarks on East-West Relations at the Brandenburg Gate in West Berlin,” on June 12, 1987, and Bush’s “Remarks at the Biannual Convention of the American Federal of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations” on November 15, 1989. Selecting the Berlin Wall came about because Berlin remained the primary symbolic epicenter of the bipolar Cold War world. World events kept returning public attention to Europe during this phase of the Cold War, through such issues as intermediate-range nuclear missiles, nuclear disarmament, and tensions within NATO and the Warsaw Pact. It was at the Berlin Wall that the end of Europe’s Cold War division – which originally prompted George F. Kennan’s signature Containment thesis, NSC-68 – was apotheosized. Of the three dissertation sections, this final section is the least conventional. First, it contains an examination of the only piece of presidential rhetoric that was not a formal speech. President Carter intentionally delivered a town hall meeting in lieu of a traditional speech and never delivered a major speech in which the Berlin Wall played a significant role. In my opinion, this absence is notable, and what Carter said during the town hall meeting is still relevant in

comparison with the other speeches. Second, President Bush likewise failed to deliver a major address relating primarily to the Berlin Wall, but examining what he said and the venues he used immediately following the fall of the Berlin Wall is relevant.

Although distinct topics, this dissertation's three sections maintain connectivity and coherence with each other. The three are not random, unrelated selections. Given the global context of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the modern President's vision for the country naturally included both direct and indirect international dimensions. Between 1977 and 1992, one of the greatest points of international concern was the communistic Soviet Union and bringing the Cold War to a close; a long-time icon of that East-West conflict was the Berlin Wall. All three are also topics which one would expect the President to verbally address, given his role as the leader of the country and as a leader within the free world.

## **Literature Review**

As Martin J. Medhurst explains in *Beyond the Rhetorical Presidency*, the academy has historically treated the words a President speaks via one of two constructs. The first is the "narrow and theory-dependent" political science approach "grounded normatively in the U.S. Constitution" that focuses upon the rhetorical presidency. The second is the "broad and practice-dependent" methodology found within speech communication, "grounded, if at all, in the constantly changing dynamics of human persuasion" which examines presidential rhetoric. Medhurst also notes that both of these constructs have seen substantial growth and sophistication within the past three decades, including the rise of a recognized communication subfield on presidential rhetoric, courtesy of the key works of scholars like Corwin, Neustadt, and Skowronek on the political science side and Houck, Kiewe, Jamieson,

and himself on the communication side. In keeping with American Studies' interdisciplinary foundation, both of these methodologies and their respective scholars, in addition to historians, journalists, and practitioners from other fields, influenced this dissertation.<sup>4</sup>

On a broader level, presidential rhetoric, particularly speeches, have found their way into multiple genres of literature, where academicians from different disciplinary backgrounds have utilized a variety of methodologies. One of the primary areas where presidential speeches are found is in anthologies. Scholars publish the speeches in their final form, often providing a general introduction to the collection as a whole as well as before each speech. Such is the case with Kalb's, Peters', and Woolley's *State of the Union: Presidential Rhetoric from Woodrow Wilson to George W. Bush*, Remini's and Golway's *Fellow Citizens: The Penguin Book of U.S. Presidential Inaugural Addresses*, Houck's and Kiewe's *Actor, Ideologue, Politician: The Public Speeches of Ronald Reagan*, and Lucas' and Medhurst's *Words of a Century: The Top 100 American Speeches, 1900-1999*. As these four examples evidence, anthologies can be organized in multiple ways. They can include the best or worst speeches, the rhetoric of a particular individual, or a selected topic or venue. Anthologies play an important role by providing easy access to speeches, but the limited space prohibits the introductions from providing an in-depth analysis of the speech.

A second key area where one will find analyses of presidential speeches is within categorical works like biographies or topical studies. Unlike anthologies, categorical works usually do not focus upon the speech text itself, but rather upon the historical events surrounding the speech. This is the case in E. Stanly Godbold's biography of Jimmy Carter

---

<sup>4</sup> Martin J. Medhurst, ed. *Beyond the Rhetorical Presidency* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1996), XI-XII.

James Arnt Aune and Martin J. Medhurst, eds. *The Prospect of Presidential Rhetoric* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2008), 13-19.

and W. R. Smyser's book regarding President Kennedy's relationship with the Berlin Wall. At times, authors of categorical works will delve into the speech's development (like Lou Cannon's *Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime*), the surrounding political debate (as Romesh Ratnesar's *Tear Down This Wall* treats Reagan's speech at the Brandenburg Gate), or cultural impact (like Christopher Maynard treats George H. W. Bush's rhetoric following the Berlin Wall's demise). Each of these methods provides valuable pieces of information and the necessary contextualization for understanding the President's speech. But, as with anthologies, categorical works provide only part of the information requisite for a thorough rhetorical analysis.

The third primary area in which one finds presidential speeches is works dedicated to speechwriting or speechwriters. Sometimes speechwriters, like Peggy Noonan and Peter Robinson, go on to write memoirs of their time in the White House, providing valuable, first-hand insight. Usually, White House insiders are not the ones writing the analytical works dedicated to the speechwriting process or the relationship between the President and his speechwriting staff. Outsiders, primarily academics like Robert Schlesinger, Martin Medhurst, and Bradley Patterson, though from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds, are the ones fulfilling that important role and revealing just how complex and varied the presidential speechwriting process is.

As with categorical works, speechwriting books approach the subject using varied methodologies. Nelson's and Riley's *The President's Words: Speeches and Speechwriting in the Modern White House* analyze speeches and speechwriting based upon genre – the acceptance speech, the Inaugural Address, the State of the Union Address, the crisis speech, and others. *Presidents Creating the Presidency: Deeds Done in Words* by Campbell and

Jamieson operates upon a similar premise, but includes some speech genres not found within Nelson's and Riley's work, including national eulogies, pardoning rhetoric, veto messages, and war rhetoric. The key to this approach is selecting speech categories found within any administration to ensure a broad spectrum of material from the earliest days of American history to the present day. This methodology has its advantages: first, using speeches from the same setting or genre provides foundational continuity because the author is comparing similar materials; second, having a broad base of materials with which to work provides necessary scope and depth to the project; and, third, it allows scholars to make over-arching observations. However, examining a genre over such a large period of time does not allow for specificity and focuses only upon the finished product that the President spoke.

The three literary forms discussed above each plays an important role in the academic examination of presidential rhetoric. This dissertation incorporates some of the standard methodologies that these genres use, as well as the books themselves as secondary sources. However, this dissertation includes three key differences to the standard texts. The first difference is the extensive utilization and examination of speech drafts. The standard procedure is to examine the speech in its final form. Few authors trek to the presidential library, dig through the archival boxes, and analyze how the speech came to be. Such primary research serves as the foundation for each section contained herein. A second difference is that few academic works provide an in-depth rhetorical analysis of the final text while taking the historical setting into account, which I have done with each piece of rhetoric within this dissertation. A third difference is that some academic works consider the political sphere's reactions to the speech, but not the reaction of the general public or international community, as is done within this project.

## **Notes on Methodology**

Each section depends upon a thorough analysis and summary of three common speeches. Every speech receives careful attention, and each section also provides a contextual comparison of the three speeches together, with an eye to how they defined the era. Albeit distinct entities, “Vision for America,” “Perspectives of Communism,” and “View of the Berlin Wall” are inextricably linked. Each of these topics dealt both with fundamental domestic American conceptions of the United States as well as with policy outcomes at home and abroad. Each was understood by all three Presidents as intrinsic to their administrations’ missions. Each dealt with deep and longstanding questions which were basic to formulating Americans’ attitudes toward the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

My research employs original sources: archival material related to the speeches themselves. I made the decision to base my arguments upon primary source research because I strongly believe that these archival materials provide the most valuable and accurate look into the workings of a presidential administration. This material includes pre-advance research notes, speech drafts, inter-departmental memos (both within the White House itself and between the White House and other governmental agencies like the National Security Council and Department of State), letters to the White House, newspaper clippings, and polling data. These materials are available, primarily, at a particular type of venue – each respective presidential library. The status of clearance and availability made many of these sources open for my examination and analysis, although not all the documents I hoped to examine had been declassified and reviewed by the archival staff.

My research procedures at each of the presidential libraries developed from the same overall approach: gather as much information as possible. It is easier to weed out what is not

needed at a later point than to make a return trip to the archives for something you wished you had examined the first time around. Within such information-gathering, at all three libraries, my research began in the same file category – the White House Office of Speechwriting. The Speechwriting Office keeps meticulous records and copies of all the major speeches, even some which are never delivered publicly. I then expanded by research to the other Speechwriting Office files, including research notes, inter-office communication, inter-departmental communication, letters from the public, and the speechwriters' personal files (which were sometimes filed separately from the Speechwriting Office). The location of particular information depended upon how the administration organized the speechwriting staff and its record-keeping. For example, Carter's speechwriting office operated more as a team rather than an individual, so the vast majority of the related documents were within the general Speechwriting Office chronological or draft files rather than within files of a particular writer. In contrast, the Reagan Speechwriting Office gave much more leeway to individual writers. Hence, writers like Tony Dolan and Peter Robinson have extensive files that include everything from research notes to drafts to memos to response letters to newspaper clippings. This sphere of information provided a very strong foundation for this project. It also required quick familiarity with the particulars of each library. Gaining such familiarity afforded me better understanding of how each administration operated and treated the handling of information. So, research methods themselves improved my awareness of each administration's style in this important area.

Once the Speechwriting Office materials were thoroughly examined, my research then expanded to the next sphere of influence – related governmental organizations like the National Security Council (NSC) and Public Liaison Office as well as individuals like the

White House Chief of Staff and presidential advisers. These were entities and individuals who were not employed by the Speechwriting Office, but who had influence upon the speech's development because their political positions afforded them positions of administrative, policy, and presidential influence. In the case of Reagan's Brandenburg Gate speech, this meant pulling files from the National Security Council and looking for drafts and memos which they maintained. It also meant looking within individual NSC members' files, which yielded men like Peter R. Sommer, a legal adviser at the NSC whose files contained a treasure trove of inter-departmental memos expressing the NSC's continued displeasure with the speech. For all the speeches, thorough research meant consulting the presidential handwriting files looking for copies containing notes or drafts written by the President himself. In summary, this sphere provided great insight into the political dialogue surrounding each speech.

My research then extended to a third sphere. This sphere encompassed files where I hoped beneficial material could be located, but was not guaranteed results. This category included any individual whose name had arisen on documents found in the first and second-level spheres – individuals named in memos, research assistants, advisors, etc. It also included the chronological mail sample files. In the era before the Internet and e-mail, American citizens still contacted the White House with regularity, primarily via letters and telegrams. These messages were all sorted and filtered through the mail office. Those deemed worthy of personal attention were forwarded to the correct department. Each week, however, a notable few were included in a mail sample file which was viewed by the highest White House officials, including the President. This file included letters that were not only well-written, but were also representative of the key issues expressed through the mail in

general. My purpose in looking at the mail files was twofold, aimed at answering twin questions. First, was the speech or the speech's topic contained within the mail sample files in the months surrounding the speech's deliverance, thus indicating public interest in the issue? Second, if the speech or the speech's topic was *not* contained within the mail samples, what topics *were*? This sphere was the colloquial "icing on the cake." The other spheres provided the foundation and the structure whereas this sphere added some additional dimension and personality.

My examination of the archival information is not designed primarily to vilify, support, or contend with modern interpretations of the respective orators. This is not meant to be a brief for or against any particular President, nor to advance a contemporary political agenda. This is noted because modern history and cultural study always run into current events. My aims are different. My examination exists to provide a new interpretation of the speeches within a culturally-based framework. This interpretive style is not revolutionary, but remains obscure within the academy. I believe in this style's utility, and therefore employ it, convinced of its enduring value. My examination will not only provide greater understanding of the 1977-1992 era on a broad, more inclusive scale, but will also provide insight regarding the cultural and historical effects of these speeches, individually and collectively.

These presidential speeches deserve exposure and examination, for in them lies the truth of an era. French author, political critic, and World War I veteran, Georges Bernanos once said, "The worst, the most corrupting of lies are problems poorly stated." Carter, Reagan, and Bush minced words only at their peril, for they spoke not merely for themselves, but for the American people. They addressed serious issues in that last phase of the Cold

War. Their rhetorical power comes not from their natural eloquence – for few would describe Carter or Bush as great orators – but from what they said. In essence, theirs was a triumph of substance over style.<sup>5</sup>

In his January 11, 1989, farewell address to the American people, President Reagan summarized the era's political rhetoric eloquently:

I won a nickname, “The Great Communicator.” But I never thought it was my style or the words I used that made a difference: it was the *content*. I wasn't a great communicator, but *I communicated great things*, and they didn't spring full bloom from my brow, they came from the heart of a great nation – from our experience, our wisdom, and our belief in the principles that have guided us for two centuries.

“I communicated great things.” These four simple words express a great understatement.

1977 to 1992 signaled great changes for the future – rebuilding faith in America to *glasnost* and *perestroika* to the Berlin Wall's demise. Despite the degree of one's personal affinity for their respective messages, all three Presidents truly were great communicators in the sense that they spoke about important things arising from the era. Their oratory may have been poor at times, but the message was strong. Their words applied not only to Americans in the 70s, 80s, and 90s, but also to Americans today. Here lies a final predicate notion of this dissertation: presidential rhetoric is not temporary utterances delivered for momentary political advantage. They are also enduring texts, providing key insights and learning opportunities for the future by opening a unique window into a specific moment in America's past.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> Wilson D. Miscamble, ed., *Go Forth and Do Good: Memorable Notre Dame Commencement Addresses* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003), 186.

<sup>6</sup> Michael Reagan, ed., *The Greatest Speeches of Ronald Reagan* (West Palm Beach: NewsMax.com, 2001), 247.

## **Section I: Vision for America**

The Inaugural Address is far from just another presidential speech. It is a defining moment of a presidential administration, as it is the first time that the President-elect addresses the nation as President. It provides an opportunity for the President to speak on whatever subject he wishes, with whatever tone he wishes. He can be nostalgic; he can be hopeful; he can be militant; he can be jubilant. He may choose to highlight policies or social conditions. He may reflect on the past or he may look forward to the future. In short, in the Inaugural, the President has the ability to be exactly who he wants to be and express what he wants America to be – his vision for America.

In considering what the Inaugural Address is, one must also remember what it is not. Of primary importance is that the Inaugural Address is not a time to gloat. Recognition of the prior administration is expected, but undercutting, demeaning, and criticizing is traditionally unwelcome. There will be ample opportunity for such actions later. The Inaugural Address is a time for looking forward rather than looking back. It is also not a time for pessimism. No one wants to stand in the cold and listen to a depressing speech. The audience wants to rally around the new President and cheer.

Each President's vision for America is different, yet each one is similar. First, it is a vision of a unified America. Elections are a moment in which the country is most divided as its citizens make a pivotal decision between Choice A and Choice B (and, on the rare occasion, Choice C and Choice D). Only one can claim victory and transition to life in the White House. The Inaugural Address provides the perfect platform for election resolution, of uniting the country behind the President. Second, the Inaugural Address looks to the future. Americans want to hear a President who is looking forward with some measure of hope that

tomorrow can be better than today; that next year can be better than this year, that what is currently wrong can be made right. Finally, the Inaugural provides an open policy forum for the laying out of what is to come. Given this reality, virtually every governmental agency, as well as proponents of various initiatives, desires a “plug” in the speech.

Despite multiple people and entities desiring a certain level of involvement or authorship, the Inaugural Address belongs to the President-elect. He sets the tone; he establishes the message. He is about to transform from a presidential candidate, or President-in-waiting, to something very different, The President. The office carries its own mystique. Yes, speechwriters are involved, helping to shape and polish the speech’s message, but at the time of the inauguration the speechwriting office is still being developed. Thus, the President is relying heavily upon his campaign team, transition team, and his own ingenuity to perfect the speech’s development. The President-elect is the key. The Inaugural Address is his moment of glory; his moment to express his vision for America.

## Chapter 1: Jimmy Carter's Vision for America "Inaugural Address" January 20, 1977

### Introduction

President Jimmy Carter was the epitome of a Washington outsider, a fact which greatly aided his victory over President Gerald Ford in the first post-Watergate general election in 1976. But that was not the only factor in Carter's successful bid for the presidency. Carter carefully planned his bid for four years, revealing his ambitions only to a chosen few until the opportune political moment. Carter strategized his gubernatorial actions to support his campaign on the national scene; he befriended key Democrats around the country; he campaigned on behalf of national Democratic candidates in 1974; he studied domestic and international policy; and he refined the Carter charm to become what some would call the John F. Kennedy of the South.<sup>7</sup>

It would be inaccurate to describe Jimmy Carter's Inaugural Address as a moment of great oratory, because the new President executed his speech with methodical, marching rhythm rather than smooth eloquence. His voice lacked the resonant, passionate, and emotional qualities necessary for a truly great speech. However, despite its halting delivery, Carter's Inaugural Address is striking in its content, containing messages which align with the political aura surrounding the man delivering the speech. Carter was a fresh face in Washington at a time when the entire political establishment seemed tainted by Watergate and a host of concurrent scandals which felled not just Richard M. Nixon but Vice President Spiro Agnew and powerful congressmen such as Wayne Hays (D-OH) and Wilbur Mills (D-AR). Carter was committed to maintaining that fresh, unspoiled image throughout his

---

<sup>7</sup> E. Stanly Godbold, Jr., *Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter: The Georgia Years, 1924-1974* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 254-255, 260-261, 265.

presidency. Like so many Presidents before and after him, Carter had great ambition for what he could accomplish while in office, including fixing the problems created by his predecessors – Richard Nixon and Nixon’s replacement, Gerald Ford. Carter came to office at a time when America was searching for a reliable, honest President. That was the image he tried to maintain throughout his candidacy and aimed to establish in his Inaugural Address.

In comparison with other Inaugural Addresses, Carter’s was rather short – roughly 1,200 words or eight minutes in length. The overall average length for a presidential Inaugural Address is 2,360 words with George Washington’s second Inaugural Address being the shortest (135 words) and William Henry Harrison’s being the longest (8,445 words). Carter’s brevity was intentional; the language was unadorned and straightforward, but not without relevance or importance. Carter saw his Inaugural Address as the opportune moment to heal the festering national wounds by focusing on ideals rather than policy. Carter did not wish to utter a lecture and issued an encouraging devotional instead. He did not ignore the tumultuous past, but neither did he dwell on it. In his eyes, the nation needed to move towards a better, more secure future. His campaign advertising had consistently struck that note, and, with his smile, his religiously-inspired integrity, and his reputation as a technocratic expert who could make government work better, he emerged as the public choice to lead that forward motion. Carter’s vision for America was that it could be better than it currently was, that its spirit needed to be reborn, and that this could be accomplished by following the prophet Micah’s call to “do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly.” One must remember, as previously noted, that Carter offered a geographic and religious profile that brought change to the presidency. These identities might have been problematic

in other elections, but in 1976 they marked him as representative of the kind of change he promised.<sup>8</sup>

## **Development**

The developmental process for Carter's Inaugural Address began with two foci – the overall tone for the speech and the theme for the Inauguration as a whole. Gerald "Jerry" Rafshoon, Carter's White House Communication's Director, gave Carter some sage advice to help the President-elect formulate his ideas and rhetoric for the Inaugural. Rafshoon recommended that the speech should be "rich in rhetoric and memorable turn of phrase," but, more than anything else, it should be "distinctively Jimmy Carter." Carter had not established himself as a great orator on the campaign trail. A speech that relied heavily upon oratorical skills had the potential to fall flat with Carter delivering it, and would not fit his projected persona of a humble farm boy made good. After all, his identity as a farmer from tiny Plains, Georgia, was a predominant factor in his public image, more so, for example, than his status as a graduate of the United States Naval Academy. His low-key demeanor was part of what marked him as refreshingly different from the standard-issue politicians who stood in disfavor during a period of scandal, and the Carter team wanted to embrace and continue the image they had struck. The image, moreover, had the merit of being at least substantially true. Carter's team was as much a product of Georgia as he was, so the image had even more legitimacy in that his support staff was part of it. The speech needed to be simple, straight-forward, and heartfelt while including ample content. As Rafshoon

---

<sup>8</sup> Robert V. Remini and Terry Golway, *Fellow Citizens: The Penguin Book of U.S. Presidential Addresses* (New York: Penguin Group: 2008), 418-419.

Fred Barnes, "The Inaugural Speech: Short, Probably Sweet," *The Washington Star*, Dec. 23, 1976, folder "Newspaper Clippings re.: Inaugural 12/13/76-1/9/77," box 15, 1977 Inaugural Committee, JCL.

continued, “It should reflect the newness of your candidacy, your election, your personality. It should give re-assurance to those who voted for you for change, but at the same time it should give assurance to those who voted against you for safety.” This balance would prove easier said than done.<sup>9</sup>

The speech draft files reveal that the Carter team found establishing this balance in rhetoric and tone an arduous task. The files also provide evidence to support the longstanding claim that Carter himself was very detail-oriented, preferring close supervision of ongoing work rather than delegation to others. Carter’s personal notes for the Inaugural Address within the archival files, all written in cursive long-hand, are extensive and include everything from numerical lists, to paragraphs on note cards, to rough drafts on notebook paper, to edits within the typed speech drafts. Carter’s notes are all undated, so it is difficult to ascertain exactly which list or version came at what point. Using standard deduction, one would assume that the list of single-sentence points for inclusion came at the beginning of the developmental process, the hand-written speech drafts with lines crossing out specific sections would come towards the middle, and the unmarked note cards would have come later in the process. This remains supposition, however. The note cards do not match either of the typed copies labeled “first draft.” The copies also do not contain any speechwriter identification, so it is challenging to determine the two first drafts’ precise authorship, whether it be by one person or by multiple individuals.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> Memo, Jerry Rafshoon to Jimmy Carter, folder “Inaugural Speech Drafts – Notes and Suggestions [1-2],” box 2, Office of the Staff Secretary – 1976 Campaign Transition File, JCL.

<sup>10</sup> Carter Handwritten Inaugural Address Notes, folder “Inaugural Speech Drafts – Notes and Suggestions [1],” box 2, Office of the Staff Secretary – 1976 Campaign Transition File, JCL.  
Speech Drafts, folder “Inaugural Speech Drafts – Notes and Suggestions [1-2],” box 2, Office of the Staff Secretary – 1976 Campaign Transition File, JCL.

Based upon content, as evidenced below, when compared with the final version, it is readily noticeable which of the initial drafts Carter and his team favored. The cards and the two drafts contain thematic and rhetorical similarities, but the ordering of points, as well as parts of the content, are different, a point readily seen simply by examining the opening paragraph of all three. The note card numbered “1” reads as follows:

Two centuries ago our nation’s birth ~~was a watershed~~ (~~seemed to~~ appeared to be the fulfillment) (of) the quest for (~~human~~) freedom. Ours was the first society ~~consciously~~ openly to define itself in terms of (the spiritual) liberty and of human liberty.\*

In contrast, the draft, marked “First draft/inaugural,” contains the following opening lines:

Once again the people have spoken.

Once again our democratic process has given us its unique combination of governmental continuity and political change.

Once again we honor not the victory of an individual but the vindication of a system.

And once again we give thanks to God for our priceless heritage of freedom.

This draft, rhetorically, stands in complete contrast to the eventual speech, although there is another draft with similar wording at the start. In contrast, a second draft copy, marked “Inaugural Speech First Draft,” contains the following opening paragraph:

I have just taken the Oath of Office on a Bible my mother gave me many years ago – opened to an admonition and a promise from God to King Solomon, still applicable to our people, our leaders, and our great nation.

The draft then quoted II Chronicles 7:14. The same copy shows Carter’s extensive and personal editing to tweak the wording so that it read more similarly to what he said in his address.<sup>11</sup>

---

\*Strikethroughs and parentheses are marked as they appear on the note card; both the text and the edits are in Carter’s handwriting.

Although the speech only proceeded through five circulated, typed drafts, it underwent significant changes under Carter's supervision as the primary writer and editor. Each stage of the draft process contains his distinctive handwriting. Some of the editing caused minor changes to a couple words within a paragraph, like changing "consummation" to "full completion," "a transcendent" to "an exceptional," and "we have" to "our nation has." On the other hand, some of Carter's editing was quite extensive – cutting entire sections and adding new paragraphs. These edits include the following samples that appear within the fourth draft:

As my high school teacher, Miss Julia Coleman use to say, "We must adjust to changing times and still hold to unchanging principles."

We must once again have faith in our country and in one another. I believe America can do better. We can be stronger than before.

We cannot afford to do everything, nor can we afford to ~~do nothing~~ lack boldness as we meet the future. So together, in a spirit of individual sacrifice for the common good, we must simply do our best.

These edits all exist in a very similar form in the final draft.<sup>12</sup>

Even though his personal handiwork is readily evident, one must remember that Carter was not the only one editing the drafts. The President-elect received editorial comments from members of his staff, particularly his trusted speechwriter Patrick Anderson, as evidenced by personal notes at the top of the drafts addressed to, "Gov" (short for Governor Carter). The staff members made edits to strengthen the speech rhetorically rather than change its content since Carter had already established the message he wished to relay.

---

<sup>11</sup> Carter Handwritten Inaugural Address Notes, folder "Inaugural Speech Drafts – Notes and Suggestions [1]," box 2, Office of the Staff Secretary – 1976 Campaign Transition File, JCL.  
Speech Drafts, folder "Inaugural Speech Drafts – Notes and Suggestions [1-2]," box 2, Office of the Staff Secretary – 1976 Campaign Transition File, JCL.

<sup>12</sup>Speech Drafts, folder "Inaugural Speech Drafts – Notes and Suggestions [1-2]," box 2, Office of the Staff Secretary – 1976 Campaign Transition File, JCL.

For example, the speech's fourth draft includes the following notes at various points within the text:

Even with this, the beginning is not as strong as I'd like.

Seems to read better this way.

This sentence doesn't quite fit where it was. I think moving it up makes the whole thing flow more smoothly.

This doesn't work; the mental picture is unisex public toilets.

Needed to preserve the cadence.

Staff edits, as opposed to Carter's edits, are easily distinguished due to the sharp difference in handwriting.<sup>13</sup>

Despite staff involvement, Carter's pivotal role in the drafting process is undeniable. He was the mastermind behind this presentation. The clearest way of seeing this is by comparing Carter's draft that he wrote on notebook paper with the final draft of the speech. Parallel material is noted below with Carter's handwritten material on the left and the speech's final wording on the right.

We can depend on our quiet strength, based not merely on the size of an arsenal but on the nobility of ideas.

. . . a quiet strength based not merely on the size of an arsenal, but on the nobility of ideas.

This inauguration ceremony marks a new beginning, a new spirit among our people, a new dedication within our government. No one person, nor even an entire government can can [sic] nurture and enhance this spirit.

This inauguration ceremony marks a new beginning, a new dedication within our Government, a new spirit among us all. A President may sense and proclaim that new spirit, but only a people can provide it.

We will fight our wars against poverty, ignorance, hunger and injustice for those are the constant enemies which truly threaten our vital interests.

. . . and we will fight our wars against poverty, ignorance, and injustice – for those are the enemies against which our forces can be honorably marshaled.

---

<sup>13</sup> Speech Drafts, folder "Inaugural Speech Drafts – Notes and Suggestions [1-2]," box 2, Office of the Staff Secretary – 1976 Campaign Transition File, JCL.

Because we are free, we cannot be indifferent to the fate of freedom elsewhere.

You have given me a great responsibility – to exemplify what you are. The strength of our people can compensate for my weakness, and your wisdom can minimize my mistakes. Let us create together a new national spirit of unity and trust.

Let us strive together. Let us learn, and laugh and work and pray together, and, if need be, suffer and sacrifice together, confident that in the end we will triumph together in the right.

America’s birth was a watershed in the quest for human freedom. Ours was the first society consciously to define itself both in terms of liberty and of the spiritual.

We have now learned that our nation can be strong abroad only if it is strong at home.

Because we are free we can never be indifferent to the fate of freedom elsewhere.

You have given me a great responsibility . . . to be worthy of you, and to exemplify what you are. Let us create together a new spirit of unity and trust. Your strength can compensate for my weakness, and your wisdom can help to minimize my mistakes.

Let us learn together and laugh together and work together and pray together, confident that in the end we will triumph together in the right.

Two centuries ago our Nation’s birth was a milestone in the long quest for freedom . . . Ours was the first society openly to define itself in terms of both spirituality and of human liberty.

Our Nation can be strong abroad only if it is strong at home.

The similarities, of which those included above are only a sampling, speak for themselves.<sup>14</sup>

The selection of an overarching theme was important to tie together all of the Inaugural festivities – the speech, the parade, the ball, the concert, and the many assorted celebrations and functions. An archives memo reveals that Rafshoon suggested a theme based upon Carter’s November 3, 1976, speech in Plains, Georgia, where the President-elect said, “I see the sun rising on a beautiful new day, a beautiful new spirit in the country . . . a commitment to the future.” Thus, Rafshoon suggested that the Inaugural theme either be “A

---

<sup>14</sup> Carter Handwritten Inaugural Address, folder “Inaugural Speech Drafts – Notes and Suggestions [1],” box 2, Office of the Staff Secretary – 1976 Campaign Transition File, JCL. Jimmy Carter, “Inaugural Address.” Jan. 20, 1977. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=6575>. [Hereafter noted as Carter, “Inaugural Address.”]

New Spirit . . . A New Commitment . . . A New America” or “A New Spirit for a New America.” A later memo from Patrick Caddell, a public opinion pollster in the employ of the Carter campaign team, indicates that the Carter team asked him to ponder the theme of “Renewal of America,” which Caddell found attractive. On December 1, 1976, the *Washington Star* ran an article titled, “Carter’s Theme: ‘A New America,’” containing the following opening statement: “The theme of the inauguration of President-elect Jimmy Carter will be ‘A New Spirit, a New Commitment, A New America.’” Hence, the eventual winner is known. The three suggestions are quite similar in theme and application, and their philosophical influence is clearly seen in Carter’s Inaugural Address. According to the *Washington Star* article referenced above, the Carter team chose this particular theme because it “emphasizes that the inauguration is a celebration for all the people of this country.” Additionally, the theme was consistent with the one noted within submissions outside contributors sent to the Carter team. The selected theme reveals that Carter wanted to bring the country alongside him in his presidential endeavors and the best time to start that feeling of cooperation was at the Inauguration.<sup>15</sup>

This new spirit extended to Carter himself as the first Southerner elected since the Civil War’s aftermath. However, it was not a point Carter dwelt on within his speech, although he did receive recommendations from two advisers who wanted him to do so. The first point within Carter’s deputy campaign manager, Peter Bourne’s, feedback concerning “What does your election mean to the country in terms of the broad view of history?” was:

---

<sup>15</sup> Memo, Jerry Rafshoon to Jimmy Carter, folder “Inaugural Speech Drafts – Notes and Suggestions [1-2],” box 2, Office of the Staff Secretary – 1976 Campaign Transition File, JCL.  
 Memo, Patrick Caddell to Governor Carter, Jan. 6, 1977, folder “Inaugural Speech Drafts – Notes and Suggestions [1-2],” box 2, Office of the Staff Secretary – 1976 Campaign Transition File, JCL.  
 Betty James, “Carter’s Theme: ‘A New America,” *The Washington Star* Dec. 1, 1976, folder “Newspaper Clippings re.: Inaugural 06/76-12/11/76,” box 15, 1977 Inaugural Committee, JCL

(1) The election of a Southerner signifies symbolically the end of the civil war, and a re-integration of the South, on an equal footing, into the mainstream of American political life.

(2) It also will eliminate not only the long-standing prejudice against the South, but also the artificial sense of inferiority which many Southerner's had felt.

Such sentiments are startling, but also astute. They show the continuing impact that Civil War and Civil Rights tensions had upon the region, and the persistent national sense of the South as a place apart. Patrick Caddell's lengthy contribution also included a reference to Carter's Southern roots: "Your own election as a southerner is a symbol of this desire to move down the new road of progress." In considering these recommendations, one must consider the men providing the input. Caddell's and Bourne's jobs required them to be attuned to public opinion. Statements like the ones they suggested would have been very welcome within the South. In contrast with Caddell and Bourne, neither Cyrus Vance nor Zbigniew Brzezinski – both foreign policy experts – came remotely close to touching the regional identity issue within their suggestions for the Inaugural Address. Vance and Brzezinski were likewise attuned to national attitudes, but were in the policy business rather than the people-pleasing business.<sup>16</sup>

## Analysis

Carter opened his speech unlike any President since Herbert Hoover, almost fifty years prior, by thanking the outgoing President. Carter's thanks reads very similarly to

---

<sup>16</sup> Memo, Patrick Caddell to Governor Carter, Jan. 5, 1977, folder "Inaugural Speech Drafts – Notes and Suggestions [1-2]," box 2, Office of the Staff Secretary – 1976 Campaign Transition File, JCL.  
Memo, Peter Bourne to President-elect Jimmy Carter, Jan. 11, 1977, folder "Inaugural Speech Drafts – Notes and Suggestions [1-2]," box 2, Office of the Staff Secretary – 1976 Campaign Transition File, JCL.  
Letter, Zbigniew Brzezinski to Patrick Anderson, Dec. 14, 1976, folder "Inaugural Speech Drafts – Notes and Suggestions [1-2], box 2, Office of the Staff Secretary – 1976 Campaign Transition File, JCL.  
Memo, Cyrus Vance to The President-elect, folder "Inaugural Speech Drafts – Notes and Suggestions [1-2]," box 2, Office of the Staff Secretary – 1976 Campaign Transition File, JCL.

Hoover's because both thanked their predecessors for assisting the country through a trying period. Hoover thanked Calvin Coolidge for his aid in rebuilding the nation in the wake of World War I and its economic and social aftermath; Carter thanked Gerald Ford for helping the nation heal in the wake of the Watergate scandal and Nixon's resignation from office. Hoover's and Carter's words indicated that the thanks came not from them alone, but from the nation as well. Hoover used the words, "the nation is deeply indebted," and Carter stated, "For myself and for our Nation." The symbolic, rhetorical gesture was appropriate, given that Coolidge's and Ford's actions impacted the entire country. The most notable difference between the gestures is not one of semantics, but of positioning. Carter's gesture of thanks came in his opening line whereas Hoover's came at the end of his first main point titled "Our Progress."\* This brief message of thanks was an appropriate segue into Carter's speech; the nation was healing and could now proceed forward fresh and anew.<sup>17</sup>

### **America's Foundation**

Before Carter delved into the body of his speech, he established the speech's tone by spending a brief period recounting the virtues of America's foundation. As many Presidents do, Carter expressed a firm appreciation for American traditions, notably referencing the presence of George Washington's Bible. To Carter, American traditionalism had served the nation well in the past and would aid the nation in the future. To ensure this continuation, the nation must heed the advice of one of Carter's favorite teachers, Miss Julia Coleman\*, who

---

<sup>17</sup> Remini and Golway, 321, 420.  
Carter, "Inaugural Address.

\*As will be discussed later within the Analysis portion of this chapter, the position of Carter's thanks changed within the draft development.

\* Julia Coleman was Jimmy Carter's 7<sup>th</sup> grade English teach who went on to become principal and then superintendent of Plains High School

said, “We must adjust to changing times and still hold to unchanging principles.” Carter was right; the nation faced new and different challenges in the 1970’s “Me Decade” than it had faced in the 1870s Gilded Age. However, to Carter, American resilience had endured and would continue enduring.<sup>18</sup>

Miss Julia, as her students called her, had a great impact upon the new President in many ways; but, most importantly, she instilled the belief in young Jimmy that even a boy from Plains, Georgia could grow up to become President of the United States.\* Miss Julia was a passionate learner whose highest desire was to instill a love of knowledge within her students, particularly the bright ones like Jimmy Carter. Miss Julia lived to see her former student elected Governor of Georgia, but passed away before he became President. Carter’s poignant inclusion of her quote within his Inaugural Address is a testament to this teacher who played such an important role in his young life.<sup>19</sup>

Following the reference to Miss Julia and her exhortation to maintain one’s personal principles, Carter continued establishing the speech’s focus of America’s great foundation by highlighting America’s spiritual tradition. The inclusion of scripture within the Inaugural Address should come as no surprise given Carter’s outspokenness regarding his Southern Baptist roots, although directly quoting the Bible is not an Inaugural Address tradition. For this speech, Carter opted to use Micah 6:8: “He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly

---

<sup>18</sup>Carter, “Inaugural Address.”

<sup>19</sup> Godbold, 38-41

Carter Handwritten Inaugural Address Notes, folder “Inaugural Speech Drafts – Notes and Suggestions [1],” box 2, Office of the Staff Secretary – 1976 Campaign Transition File, JCL.

Fourth Speech Draft, “Inaugural Address,” folder “Inaugural Speech Drafts – Notes and Suggestions [1-2],” box 2, Office of the Staff Secretary – 1976 Campaign Transition File, JCL.

\*Carter’s handwritten speech draft notes as well as his handwritten note in the fourth draft of the speech reveal that it was Carter’s idea to highlight Miss Julia.

with thy God?” The choice to quote Micah is interesting because the book describes the “wretched estate of all Israel because of their sin, and the wonderful deliverance to be brought in by Him ‘whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting,’” in reference to the birth of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem. The book is a classic narrative of redemption. It begins with Israel’s guilt and condemnation and ends with the hope of eternal forgiveness.<sup>20</sup>

Micah Chapter 6 turns the attention away from the future and emphasizes the present state of the Israelites – their ways and actions, and the necessity of moral living. Micah warned that the Lord always disapproved of those who chose to walk in disobedience, for disobedience caused a rift in the relationship between the people and God. The only way to reestablish the relationship of communion with God was through humility and repentance. The prophet then reminded the people of God’s grace and goodness to them throughout their history, particularly their deliverance from slavery in Egypt. As the prophet said, God had chastened His people and called them to righteousness so that they could receive Divine blessing. Micah, as God’s prophet, was reminding the people that if they confessed their sin and rejected their present way of living by following God’s commandments to “do justly . . . love mercy, and . . . walk humbly with thy God,” then they would receive the Lord’s blessing and reestablish their joyful relationship with Him.<sup>21</sup>

It is not entirely clear that the new President was purposefully drawing a direct comparison between the historical state of Israel’s actions in the Book of Micah and the American people’s actions in 1977 (although some religious scholars might delight in the comparison, given some of the social mores traditionally associated with the popular culture

---

<sup>20</sup> Carter, “Inaugural Address.”

H. A. Ironside, *Notes on the Minor Prophets* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers: 1969), 219-220.

<sup>21</sup> Ironside, 245-247.

of the 1970s). Carter's notes for his Inaugural Address show that he himself was not pleased with the moral position of the American people. The President-elect wrote, "We are a spiritual nation, but we are threatened by moral decay." Making such a direct statement within personal notes is quite different, however, from saying it publicly in a speech, even if Carter was not the only person holding that opinion. And Carter was not alone. Jerry Rafshoon's memo indicates his support for Carter's view on this issue. Rafshoon said, "Right now we [the American people] suffer from a spiritual malaise . . . a crisis of the spirit." The word "spiritual" in this case has nothing to do with religious belief, but everything to do with outlook and perspective. Rather than issuing a social chastisement, a more practical assessment of the inclusion of Micah 6:8, given the content within the main body of Carter's Inaugural Address and his focus upon making America better, is that Carter urged the American people to improve themselves and thereby improve their country. By clinging to their traditional spiritual roots and treating others as they would wish to be treated, the American people would follow this biblical mandate and build a better American society.<sup>22</sup>

However, Micah 6:8 was not the President's first choice. His handwritten outline, as well as a marked-up copy of the speech's first draft, included an Old Testament reference – II Chronicles 7:14: "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." The first draft also indicates that II Chronicles 7:14 was the passage laying open before him; within the Bible his mother had

---

<sup>22</sup> Carter Handwritten Inaugural Address Notes, folder "Inaugural Speech Drafts – Notes and Suggestions [1]," box 2, Office of the Staff Secretary – 1976 Campaign Transition File, JCL.  
Memo, Jerry Rafshoon to Jimmy Carter, Jan. 4, 1977, folder "Inaugural Speech Drafts – Notes and Suggestions [1-2]," box 2, Office of the Staff Secretary – 1976 Campaign Transition File, JCL.

given him; the Bible upon which he took the Oath of Office. These statements are identical to the ones Carter referenced in conjunction with Micah 6:8 in the final draft. The speech's second draft indicates that II Chronicles 7:14 was "Option I" and Micah 6:8 was "Option II." The reasoning behind the switch from II Chronicles to Micah is not specifically noted in the drafts, but a note from Patrick Anderson, one of Carter's chief speechwriters, provides at least one theory. Anderson expressed his nervousness regarding "that particular Biblical quotation." Anderson never states the reference, but his subsequent wording indicates that he was referencing II Chronicles 7:14. Anderson related, "It could be interpreted as your suggesting that the American people humble themselves and turn from their wicked ways and their sins, but you've been arguing all along that the government was bad but the people were good." A desire to maintain a consistent message would certainly be a worthy enough reason to switch verses, and President Carter could not afford to alienate the American people on his first day in office.<sup>23</sup>

There are also other indications that can be gathered from the editorial comments as to why Carter would switch verses. In the first two drafts, Carter began his speech by referencing the Bible and taking the Oath of Office. The speech then proceeds into the scriptural reference (II Chronicles) after which Carter thanked Ford for helping heal the country. The Old Testament healing of the nation thus corresponded directly to Ford's actions after the Watergate scandal. Despite thematic parallels between the two verses, by switching passages as well as rearranging the speech's content, Carter effectively changed

---

<sup>23</sup> Carter Handwritten Inaugural Address Notes, folder "Inaugural Speech Drafts – Notes and Suggestions [1]," box 2, Office of the Staff Secretary – 1976 Campaign Transition File, JCL. Speech Drafts, "Inaugural Address," folder "Inaugural Speech Drafts – Notes and Suggestions [1-2]," box 2, Office of the Staff Secretary – 1976 Campaign Transition File, JCL. Memo, Patrick Anderson to Governor Carter, folder "Inaugural Speech Drafts – Notes and Suggestions [1]," box 2, Office of the Staff Secretary – 1976 Campaign Transition File, JCL.

the purpose for which the biblical reference was included. The focal point shifted from national healing to a new national spirit; in essence, this was a change from mourning to hope.<sup>24</sup>

### **America's Future**

Following his thanks to President Ford, tribute to Miss Julia, and exhortation from Micah, Carter presented a clear thesis statement for his speech: "This inauguration ceremony marks a new beginning, a new dedication within our Government, and a new spirit among us all. A President may sense and proclaim that new spirit, but only a people can provide it." This statement coincided with the over-arching theme for the entire Inauguration (as relayed in Jerry Rafshoon's memo), but also provided a three point outline for the speech.<sup>25</sup>

Carter began his Inaugural Address by concentrating upon the dream of a new beginning for all Americans. The first component within this section was Carter's specific statement that his speech was not intended to create a new dream, but rather awaken an old one – the dream of freedom, present within America since its foundation. As Peter Bourne suggested in his letter of thoughts concerning the Inaugural Address, "The way to move forward is to go back to our founding principles and adapt them to today's [sic] realities." Within the Inaugural Address, Carter expresses America's founding as a "milestone in the long quest for freedom" and indicated that the founders' dream still awaited its full fruition. This concept appears to gain its inspiration from Zbigniew Brzezinski's\* letter dated December 14, 1976. Brzezinski's letter logically included primarily upon foreign policy

---

<sup>24</sup> Speech Drafts, "Inaugural Address," folder "Inaugural Speech Drafts – Notes and Suggestions [1-2]," box 2, Office of the Staff Secretary – 1976 Campaign Transition File, JCL.

<sup>25</sup> Carter, "Inaugural Address."

\*Dr. Zbigniew Brzezinski went on to serve as Carter's National Security Adviser.

issues, although he listed other themes which, for political reasons, he felt should be mentioned within the Inaugural Address. Brzezinski's letter outlined six major themes, the first of which was "The New Spirit/the international dimension." The first sentence under this point read, "America's birth was a watershed in man's quest for freedom" which was tweaked to read, "Two centuries ago our Nation's birth was a milestone in the long quest for freedom" within the Inaugural Address. The two themes bear clear enough similarities that it is safe to presume Brzezinski's influence upon the eventual speech.<sup>26</sup>

The second component of Carter's dream of a new beginning was the necessity of cooperation between Carter and the nation. Carter knew that he could not accomplish his goals alone; he needed the support of the American people. Carter also made a startling admission – he admitted weakness and that he could and would make mistakes. Politicians simply do not admit any flaws, especially not in nationally televised speeches. This tendency did not prevent Carter from openly stating, "Your [the American people's] strength can compensate for my weakness, and your wisdom can help minimize my mistakes." This statement, or one very similar to it, is found throughout the speech drafts, including the very first draft. An uncharacteristic, but honest, statement like this fits Carter's persona. This was the man who admitted to *Playboy* editors that he had lusted after women and committed adultery in his heart. The resultant uproar mostly surrounded the fact this it was *Playboy*, and that Carter seemed to be talking about sex. But a careful observer would understand that Carter was actually making a sophisticated point about theodicy, or the presence and state of evil in life. The average politician does not make statements like that in public either, but

---

<sup>26</sup> Carter, "Inaugural Address."

Memo, Peter Bourne to President-elect Jimmy Carter, Jan. 11, 1977, folder "Inaugural Speech Drafts – Notes and Suggestions [1-2]," box 2, Office of the Staff Secretary – 1976 Campaign Transition File, JCL.  
Letter, Zbigniew Brzezinski to Patrick Anderson, Dec. 14, 1976, folder "Inaugural Speech Drafts – Notes and Suggestions [1-2]," box 2, Office of the Staff Secretary – 1976 Campaign Transition File, JCL.

Carter was far from the average Washington politician. Carter's admission of humanity fit well with his urging the American people to work cooperatively not just with him, but with their fellow citizens. Carter encouraged the American people to learn together, laugh together, work together, pray together, and ultimately triumph together. Carter viewed this cooperative endeavor not merely as a suggestion, but as a mandate required of Americans, because their country was the first one established that clearly defined itself "in terms of both spirituality and of human liberty." Carter adopted suggested language from Brandt Ayers' and Cyrus Vance's letters as well as points from a complete speech submitted by William M. Touchstone of Houston, Texas when he urged the American people to work together. By doing so, Americans would ensure that the American dream continued into the future, that America could and would be better, and that the American people could and would be stronger than before.<sup>27</sup>

Carter's second point was the new direction upon which the nation needed to embark. As the President mentioned earlier in the speech, he believed that America was not in the position it needed to be socially, morally, and politically. Carter could have spent a great deal of time elaborating upon each of the major challenges America was facing at the time, but doing so would have served no purpose other than depressing the audience. Carter's focus was minimally on the past and almost entirely upon the future. Carter noted that America had made great strides in improving the quality of life for all Americans, but there

---

<sup>27</sup> Carter, "Inaugural Address."

Speech Drafts, "Inaugural Address," folder "Inaugural Speech Drafts – Notes and Suggestions [1-2]," box 2, Office of the Staff Secretary – 1976 Campaign Transition File, JCL.

Letter, Brandt Ayers to President Jimmy, folder "Inaugural Speech Drafts – Notes and Suggestions [1-2]," box 2, Office of the Staff Secretary – 1976 Campaign Transition File, JCL.

Memo, Cyrus Vance to The President-elect, folder "Inaugural Speech Drafts – Notes and Suggestions [1-2]," box 2, Office of the Staff Secretary – 1976 Campaign Transition File, JCL.

William M. Touchstone Inaugural Speech, Jan. 3, 1977, folder "Inaugural Speech Drafts – Notes and Suggestions [1-2]," box 2, Office of the Staff Secretary – 1976 Campaign Transition File, JCL.

were still improvements which could be made and Carter was resolved to making those advancements. He made this quite clear by stating, “Our commitment to human rights must be absolute, our laws fair, our natural beauty preserved; the powerful must not persecute the weak, and human dignity must be enhanced.”<sup>28</sup>

To get the country back on the right track, the country first needed to reestablish its faith in the nation’s basic principles – liberty, equality, opportunity, and human rights. Patrick Caddell’s memo suggested this theme of restoring the nation’s faith. Caddell emphasized that the country did not need upheaval at this point in time. Rather, it needed stability and a return to basic moral values, which fit perfectly within Carter’s general theme. Caddell’s ideas also contributed to the following line from the Inaugural Address: “We have learned that ‘more’ is not necessarily ‘better.’” Caddell’s memo emphasized this theme under a bullet point titled “Quality of Life versus Quantity” where he stated, “We have reached a high level of acquisition of material goods. We must learn that more does not mean better.” This theme fit into the then-current vogue for the “Small is Beautiful” ethos popularized by E.F. Schumacher in his 1973 book of the same name. Carter’s primary campaign rival, Jerry Brown of California, frequently cited this message, and it came to fit into Carter’s overall ethos, as well.<sup>29</sup>

The return to basic principles portion of Carter’s speech also took great inspiration from Cyrus Vance’s contributions. This is logical given that Vance went on to become Carter’s Secretary of State, and Carter opted to make several statements regarding America’s position in the world. Carter used Vance’s exact wording when he said, “Our Nation can be strong abroad only if it is strong at home.” He also made statements remarkably similar to

---

<sup>28</sup> Carter, “Inaugural Address.”

<sup>29</sup> Memo, Patrick Caddell to Governor Carter, Jan. 5, 1977, folder “Inaugural Speech Drafts – Notes and Suggestions [1-2],” box 2, Office of the Staff Secretary – 1976 Campaign Transition File, JCL.

those in Vance's letter. Vance's wording was, "We will not behave in another country in a way which would violate our own rules and standards here at home" and Carter said, "We will not behave in foreign places so as to violate our rules and standards here at home."

Another example is Vance's statement, "Our greatest strength overseas . . . is the ideas that are the bedrock of this nation," which became, "And we know that the best way to enhance freedom in other lands is to demonstrate here that our democratic system is worthy of emulation," in Carter's address.<sup>30</sup>

Within this section, Carter was not proposing anything new. He was simply providing a philosophical reminder that would, when put into action, change the country for the better and thereby change the country's relationship with other countries. There was a specific context for these remarks since, during the Watergate era, American adventurism overseas was subject to harsh criticism. Senator Frank Church (D-ID) led publicized hearings into CIA operations which seemed to betray the American freedoms which that institution was supposed to defend. Carter's pledge to reintroduce the domestic values of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, as well as a moral compass of right and wrong into foreign policy, was part of his pledge to fix what was broken in Washington. Carter was in no way pessimistic about this rededication occurring; his writings express his resolve that it could and it would. But he was not ignorant that such a rededication would take personal sacrifice, which is why he encouraged the nation to sacrifice together for the common good. Carter did not ask for an insurmountable sacrifice; he simply asked the American people to do their best.<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> Carter, "Inaugural Address."  
Memo, Cyrus Vance to The President-elect, folder "Inaugural Speech Drafts – Notes and Suggestions [1-2]," box 2, Office of the Staff Secretary – 1976 Campaign Transition File, JCL.

<sup>31</sup> Carter, "Inaugural Address."

Carter's third area of focus was upon the new American spirit which would arise as a natural outgrowth of his dream for a new beginning and the rededication of the American people. The new American spirit would arise from a return to America's traditional roots and from its people doing their best. Carter repeated "We are" within each of his key points. By using "we," Carter put himself alongside the American people. He and the people would work together to accomplish several goals. First, America would maintain strength, both military and moral, so that the nation would never need to prove itself in battle. This is a point Brzezinski supported and encouraged the President to emphasize – American power "must remain a constant and credible factor of stability." That stability must be evident not only to America's friends, but also to its foes because of the Cold War conflict. America might be idealistic, but it would never be weak.<sup>32</sup>

However, Carter did not desire to instigate conflict, particularly with the Soviet Union, because to do so would likely have meant not just a military conflict but a nuclear conflict. In general terms, he wanted the rivalry with the Soviets to lessen, and Détente to continue. Strategic Arms Control was to be a central plank of his outlook. Within the Inaugural Address, Carter emphasized his position against nuclear arms and the military arms race that had dominated the Cold War landscape over the previous three decades. Carter pledged "perseverance and wisdom in our efforts to limit the world's armaments to those necessary for each nation's own domestic safety." This pledge continues Carter's optimism, but it is also vague and difficult to implement. What body determines the amount and types of arms necessary for domestic safety? The United Nations could not assume that role due to the veto power of select members of the Security Council. Additionally, no matter what

---

<sup>32</sup> Carter, "Inaugural Address."  
Letter, Zbigniew Brzezinski to Patrick Anderson, Dec. 14, 1976, folder "Inaugural Speech Drafts – Notes and Suggestions [1-2], box 2, Office of the Staff Secretary – 1976 Campaign Transition File, JCL.

limitations were put in place, one could assume that at least one nation would probably cheat and manufacture over their established quota despite the bi-lateral treaties making allowances for external verification.<sup>33</sup>

Carter did not recognize only the new spirit within America; he also recognized that there was a new spirit on the international level, saying, “The passion for freedom is on the rise.” Given the historical context, this statement could be interpreted many ways. First, the 20<sup>th</sup> Century was dominated by nationalist and self-determinist movements around the world. New countries fought their way to existence during every decade. The aftermath of World War I saw the sprouting up of new countries in Europe and the Middle East. The end of World War II rearranged the borders yet again. The 1950s and 1960s saw Europe’s colonial holdings in Africa and Asia break free in great numbers. Also, various parts of the Soviet block had attempted to shake loose from Moscow’s vise-like grip, from Hungary in 1956 to Czechoslovakia in 1968. Poland’s status occasioned controversy during a Carter-Ford debate when the Republican nominee challenged the assertion that Warsaw was under Moscow’s domination. In the Soviet Union itself, Nikita Khrushchev’s explosive treatment of Stalinism sparked a significant – if quiet – reassessment of Party leadership. The fresh air of freedom had blown through Soviet society and would continue doing so under the leadership of Mikhail Gorbachev in the 1980s.<sup>34</sup>

To Carter, Americans could not overlook this quest for international freedom simply because its own people were already free themselves. Americans had the moral responsibility to aid the cause of freedom, primarily through the promotion of human rights.

---

<sup>33</sup> Carter, “Inaugural Address.”

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

Speech Draft, President’s Marked Up First Draft 1/20/80, folder “1/23/80 [Material for State of the Union Address] [3],” box 166, Office of the Staff Secretary – Presidential Handwriting File, JCL.

America would not intimidate or bully, but it would be vigilant and proactive because human rights transcended national borders. Human rights were given to all mankind, and governments should never be allowed to withhold them from people. Peter Bourne encouraged the President on this issue: “All people regardless of where they live and/or what political system they live under, share these aspirations, and we should help them be fulfilled.” The aspirations Bourne references included an entire listing of basic human needs and rights, including the “freedom from hunger, physical suffering and disease, war, pests, pollution of the environment, and servitude to others . . . the opportunity to travel freely, to be educated,” etc. Carter’s ambitions in this area were certainly noble and arguably justified, but the implementation and guarantee of human rights around the world would prove an arduous task. Despite the obstacles, Carter maintained human rights as his signature foreign policy issue, and connecting American values with American foreign policy in this regard became associated with his presidency.<sup>35</sup>

Finally, Carter closed his Inaugural Address with a list of exhortations – statements that “when my time as your President has ended, people might say this about our Nation.”

This list included the following:

That we had remembered the words of Micah and renewed our search for humility, mercy, and justice

That we had torn down the barriers that separated those of different race and region and religion, and where there had been mistrust, built unity, with a respect for diversity

That we had found productive work for those able to perform it

That we had strengthened the American family, which is the basis of our society

---

<sup>35</sup> Carter, “Inaugural Address.”

Memo, Peter Bourne to President-elect Jimmy Carter, Jan. 11, 1977, folder “Inaugural Speech Drafts – Notes and Suggestions [1-2],” box 2, Office of the Staff Secretary – 1976 Campaign Transition File, JCL.

That we had ensured respect for the law, and equal treatment under the law,  
for the weak and the powerful, for the rich and the poor

That we had enabled our people to be proud of their own Government once  
again

The list directly mirrors the themes and statements Carter had just made within his speech, as well as those suggestions submitted for the Inaugural Address. He again references Micah, as he had in his introduction, and the other points all relate to his emphasis: dreaming of a new beginning, establishing a new dedication to American ideals, and embracing the new spirit emerging within the country and around the world. Most importantly, in closing, Carter emphasized that he did not want the American people to view these statements as his presidential goals. No, they were the nation's goals; they belonged to the people and the people would determine success versus failure.<sup>36</sup>

### **Immediate Response**

As is characteristic of the media attention to presidential Inaugurations throughout American history, Carter's Inaugural Address received its fair share of attention from the press, both negative and positive and both domestic and international. Among the discontented was columnist and political analyst Joseph Kraft of the *Washington Post* who published a scathing review of the President's speech. Kraft criticized Carter both for what he said, particularly Carter's emphasis upon returning to the "virtues of the old-time religion," and for what he did not say, namely not mentioning the Soviet bloc, crime, drugs, war, sickness, and other social ills. Kraft expressed concern that Carter's speech projected a

---

<sup>36</sup> Carter, "Inaugural Address."

Assorted Inaugural Address Suggestions, folder "Inaugural Speech Drafts – Notes and Suggestions [1-2]," box 2, Office of the Staff Secretary – 1976 Campaign Transition File, JCL.

philosophy of complacency, thereby diminishing the nation's sense of responsibility and the necessity of taking action. Kraft closed his article by expressing the hope that Carter walked better than he talked. *Time Magazine*, while kinder than Kraft and taking the entirety of the Inauguration Day into consideration, also criticized the speech, which, it informed readers, had been completed "only a couple of days earlier." *Time* called the Address "subdued," relayed that that even Carter's supporters found it "disappointing," and complained that Carter's "singsong cadence" effectively undermined the speech's content, which was more effective when read than when heard. A different piece within the *Washington Post* titled, "How Mr. Carter Sees the World," dealt the President a more favorable hand by focusing upon the opportunities within Carter's reach to benefit the nation and the world. However, the article still contained an element of criticism regarding Carter's rhetoric towards the international community which the author feared would leave many unimpressed. In comparison with the aforementioned pieces, Haynes Johnson's *Washington Post* article was quite complimentary. Johnson appreciated Carter's "solemn, short speech" that was "understated in tone and in stated promise." Rather than finding Carter's tone a "singsong," Johnson deemed it firm and even-toned. He also noted that Carter's speech was "most warmly received when he referred to problems of the past," particularly when he addressed the United States' behavior in foreign countries, an unnamed reference to the Vietnam War. Another *Washington Post* article from January 21 complimented the President on keeping his religious rhetoric "gentle, benign and broadly acceptable" in its expression. Most notably, however, not a single news article within the archival files criticized one particular component of Carter's speech – his thanks to President Ford. If for no other reason, the press

appeared to appreciate Carter's Inaugural Address for that simple, heartfelt gesture of appreciation.<sup>37</sup>

The administration also took careful notice of the foreign media's response to the Inauguration, both immediately following the Inauguration and later in the week. These media summaries were circulated among key staff members, including the National Security Adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, and were divided by government type (Communist versus Noncommunist) and by country. According to these summaries, the Soviet media was "consistent with the increasingly positive view of the new [Carter] Administration" and they had broadcast selected portions of the speech, namely those relating to peace and arms control. China, in keeping with its previous straightforward news items regarding the President, simply reported that "James Carter, a big southern peanut farm owner and a former governor of Georgia has now 'formally' become President." No further information or impressions were broadcast to the people. In contrast to the Soviet and Chinese media, the Western European media covered and interpreted every possible angle of the Inauguration. According to the report, most were favorably impressed, but they were "somewhat divided in assessing the President's speech." Many expressed their desire to hear more regarding U.S. foreign policy and less of Carter's moral generalities. This was not an unusual reaction from European capitals, where moralistic American rhetoric usually found little enthusiastic official reception – mirroring the experience of Woodrow Wilson.<sup>38</sup>

The administration's second summary provided a more in depth coverage of the foreign media's reaction. According to the report, with the exception of North Korea and

---

<sup>37</sup> Inaugural Newspaper Clippings, folders "Newspaper Clippings re. Inaugural" and "Post Inaugural Newspaper Clippings," boxes 15-16, 1977 Inaugural Committee, JCL.

<sup>38</sup> Initial Foreign Media Reaction to Presidential Inauguration, Jan. 22, 1977, folder "Media Reaction to Carter Administration and Polls: 1/77-2/79," box 33, Office of the National Security Adviser – Zbigniew Brzezinski's Subject Files, JCL.

Cambodia, “all communist countries have at least reported the inauguration of President Carter and most have published editorial comment noting favorably the new administration’s professed commitment to peace.” The Communists’ attention to professions of peace is logical given the Cold War environment. The Soviets were committed to the Détente course. They and their satellites could be expected to support a tone which promised to continue that policy. In contrast, the Western European nations were less concerned with world peace and more attentive to alliances and Carter’s expressions of moralism and idealism. Two regions not included in the first report but included in the second were the Middle East and Latin America. According to the report, Arab reactions were sparse and speculative, whereas Israel’s were generally optimistic that America’s historic ties with the small country would be maintained. This was a key concern since the Middle East was not quite three years removed from the 1973 war. Latin American press comments appeared difficult to obtain and provided little to no commentary on the President’s speech. There is irony here, since Carter’s emphasis on human rights would cause problems for several Latin American dictatorships accustomed to American support based upon anticommunism.<sup>39</sup>

The White House also undoubtedly received the usual laudatory letters and telegrams from the American public congratulating him on his presidency. However, the mail sample files included very few of these letters. Of these few samples, only two contained notable comments aside from the usual well wishes, congratulations, and assurance of prayers. Mildred Wilson of North Tonawanda, New York sent the President a telegram on February 4, 1977 in which she stated, “I am very proud to know that my vote helped to send a man of so much compassion to the White House ... I for one know I chose a great man when you were

---

<sup>39</sup> Foreign Media Reaction to Presidential Inauguration, Jan. 25, 1977, folder “Media Reaction to Carter Administration and Polls: 1/77-2/79,” box 33, Office of the National Security Adviser – Zbigniew Brzezinski’s Subject Files, JCL.

Jimmy Who.” Her closing sentiments of “Jimmy Who” accurately summarize Carter’s political career. Even at the start of his presidential campaign, Carter was a relatively unknown national figure. Another correspondent, Jack Reilly of Huntington, New York, wrote on February 23, 1977, inviting the First Family to have dinner with his family as a means of proving that Carter was “indeed a peoples’ president” and allowing the President to show his “salute and tribute to all school teachers and Korean veterans as well.” Reilly closed the letter by saying, “So, Mr. President, accept our invitation, sit by our fire with us, and enjoy my wife’s great cooking – Yankee style.” Mr. Reilly’s letter earned him a response from the White House in which the President related that he was “particularly pleased” by the “kind invitation to visit your home and to discuss your ideas with you.” However, the President was unsure whether he would be able to accept the invitation, but would hold the letter for consideration should his itinerary take him to that part of New York. It is rather delightful to imagine the Secret Service testing Mrs. Reilly’s cooking to ensure it was safe for the President’s consumption.<sup>40</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Carter did not assume the presidency at an easy point in history, but those challenges did not deter him from pursuing his objectives. Even though many of Carter’s goals did not come to fruition, the research contained within this chapter gives credence to the arguments and scholarship that present Carter as a man of great ideas and ideals. Despite many historians labeling his presidency as “ineffectual,” others give Carter credit for being one of the most active previous Presidents in American history. Carter’s focus on human rights did not end when he left the White House. He has continued the fight for a better America and a

---

<sup>40</sup> Letters to the President, Mail Sample Files, White House Central Files, boxes 1-4.

better world. His post-White House actions have proved that the words he uttered within his Inaugural Address were not merely ones that were convenient for the hour in which they were spoken. The words matched the man.

This chapter provides unique insight into Carter's skill in shaping his own message. Carter is not recognized as a skilled orator, but that does not mean that he was not an effective writer. His personal influence upon the Inaugural Address is unquestionable. Carter developed his own outlines, wrote his own drafts, and edited what his speechwriting staff returned to him. He knew what he wanted to say, how he wanted to say it, and was able to develop those ideas on paper. Today's scholarship does not widely recognize this reality.

Carter cannot be faulted for desiring and envisioning a better America – economically, morally, internationally, militarily, and socially. Yet this vision begs the question, “How does a President go about bettering a nation?” As Carter related in his speech, he could not accomplish this goal alone; it would require the cooperation of the American people. How, then, does one instill the necessary ambition within a people? One option is through rousing oratory, a skill Carter did not naturally possess. Another option is through charismatic personality, another trait Carter did not exhibit.

What Carter did possess was the power of leading by example. Just as he walked from the Capitol to the White House following his Inaugural Address to break the barriers of aloofness and show that he was the People's President, Carter was determined to remain “Jimmy” despite his surroundings, opposition, and political challenges. Ultimately, Carter's vision of a better America came back to haunt him in the 1980 presidential election when Ronald Reagan soundly defeated the incumbent President as the American people answered that they were not better off than they had been in 1977.

## Chapter 2: Ronald Reagan's Vision for America "Inaugural Address" January 20, 1981

### Introduction

Ronald Reagan's Inauguration on January 20, 1981, followed an overwhelming political victory over incumbent Jimmy Carter. Although some scholars describe this event as an "unforeseen tidal wave," others view it as a negative referendum on Carter's political stance. In contrast, others credit Reagan's success to his "splendid simplicity" of speech. That plainness of speech, heartfelt message, and smoothness of delivery extended to Reagan's first Inaugural Address, a speech that stood in stark contrast to the lavish stateliness of the surrounding Inaugural events.<sup>41</sup>

Many people appear unaware of the pivotal role that Reagan played in the speech's development. The Reagan speechwriting staff, anchored by long-time Reagan aide Ken Khachigian, put forth an open-call to government entities, campaign consultants, friends of the President-elect, and the American people in general for suggestions towards the overall message as well as specific portions of the speech. Khachigian maintained close contact with Reagan during the developmental process. However, Reagan remained dissatisfied with the prepared speech, so he wrote his own . . . by hand. Reagan incorporated components and thoughts from Khachigian's draft and inserted his own ideas and desires. The speech's content was kept a closely guarded secret so as to heighten its impact when delivered live. One of the few things Edwin Meese, Reagan's counselor, was willing to say about the speech in advance was that it would "emphasize the fact that we face many problems in domestic and foreign affairs" and that "there is a sense of urgency in the speech." Meese's description

---

<sup>41</sup> Sean Willentz, *The Age of Reagan: A History, 1974-2008* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008), 125, 127.

is quite accurate, for the speech revealed itself to be a unique amalgamation of America's recommendations combined with Reagan's own resolution. This pairing would go on to fuel a new wave of conservatism that would sweep the nation during the 1980s.<sup>42</sup>

## Development

Reagan rightfully deserves much of the credit for the Inaugural Address' content and style, but one cannot underestimate Ken Khachigian's influence. A White House veteran, Khachigian had served on Nixon's speechwriting staff before the Reagan campaign tapped him to develop speeches in between campaigns stops rather than sending them through the centralized campaign headquarters. It was Khachigian who solicited the public recommendations for the Inaugural Address. Perhaps most impressively, Khachigian also read and analyzed every single previous Inaugural Address, paying close attention to each one's historical context. The historical setting was what impressed him the most – not the eloquence (or lack thereof), but each Inaugural Address' ability to tell the story of America every four years. What America was thinking and feeling in 1880 was different than what it was thinking and feeling in 1980. Khachigian set out to tell the American story of 1980 with Reagan starring as the lead character, guiding America into a new era.<sup>43</sup>

In order to tell America's story, Khachigian needed to know what America was thinking. This rationale made an open or semi-open call for suggestions understandable. It is unknown what types of responses or how many Khachigian desired when the speechwriting office sent out the call, or the percentage of responses received in relation to

---

<sup>42</sup> Lou Cannon, *President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), 96-98. Associated Press, "Reagan 'putting his heart' into the Inaugural address," *Los Angeles Herald Examiner* (Jan 11, 1981), A6.

<sup>43</sup> Cannon, 96.

number of requests sent out, but the outpouring of suggestions was substantial. Another evident fact is that Khachigian outlined a basic procedure and schedule for developing the Inaugural Address. The schedule's first phase was the call for contributions. Khachigian explained the call as an opportunity for "everyone in a key position and whose substantivd [sic] advice is required . . . to make an input into the speech." The memos were to be limited to two pages in length (a recommendation followed by some, but not by others) and to include what the writer felt the speech should contain: "tone, substance, length, any special gestures to make, etc." The suggestions were to go through Robert Garrick at Transition Headquarters and seen only by the President-elect.\* The Reagan team requested that suggestions be submitted by December 11, 1980; but, as would be expected, late stragglers continued arriving well into January. A wide variety of individuals, governmental entities, and private groups and individuals sent proposals, including everything from full drafts to topic-specific pieces on everything from nuclear energy to foreign policy to those consisting of a series of one-liners. The individuals included Seth Cropsey from *Fortune Magazine*, Pete Hannaford of the public relations firm Deaver & Hannaford, Inc., Vernon Jordan of the National Urban League, and many others whose positions or organizations were not included in the correspondence.<sup>44</sup>

---

<sup>44</sup> Memo, Ray Price to The President-Elect, Dec 29, 1981, folder "President-Elect Reagan: Inaugural Address, First Draft January 4, 1981 (2)," Kenneth Khachigian Papers, RRL.  
 Inaugural Suggestions, folder "Inaugural Address, 1/20/81," Kenneth Khachigian Papers, RRL.  
 Memo: Ken Khachigian to Ed Meese and Jim Baker, Dec. 6, 1980, folder "Inaugural Address, 1/20/81 (3)" Kenneth Khachigian Papers, RRL.

\* Khachigian's instructions that the suggestions "be seen only by the Governor and whomever he plans to discuss them with" is interesting considering all of the suggestions included herein are housed in the Kenneth Khachigian Papers collection at the Ronald Reagan Library. It is possible that additional suggestions might be found within Reagan's gubernatorial papers and those included within Khachigian's are only the ones that Reagan shared with him. However, given the broad spectrum of suggestions contained within the Khachigian collection and the large number which were not integrated into Khachigian's drafts of the speech, it is entirely plausible that Garrick's office, on behalf of President-elect Reagan, relayed through far more information than was originally planned.

The submitted suggestions likewise varied from the worthy of inclusion to the absurd. On January 7, 1981, Robert Garrick forwarded a letter from Paul Somers, a California real estate broker, to Ken Khachigian. Garrick's memo stated: "I thought the enclosed suggestion for the President-elect's speech would at least give you your morning humor. When you read this correspondence through carefully, this fellow may not have a bad idea; but I think it holds the potential for the start of World War III." Garrick was following the established procedure of forwarding any and all submissions to Khachigian . . . no matter how pretentious or bizarre. In this case, Garrick's summary was quite accurate, for Somers' recommendation included the following lines:

Two hours ago . . . a force of volunteer American paratroopers landed in Iran and surrounded the 'holy city' of Qom, the residence of Ayatolla Kohmeni [sic]. These troops are armed with (tactical nuclear?) weapons which could level that city in a matter of a few hours . . .

The government of Iran has been notified of the presence of the troops and has been informed that the purpose of their presence in Iran is to cause that government to deliver the America kidnap victims, unharmed and in good health . . .

As a further safeguard to the troops involved in this humanitarian mission, the Strategic Air Command has been ordered to target certain sites in Iran for total destruction should any of the troops be harmed.

It would be super-effected if the President-elect would then proceed into the next point in his speech without missing a beat, as much as to say that the above is a routine reaction to this situation – as it is . . .

One can only imagine the political fall-out if such rhetoric had been included in the Inaugural Address. However, as historical events revealed, the advice proved unnecessary as Iran peacefully released the hostages shortly after President Reagan took the Oath of Office.<sup>45</sup>

---

<sup>45</sup> Memo, Bob Garrick to Ken Khachigian, folder "Inaugural Address, 1/20/81 (6)", Kenneth Khachigian Papers, RRL.

In contrast to the example above, the majority of the messages contained well-written and plausible suggestions. Many of these ideas were utilized and many more were not. These suggestions included Lorrin L. Morrison's three-page historical missive in which he noted that he was submitting "some suggestions that might otherwise have been overlooked," and Dr. Stephen A. Novick's five-page letter which emphasized what was wrong with America and the necessity of summoning the memory of historic leaders to inspire the American people to fix their nation's problems.<sup>46</sup>

Khachigian's papers at the Ronald Reagan Library reveal that even the politically disgraced Richard Nixon sent some self-described "random thoughts" for the Inaugural on January 15. In reality, Nixon's "random thoughts" covered three pages and included instructions for a secretly planned "grace note" to the Carters thanking them for their service to the nation during a difficult period. Nixon's suggestions went on to include nine paragraphs of quotable material relating to foreign policy, including:

This is a time not just to defend freedom but to extend it to those who want it wherever they may be – not by the force of our arms, but by the power of our example.

As I have travelled over this great and good country over the past 40 years, I have had the privilege of speaking to and looking into the faces of millions of Americans. We are a strong, peaceful, generous, and decent people. There is nothing we desire more than to join with other men and women of good will to launch a winning crusade against poverty, misery, and disease throughout the world.<sup>47</sup>

---

<sup>46</sup> Livingston Memo, Dodie Livingston to Governor Reagan, folder "Inaugural Address, 1/20/81 (9)," Kenneth Khachigian Papers, RRL.

Letter, Lorrin L. Morrison to The Honorable Ronald Reagan, folder "Inaugural Address, 1/20/81 (9)," Kenneth Khachigian Papers, RRL.

Letter, Stephen A. Novick to William Timmons, folder "Inaugural Address, 1/20/81 (3)," Kenneth Khachigian Papers, RRL.

<sup>47</sup> Letter, Richard Nixon to Mike Deaver, folder "Inaugural Address, 1/20/81 (6), Kenneth Khachigian Papers, RRL.

Khachigian held the responsibility of sorting through all the suggestions, compiling recommended passages, and relaying them through to Reagan before sending the President-elect the first working draft on January 4, 1981. To some, this date may be a point of concern, given its proximity to the Inauguration. However, one must remember three things. First, the January 4 version was not Khachigian's first draft. It was the first draft which he forwarded to the President-elect. Furthermore, this draft was by no means a rough draft; it was well-developed and complete. Based upon evidence from his personal files, the January 4 draft was at least the third complete draft Khachigian had developed. Second, after the rush of the campaign trail, where speeches are constantly in a state of development and re-development, having over two weeks to perfect a speech was a luxury. Third, Reagan was accustomed to receiving and preparing text for delivery on short notice. After all, he had been an actor.<sup>48</sup>

From Khachigian's memo to President-elect Reagan regarding the first draft, the reader learns two important things. First, Khachigian's organizational skills were nothing short of fastidious and methodical. His memo outlines nine "guiding observations" that clarify the speech's structure and theme, specific points that were included or excluded and why, and the planned schedule for future edits. Along with the speech draft, Khachigian also returned all of the raw materials so Reagan would have them on hand to review as he wished. Second, one immediately perceives the level of trust that Reagan had in Khachigian and that Khachigian had in Reagan. Khachigian commented that he knew the first draft was a little too long (roughly 3400 words or 20 minutes without counting the inevitable applause). He

---

<sup>48</sup> Speech drafts, folder "Inaugural Address, 1/20/81," Kenneth Khachigian Papers, RRL. Memo, Ken Khachigian to The President-Elect, folder "President-Elect Reagan, Inaugural Address, First Draft, January 4, 1981," Kenneth Khachigian Papers, RRL. Cannon, 96.

wanted Reagan to have more material with which to work than less and knew Reagan would be able to trim the excess rhetorical “fat” with no difficulty. Khachigian emphasized on more than one occasion that this draft was merely his proposal; if Reagan was not completely comfortable with it, he should feel free to make changes and Khachigian would work around those edits. Furthermore, Khachigian maintained a high level of confidentiality with this draft. He specifically noted that this copy was to go to Reagan and Reagan alone. No copies were made for staff; no sections were leaked to the press. Khachigian had vowed confidentiality and he kept his word. The Khachigian-Reagan relationship is a prime example of Reagan’s relationship with his entire speechwriting staff. Reagan trusted them to do their job and to do it well.<sup>49</sup>

Reagan ultimately found it easier to begin writing the speech anew rather than edit within Khachigian’s draft. This is not a discredit to Khachigian’s work in the least. It merely related to how Reagan’s mind functioned. As exemplified below, much of Khachigian’s original work either remained intact or was tweaked to fit into Reagan’s conceptualization and style. (The left hand column is text from the January 4 Khachigian draft; the right hand column is text from the delivered speech.)

. . . the peaceful passage of executive authority in America. Thus, what is momentous to the participants in this ceremony is as the commonplace routine in the span of our history.

The orderly transfer of authority as called for in the Constitution routinely takes place, as it has for almost two centuries.

Now the business of America goes forward . . . We suffer from the worst sustained peacetime inflation in our history.

The business of our nation goes forward . . . We suffer from the longest and one of the worst sustained inflations in our national history.

---

<sup>49</sup> Cannon, 96.

I want you, my fellow citizens, and especially President Carter, to know how much I appreciate the spirit of cooperation which the outgoing administration has accorded us throughout the recent transition process. You showed a watching world that we remain united . . .

American also is not at full production, and idle industries have cast millions into unemployment . . . We have a system of taxation which imposes unfair and unwise burdens on the taxpayer. Our tax system should be an equitable one that guarantees all citizens receipt of their just reward for their hours of labor.

We must act today in order to preserve tomorrow. And act we will.

The solutions we seek will be equitable as we can make them. No group should be singled out to pay the price for a national problem.

In this crisis, government isn't the solution. Government is the problem.

So that we are not misunderstood: We don't intend to do away with government. We simply intend to make it work. We want it to work with us and not over us. It should stand by our side and not on our back.

I ask you to begin with me today an era of national renewal. With all the creative energy at our command, we shall renew our determination, our courage, our strength, our spirit, our faith, and our hope.

Putting America back to work means putting all Americans back to work.

Mr. President, I want our fellow citizens to know how much you did to carry on this tradition. By your gracious cooperation in the transition process, you have shown a watching world that we are a united people . . .

Idle industries have cast workers into unemployment, human misery, and personal indignity. Those who do work are denied a fair return for their labor by a tax system which penalizes successful achievement and keeps us from maintaining full productivity.

And let there be no misunderstanding: We are going to begin to act, beginning today.

The solutions we seek must be equitable, with no one group singled out to pay a higher price.

In this present crisis, government is not the solution to our problem; government is the problem.

Now, so there will be no misunderstanding, it's not my intention to do away with government. It is rather to make it work – work with us, not over us; to stand by our side, not ride on our back.

So, with all the creative energy at our command, let us begin an era of national renewal. Let us renew our determination, our courage, and our strength. And let us renew our faith and our hope.

Putting America back to work means putting all Americans back to work.

To our neighbors, we extend an invitation to strengthen our historic ties. We will look to mutually beneficial relations and not impose on your sovereignty or intervene in your internal affairs.

To those neighbors and allies who share our freedom, we will strengthen our historic ties and assure them of our support and firm commitment . . . We will not use our friendship to impose on their sovereignty.

To the enemies of freedom and to our potential adversaries. I remind you that peace is the highest aspiration of the American people. We will negotiate for it, sacrifice for it, but we will not surrender for it – now or ever.

As for the enemies of freedom, those who are potential adversaries, they will be reminded that peace is the highest aspiration of the American people. We will negotiate for it, sacrifice for it; we will not surrender for it, now or ever.

We are, after all, Americans.

We are Americans.

The statements above are merely a few of the similarities between the two versions. The similarities could easily cover several additional pages. The biggest changes Reagan made were in word choice and rhetorical style. When one reads the Khachigian draft, Reagan's own spirit does not appear. The style is too formal and occasionally awkward in wording. The underlying messages, however, were consistent because Khachigian had met with Reagan in December to discuss some of the general themes. Reagan also periodically sent Khachigian some specific lines that he wanted incorporated into the speech. This is why Reagan did not have to start his revision completely from scratch. He liked the substance of what Khachigian wrote and simply needed to "Reaganize" it further.<sup>50</sup>

Reagan wrote at least two drafts of his version of the speech; both were completed on a yellow legal pad in cursive script. The final Reagan draft is a mirror image of the speech he delivered from the Capitol. Khachigian made some minor tweaks to wording and transitions, but that is all. Every paragraph that Reagan wrote is in the speech and nothing

---

<sup>50</sup> Speech Draft, Jan 4, 1981, folder "President-Elect Reagan: Inaugural Address, First Draft, January 4, 1980," Kenneth Khachigian Papers, RRL.  
 Ronald Reagan, "First Inaugural Address" (Jan 20, 1981). Online by *The Miller Center Foundation*. <http://millercenter.org/president/speeches/detail/3407>. (Hereafter noted as Reagan, "First Inaugural Address.") Cannon, 96.

else was added. The 1980 Inaugural Address is a credit to Reagan's rhetorical genius, exhibits his theatrical flair, and clearly depicts his vision for America's future.<sup>51</sup>

## **Analysis**

In his book, *President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime*, Lou Cannon aptly describes Reagan's first Inaugural Address as two speeches in one. According to Cannon, the first is the warning, containing "an FDR-style warning of economic peril with big government rather than big business as the culprit" that relied heavily upon Khachigian's drafts. The second is the call, a focus upon the American spirit, patriotism, and self-sacrifice that possessed more of Reagan's spirit. However, in dividing the speech in two, Cannon ignores a small but powerful portion of the speech – the first two paragraphs. This section is significantly smaller than the other two, but it should not be overlooked.<sup>52</sup>

Reagan specifically instructed Khachigian that the speech was to begin with the opening that the Inauguration was a momentous occasion, not because of who was taking office, but because it was a routine and orderly transfer of power, something which was commonplace in American history. This is a true yet often overlooked reality. How many countries have endured generations of armed conflict between warring political factions? But in the United States, while there may be occasional re-counts and legal battles, the loser does not call upon an army of loyal followers to attempt to overthrow the winner. Seth Cropsey also included "the political meaning of an inauguration" as the first point in his suggested outline for the Inaugural. This main point contained the following bullet points which also mirror Reagan's notes:

---

<sup>51</sup> "Inaugural Address, Reagan's Draft," ID #Begin-001299, SP100, WHORM Subject File, RRL.

<sup>52</sup> Cannon, 98.

- A. the orderly transition of power
  - 1. different from regimes past and present
- B. the solution to one of the oldest of political problems and
- C. proof of the vitality and durability of our political institutions and therefore, cause for hope

Tom Evans (who would serve as one of Reagan's presidential advisers) sent an outline that also included a reference to the orderly transfer of power, albeit in the conclusion. Finally, Anne Armstrong (a longtime Republican politician and diplomat) also included this point in her notes regarding the speech's symbolism. Reagan was not alone in recognizing, cherishing, and acknowledging the importance of reminding the American people of the uniqueness of the American electoral system.<sup>53</sup>

This orderly transition of power includes another often overlooked reality – maintaining a sense of propriety towards the outgoing administration . . . at least on Inauguration Day. This was another point that Reagan emphasized to Khachigian – “Don't be too harsh on J.C. – I don't want people in the audience looking at one another for reactions as if to say ‘can you believe what he's saying?’” Reagan was a gentleman. Even while on the campaign trail, Reagan did not want his team or the Republicans to attack Carter personally. Attacking his record and his policies was fine, but not the man himself. That decorum extended to the Inaugural Address as well. Reagan could have taken the opportunity to provide a scathing review of Carter's administration, but he did not. Just as

---

<sup>53</sup> RR Instructions, folder “Inaugural Address, 1/20/81 (4),” Kenneth Khachigian Papers, RRL.  
 Reagan Inaugural Outline, S. Cropsey to Ken Khachigian, folder “Inaugural Address 1/20/81 (10),” Kenneth Khachigian Papers, RRL.  
 Memo, Anne Armstrong to Ed Meese, Dec. 16, 1980, folder “Inaugural Address, 1/20/81 (2),” Kenneth Khachigian Papers, RRL.  
 Idea Paper, Tom Evans, folder “Inaugural Address, 1/20/81 (9),” Kenneth Khachigian Papers, RRL.

Carter was complimentary towards his predecessor, Reagan thanked Carter for maintaining the tradition of a peaceful transition of power.<sup>54</sup>

In thanking Carter, Reagan subtly inserted a jab at his ideological nemesis – Communism. Reagan emphasized that Carter had shown the watching world that the American people were “pledged to maintaining a political system which guarantees individual liberty to a greater degree than any other” and thanked him for “maintaining the continuity which is the bulwark of our Republic.” As will be discussed to a greater extent in the second section of this dissertation, Reagan used a variety of phrases when describing the Communist system. “Maintainers of individual liberty” was never one of those phrases. By emphasizing the positives of the American political system, Reagan was also emphasizing the negatives of any opposing political system. Given that he took office during the Cold War, albeit late in that global conflict, it is worth remembering that the main opposing political system on American minds was Soviet-style Communism.<sup>55</sup>

There is one additional point relating to Reagan’s thanks to President Carter which must be discussed. Reagan ends the paragraph with, “and I thank you [President Carter] and your people for all your help in maintaining the continuity which is the bulwark of our *Republic*.” In examining Khachigian’s drafts along with the rough drafts from other staff members, most notably those of Tony Dolan (an investigative reporter who served on the White House speechwriting staff from 1981-1989) and Peter Hannaford (Reagan’s director of public affairs while he served as the Governor of California), along with Reagan’s handwritten draft, it is immediately evident that there was not universal agreement on this term.

---

<sup>54</sup> RR Instructions, folder “Inaugural Address, 1/20/81 (4), Kenneth Khachigian Papers, RRL. Jamieson, 436-437.

Reagan, “First Inaugural Address.”

<sup>55</sup> Reagan, “First Inaugural Address.”

Tony Dolan’s draft used the phrase “democratic ideal,” whereas Hannaford stated “the business of the republic” in the approximate position that “Republic” appears in the finalized speech. An unnamed draft includes the phrase “the spirit of our democracy” whereas Khachigian’s January 4 draft includes neither term in this location. Not surprisingly, Reagan’s draft uses the phrase identical to what he spoke on January 20 – “hallmark of our Republic.”<sup>56</sup>

By using the term “Republic” Reagan drew attention to the governmental system rather than to the American people, which directly supports the point he was emphasizing. It was not the American *people* that guaranteed individual liberty; it was the people’s unity behind this *system* designed to maintain liberty that guaranteed the country’s continued success. Reagan was correct in his terminology, but he was the last President to use the word “Republic” in an Inaugural Address. In their Inaugural Addresses, every President since Reagan, Republican and Democrat alike, have referred to the American Democracy instead. Those attuned to political terminology would also note that “Republic” denotes a more deliberative style of government in which those elected represent the public, but are not necessarily immediately answerable to the populace on an issue-by-issue basis (i.e. a representative democracy). The difference between “Republic” and “Democracy” is not oppositional and can be slight; but here, it is hard to believe that Reagan and his team were not conscious of it. If the story is to be believed, when Benjamin Franklin was asked by an onlooker what form of government the founders at the Constitutional Convention had come

---

<sup>56</sup> Reagan, “First Inaugural Address.”  
Speech Draft, Jan 4, 1981, folder “President-Elect Reagan: Inaugural Address, First Draft, January 4, 1980,” Kenneth Khachigian Papers, RRL.  
Dolan Draft, folder “President-Elect Reagan: Inaugural Address, First Draft, January 4, 1980,” Kenneth Khachigian Papers, RRL.  
Hannaford Draft, folder “President-Elect Reagan: Inaugural Address, First Draft, January 4, 1980,” Kenneth Khachigian Papers, RRL.  
“Inaugural Address, Reagan’s Draft,” ID #Begin-001299, SP100, WHORM Subject File, RRL.

up with, he answered, “A Republic . . . if you can keep it.” Reagan was reawakening the term.

After this short, but important introduction, Reagan delves into the two substantive sections of the speech. As with the introduction, Reagan provided Khachigian with some guiding principles from the outset. Reagan intimated that the system whereby people elected the government was sound, but not without its historic challenges as evidenced in times of war and economic depression. However, the people maintain the ability to rectify a negative situation. Reagan wanted to emote “optimism and hope, but not ‘goody-goody’ – i.e. , not pollyannish [sic].” Edwin Gray, another eventual Reagan administration official, likewise recommended that the speech’s tone should “appeal to the American spirit” and emphasize that “the best is yet to come.” Reagan knew America was facing challenges on multiple fronts, and through his Inaugural Address sounded a warning cry that the American people must face and defeat those obstacles together. Reagan had faith that the American people would prevail and emerge not only victorious, but stronger for the effort. Despite their contrasting tones, the two sections blend together in a speech that is fiery yet constrained, realistic yet optimistic, historical yet futuristic, and simple yet sophisticated.<sup>57</sup>

### **The Warning**

In comparing the public submissions sent to the Reagan team in relation to the finalized Inaugural Address, one man’s outline contained more parallels pertaining to this section than any other letter Reagan’s team received. That man was Seth Cropsey.

---

<sup>57</sup> Cannon, 98.

RR Instructions, folder “Inaugural Address, 1/20/81 (4), Kenneth Khachigian Papers, RRL.  
Memo, Edwin Gray to President-Elect Ronald Reagan, Dec. 11, 1980, folder “Inaugural Address, 1/20/81 (3), Kenneth Khachigian Papers, RRL.

Cropsey's outline included the following issues, which were all highlighted within the Inaugural: the distribution of wealth, the ideological focus of the Founding Fathers upon liberty, the pride of personal accomplishment, the reality that fixing the economic problems would take time, the necessity of maintaining a positive psyche in tackling the economic problems, and the importance of distinguishing between international friends and foes. This is not to say that Cropsey's recommendations were included to the exclusion of others. Other individuals also noted that solving the economic issues would require the responsibility and sacrifice of all Americans. However, Cropsey's clear influence makes sense considering that he went on to work within the Reagan administration as a departmental speechwriter, Assistant to the Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger, and Deputy Undersecretary of the Navy before going on to publish numerous articles on different aspects of government policy.<sup>58</sup>

Following the introduction, Reagan elaborated first upon the economic perils facing the nation. Throughout his campaign, Reagan emphasized the lagging American economy by asking the American people:

Are you better off than you were four years ago? Is it easier for you to go and buy things in the stores than it was four years ago? Is America as respected throughout the world as it was four years ago? And if you answer all of those questions, yes, why then, I think your choice is very obvious as to whom you should vote for. If you don't agree, if you don't think that this course that we've been on for the last four years is what you would like to see us follow for the next four, then I would suggest another choice that you have.

---

<sup>58</sup> Reagan Inaugural Outline, S. Cropsey to Ken Khachigian, folder "Inaugural Address 1/20/81 (10), Kenneth Khachigian Papers, RRL.

Inaugural Suggestions, Andrew Green, folder "Inaugural Address 1/20/81, Kenneth Khachigian Papers, RRL. Letter, Vernon E. Jordan to Ken Khachigian, folder "Inaugural Address 1/20/81, Kenneth Khachigian Papers, RRL.

Seth Cropsey Biography, Hudson Institute, (Nov. 14, 2011). Available at: [http://www.hudson.org/learn/index.cfm?fuseaction=staff\\_bio&eid=CropSeth](http://www.hudson.org/learn/index.cfm?fuseaction=staff_bio&eid=CropSeth)

The majority of the American people answered Reagan's opening question in the negative. The bare simplicity of the question and the clarity of the answer stuck in the collective Democratic craw, but there was no denying Carter's overwhelming electoral defeat. Carter had lost the public trust when it came to hope for improvement. Acknowledgement of a problem is merely the first step in recovery, just as Reagan's election was only the beginning of his administration. Reagan was elected, but how would he fulfill his campaign promise? The Inaugural Address was a good place for Reagan to express both his concern for America and his promise to America.<sup>59</sup>

First, Reagan focused upon the economy. Americans all knew that the country was not prospering financially. In January, 1981, inflation, interest rates, and the projected federal deficit were all at near-record highs. Unemployment was also over 7%. But the question of how to solve the problem remained a point of debate. Reagan's Inaugural Address lays the blame on the doorstep of two groups: the people and the government. Reagan stated that both groups must re-establish their moral center and be willing to work together with their fellow citizens to revive the country.<sup>60</sup>

The American people were responsible for not living within their means and desiring others to pick up the tab. Reagan emphasized that, yes, individuals could live beyond their means by borrowing, but that lifestyle could not sustain itself. It had to be curtailed immediately if the country was to turn itself around. He reflected the GOP's historical appeal to frugality. Likewise, the American people needed to accept the responsibility for everyone paying an equitable share of the bills rather than the tax system penalizing

---

<sup>59</sup> Terry Golway, *Ronald Reagan's America: His Voice, His Dreams, and His Vision of Tomorrow* (Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, 53.

<sup>60</sup> Robert Dallek, *Ronald Reagan: The Politics of Symbolism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 63.

achievement and productivity. As Reagan stated, “All of us together, in and out of government, must bear the burden. The solutions we seek must be equitable, with no one group singled out to pay a higher price.” Only when the people had accepted personal responsibility and accountability could they then hold the government to the same standard.<sup>61</sup>

Reagan placed the responsibility for the escalated inflation rate, a complicated tax system, increased national debt, and an ever-growing government work force on the government. The American people do not run the Federal Reserve, the government does. The American people do not write the tax code, the government does. Such examples pertain to the aforementioned use of “Republic.” However, the American people are responsible for their responses to government action. Namely, the people can hold the government accountable via the election process. The American people had overwhelmingly elected Reagan to serve as President and thereby were at least open to his plans for change. However, those changes required time. Reagan acknowledged this fact in his speech, stating, “The economic ills we suffer have come upon us over several decades. They will not go away in days, weeks, or months . . .” In reality, the economic ills took years to heal, despite a 25% tax reduction and widespread spending cuts in 1981. The nation slid deeper into recession and Reagan’s approval numbers plummeted as well. Despite the economic and political pain, and the continued controversy over “Reaganomics,” Reagan was correct in saying that the economy would recover, which it did in 1983. Of course, Reagan’s critics were quick to point out the severity of the recession that dogged his first months in office. They also pointed out that his determination to increase defense spending, coupled with his inability to persuade Speaker of the House Tip O’Neil and the Democrats to cut government spending, led to deficits. His supporters, on the other hand, preferred to concentrate on his

---

<sup>61</sup> Reagan, “First Inaugural Address.”

lowering of the marginal tax rates, which they likened to John F. Kennedy's, and which – according to the dictates of “supply-side economics” and other fiscal theories – injected liquidity into the economy and prompted a boom.<sup>62</sup>

Reagan centered the public's attention upon the government by uttering one of his most quoted lines, “In this present crisis, government is not the solution to our problem; government *is* the problem.” As Robert Dallek relates, Reagan was not the first President supporting the idea that less government equals better government. However, unlike the others, Reagan had built his political career around this concept and planned to make it the primary goals of his administration. His objective was to make the government more efficient, to have it work with the people rather than over the people. He emphasized the necessity of recognizing the distinction between the federal government's rights and responsibilities and those of the states and the American people. After all, “the Federal Government did not create the States; the States created the Federal Government.” This was significant because, in the wake of the last-gasp segregation in the South, federalism and states-rights were used as a tool to resist integration. Consequently, they came into disrepute. Reagan aimed to rescue federalism as a concept and reinvigorate it. The government's job was to provide opportunity for all Americans, regardless of race or religion, and Reagan expressed that this was not possible without widespread change.<sup>63</sup>

Despite the necessity of this warning, Reagan did not want his Inaugural Address to end on a dour tone. He wanted Americans to be proud to be Americans once again, to remember its greatest heroes, and to embrace the challenges of the future together as a united

---

<sup>62</sup> Reagan, “First Inaugural Address.”  
Golway, 57-58.

<sup>63</sup> Reagan, “First Inaugural Address.”  
Dallek, 63.

people. He wanted Americans to take ownership of their future. The American people were the ones who would seal their own destiny; they were the heroes. They were the ones to whom Reagan said he had listened during his campaign and they were the ones to whom he would continue listening throughout his administration.

### **The Call**

The second section of Reagan's Inaugural Address is a rallying cry for American patriotism and camaraderie. There are scholars, like Terry Golway, who disagree with this assessment and claim that Reagan's Inaugural Address was "determined not to inspire but to establish the parameters of a new order." Golway's view that Reagan sought to "establish the parameters of a new order" is partially correct, for Reagan focused upon the necessity of changing American attitudes towards each other and towards the government. However, the Inaugural Address contains far too much uplifting, patriotic, and optimistic rhetoric for it not to be considered inspirational. One cannot promise, "Your dreams, your hopes, your goals are going to be the dreams, the hopes, and the goals of this administration, so help me God," and not expect a surge of emotion within the audience. These were not words establishing a new order and neither were these words an empty promise. Reagan was making an oath to the nation, an oath to which the American people could hold him accountable in the next election. More importantly, Reagan's words were designed to uplift the nation.<sup>64</sup>

Reagan urged the American people to love their countrymen as well as their country, to help both in a time of need. This is simply a restating of the "Golden Rule" – do unto others as you would want them to do to you – a saying derived, in part, from Matthew 7:12,

---

<sup>64</sup> Reagan, "First Inaugural Address."  
Golway, 65-66.

which reads, “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them . . .” This statement spoke to Reagan’s essentially positive outlook, which the electorate appreciated and which confounded critics who tried to classify him as mean. He simply did not look or sound that way. The American people needed to seize their own destiny. They needed to take the initiative to help their neighbors and thereby help their country.<sup>65</sup>

This help also had to extend to America’s international neighbors and allies. Reagan knew that he was coming to office in a politically tenuous time. The Cold War era was filled with political dialogue over military spending, international armaments (particularly nuclear arms), and arms control negotiations and treaties between the United States and Soviet Union (namely, SALT I and SALT II). Reagan’s administration also followed a series of American interventions, both political and military, around the world, including Korea, Vietnam, Panama, Cuba, East & West Germany, and Lebanon. Reagan sought to allay international suspicion and fears by stating that he wanted to strengthen America’s historic ties with its neighbors and allies *without* imposing upon their sovereignty by matching loyalty with loyalty. This was another point that Khachigian and Reagan received through the open call. As previously noted, Tom Evans’ proposals recommended a strengthening of old international ties and an avoidance of the United States acting as the world’s policeman and Seth Cropsey’s outline encouraged Reagan to support America’s international friends by helping and defending them against the Soviet threat.<sup>66</sup>

---

<sup>65</sup> Reagan, “First Inaugural Address.”

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

Reagan Inaugural Outline, S. Cropsey to Ken Khachigian, folder “Inaugural Address 1/20/81 (10),” Kenneth Khachigian Papers, RRL.

Idea Paper, Tom Evans, folder, “Inaugural Address, 1/20/81 (9),” Kenneth Khachigian Papers, RRL.

Evans and Cropsey also called on Reagan to address America's enemies. Although the Soviet Union is not mentioned by name, one can safely assume, given the Cold War context, that the USSR was one of the main "enemies of freedom" that Reagan referenced. Reagan reassured the American people that he would not recklessly involve the country in a military conflict. However, he made it very clear that American freedoms would never be negotiated and would never be surrendered, saying, "We will negotiate for it [peace], sacrifice for it; we will not surrender for it, now or ever." Likewise, Americans would not be swayed by terrorism, for moral fortitude would conquer evil.<sup>67</sup>

Considering Reagan's oft-expressed personal faith, it is unsurprising that his Inaugural Address would include a reference to prayer. Reagan stated that he took great comfort in the fact that "tens of thousands of prayer meetings are being held on that day." He also encouraged the establishment of Inauguration Day as a day of prayer, which may seem surprising at first, but the archives provide the underlying story. On June 30, 1980, then-Governor Reagan sent a response letter to Vonette Bright of Campus Crusade for Christ International. In his response, Governor Reagan thanked Mrs. Bright for her kind letter and for the prayers. He also wrote, "Yes, I would be very happy to do anything I could do to bring about the declaration of such a day of prayer as you mentioned." Such wording is too vague to determine precisely what day Mrs. Bright suggested. It is also not possible to glean that information directly from Mrs. Bright's letter as it was not included in the archive files. However, the latter portion of Reagan's letter inferences that Mrs. Bright was referencing Inauguration Day. Governor Reagan states that he "will not be in charge so it would only be

---

<sup>67</sup> Reagan, "First Inaugural Address."

Reagan Inaugural Outline, S. Cropsey to Ken Khachigian, folder "Inaugural Address 1/20/81 (10)," Kenneth Khachigian Papers, RRL.

Idea Paper, Tom Evans, folder, "Inaugural Address, 1/20/81 (9)," Kenneth Khachigian Papers, RRL.

whatever influence I might have in the planning for that day. That is, if I am elected.” Since a presidential proclamation establishes a National Day of Prayer, Reagan was entirely correct in his assessment. Only current President Carter would hold the authority to declare Inauguration Day 1981 as a day of prayer. Reagan could suggest or petition for the action, but he himself could not make it.<sup>68</sup>

Despite the reality that Reagan was not yet President, the personal and political encouragement toward establishing the Inauguration as a day of prayer continued. This is evidenced by another letter, this time from William Bright, husband of Vonette Bright and President of Campus Crusade for Christ International, to Congressman William Armstrong of Colorado. In the letter, Dr. Bright thanks the Congressman for “using your influence to encourage Ronald Reagan to declare January 20, Inauguration Day, a day of national prayer.” The letter goes on to reference other correspondence, both by letter and by mailgram, between Vonette Bright and Governor Reagan as well as a mailgram sent to Nancy Reagan. Clearly, the Brights, and quite possibly others as well, were on a mission, and their tenacity paid off in the form of the insertion within Reagan’s Inaugural Address. Furthermore, the Brights’ efforts impacted President Reagan’s 1982 proclamation establishing the first Thursday in May as the National Day of Prayer. The United States now had a pre-established day that could be coordinated on the local, state, and federal levels, even if it was not Inauguration Day. This also showed that Reagan was equipped to assume the religious appeal which worked for Carter in 1976, but not in 1980.<sup>69</sup>

---

<sup>68</sup> Reagan, “First Inaugural Address.”

Letter, Ronald Reagan to Mrs. William Bright, Jun 30, 1980, folder “Inaugural Address, 1/20/81 (3),” Kenneth Khachigian Papers, RRL.

<sup>69</sup> Letter, Dr. William Bright to the Honorable William L. Armstrong, Nov. 14, 1980, folder “Inaugural Address, 1/20/81 (3),” Kenneth Khachigian Papers, RRL.

Reagan's Inauguration was also notable because it was the first held on the West Front of the Capitol. This move was symbolic on many levels. First, Reagan was from the West. His standing at the Capitol, gazing westward, evoked the image of him overlooking all of America as the President of all Americans. Second, it provided a perfect backdrop for his speech's emphasis upon the Founding Fathers (Washington, Jefferson, and Warren), American heroes (Lincoln), and personal sacrifice (those killed in wars around the world and particularly those buried at Arlington National Cemetery). When standing on the Capitol's West Front, one has a clear view down the National Mall towards the Washington Monument, past various war memorials, to the Lincoln Memorial in the distance.<sup>70</sup>

The highlight of this portion of the speech was Reagan's story of Martin Treptow, a small town boy who died on the western front of World War I and who, according to the speech, was buried "under one such marker," an indirect reference back to an earlier paragraph describing Arlington National Cemetery. This assertion regarding Treptow's final resting place was false, and Reagan, Khachigian, and the others involved in the speech's development knew it was factually incorrect. Reagan added the story to his revision of Khachigian's original draft, the one he practiced in his packing-box-filled California home with Khachigian as his audience. One of the cardinal rules of speechwriting is doing research. Khachigian knew this and also knew that Reagan had a reputation among the campaign staff for basing some of his stories on myths and the movies. Hence, when he heard the Treptow story in the speech, Khachigian wanted to ensure its validity by performing research, especially since Reagan admitted to receiving the story from a friend and political supporter, Preston Hotchkiss.<sup>71</sup>

---

<sup>70</sup> Reagan, "First Inaugural Address."

<sup>71</sup> Cannon, 99.

Khachigian enlisted the assistance of Ed Hickey, Reagan's security chief when he was governor, and performed thorough research. His research included the databases of all overseas cemeteries containing American soldiers, the Army Adjutant General Disposition Branch for WWI dead, the American Battle Monuments, the Washington National Records Center General Archives Division, the National Military Personnel Record Center in St. Louis, the Veterans Administration, and Arlington National Cemetery. Reagan was correct in his speech's assertion that Treptow was a WWI casualty; Khachigian confirmed Treptow's death in World War I via Pentagon records. Khachigian's papers included the research notes he received from Hickey and a Jim B. regarding Treptow. These notes confirm that Martin A. Treptow, serial number 102686, enlisted on July 16, 1917, and was killed in action on July 29, 1918, in Sergy, France. He was a member of Company M of the 168<sup>th</sup> Infantry in the 42<sup>nd</sup> Division, the "Rainbow Division." The notes also confirm that Treptow was listed in the National Archives volume of *Soldiers of the Great War* as being born in Bloomer, Wisconsin. Reagan, in his Inaugural Address, was also correct in describing that Treptow had been "killed trying to carry a message between battalions under heavy artillery fire." Specifically, the research notes, based upon the National Archive records, state that "Treptow was killed instantly by shellfire when carrying messages from his lieutenant to the major." However, Treptow was not included in the registry at Arlington National Cemetery. In reality, Treptow, like so many others, was originally buried in France (first near hill 212 Chateau Thierry and then cemetery 608 at Singes et Nesles Aisne). His family then requested that his remains be transferred to the U.S. The Treptow family received the remains on July 23, 1921) and buried their beloved relative in his hometown of Bloomer,

Wisconsin in Grave 5, Lot 1, Block 21. Reagan's inference that Treptow's remains were in Arlington was not true.<sup>72</sup>

Khachigian relayed the disappointing news to Reagan who, from all accounts, received the news well, but refused to change the speech to make it historically accurate because it would take away from the story. Reagan wanted to maintain the flow and emotion of the moment, which meant that some accuracy needed to be sacrificed. Khachigian had to mollify his conscience by changing the speech from reading "under one of those white markers," in direct reference to Arlington National Cemetery, to "under one such marker," a more general inference to Arlington National Cemetery. Khachigian knew that reporters would catch the error and warned Reagan of such. However, Khachigian was unwilling to betray Reagan and so he and other aides took the blame for the error. When questioned, they omitted the fact that Reagan knew of the error and had decided that the story must proceed in its Reaganized form.<sup>73</sup>

Reagan related how Treptow's diary had deeply impacted him. The diary included the following pledge, "America must win this war. Therefore I will work, I will save, I will sacrifice, I will endure, I will fight cheerfully and do my utmost, as if the issue of the whole struggle depended on me alone." Reagan clarified that he was not asking Americans to make the ultimate sacrifice of giving their lives in the face of the economic and social challenges they faced, but he was asking them to give of themselves and to work together to solve the problems.

---

<sup>72</sup> Canon, 99.

Martin A. Treptow Research Notes, folder "Inaugural Address, 1/20/81 (7)," Kenneth Khachigian Papers, RRL.

<sup>73</sup> Canon, 99-100.

Reagan, "First Inaugural Address."

Finally, the reason why Americans could overcome their economic woes and reclaim their national pride was simply that they were Americans. If Americans were to act worthy of themselves, there was no obstacle which they could not overcome. The American Dream was still alive and well. In Reagan's eyes, every American had the absolute right to dream, to hope, and "to believe that together with God's help we can and will resolve the problems which now confront us." His closing line, "And after all, why shouldn't we believe that? We are Americans" has all the makings of a classic movie. But that was Reagan – the patriot, the optimist, the actor.<sup>74</sup>

### **Immediate Response**

Following the Inaugural Address, Reagan received a swelling of public support in the form of letters and mailgrams. Some, like Arthur Burns of the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, Jerry Blanke of Made in USA Inc., Edward Kiernan of the International Union of Police Associations, and Mayor Christopher Paci of Lodi, New Jersey, simply congratulated Reagan on a magnificent speech and expressed similar pride in their country. Others, like H.G. Allyn, Jr. of the Pittsburgh & Lake Erie Railroad Company, included recommendations along with the compliments. Mr. Allyn's letter highlighted Reagan's attention to economic productivity, recommended "the so-called 10-5-3 Capital Cost Recovery Act bill" to resolve financial depreciation, commented that Congressmen Jones and Conable would be introducing the plan in H.R. 1053, and encouraged the administration's support of the package. Others offered suggestions of another form – their willingness and ability to serve in the Reagan administration. Robert Weiss, the Director of

---

<sup>74</sup> Reagan Inaugural Outline, S. Cropsey to Ken Khachigian, folder, "Inaugural Address 1/20/81 (10)," Kenneth Khachigian Papers, RRL.  
Idea Paper, Tom Evans, folder, "Inaugural Address, 1/20/81 (9)," Kenneth Khachigian Papers, RRL.

Security for Editorial America, S. A. in Florida began his letter with complimenting Reagan's speech before stating, "Secondly, as a security director and ex law enforcement officer I would like to offer any assistance if ever needed to your administration." For his offer, Mr. Weiss received a form letter response stating, "Dear Mr. Weiss, I want you to know how much your message meant to me. There is much to do, and I count on your support in our efforts to make that new beginning we all desire. With heartfelt appreciation, Sincerely, Ronald Reagan." The "Ronald Reagan" is stamped and is the more formal of the two form letter stamps used during the Reagan administration. The other stamp read "Ronnie."<sup>75</sup>

However, the overwhelmingly complimentary responses Americans sent to the President were not necessarily a reflection of the nation as a whole at the time of his Inaugural Address. The January 30 to February 2, 1981, Gallup Poll showed Reagan holding a respectable, but not overwhelming, 51% approval rate. Of those surveyed, 36% held no opinion of the new President and 13% disapproved of Reagan. In the three months following the Inauguration, Reagan solidified his support based and increased his approval rating to 67%, but he also increased his disapproval rating to 19%.<sup>76</sup>

Reagan's detractors likewise sent letters to the White House following the Inauguration. A prime example of this reality is Patsy Mink's letter to the President. As

---

<sup>75</sup> Letter, Arthur F. Burns to President Reagan, Jan. 22, 1981, ID #000261, SP100, WHORM Subject File, RRL. Letter, Jerry Blanke to President Reagan, Jan. 21, 1981, folder, "ID #Begin-001299," SP100, WHORM Subject File, RRL.

Letter, Edward J. Kiernan to President Reagan, Jan. 22, 1981, ID #00943, SP100, WHORM Subject File, RRL. Letter, Christopher Paci to President Reagan, Jan. 20, 1981, ID #001219, SP100, WHORM Subject File, RRL. Letter, H.G. Allyn Jr. to President Reagan, Jan. 21, 1981, ID #000340, SP100, WHORM Subject File, RRL. Letter, Robert Weiss to President Reagan, Jan. 21, 1981, ID #000837, SP100, WHORM Subject File, RRL. Letter, White House to Robert Weiss, Jan. 30, 1981, folder, "ID #Begin-001299," SP100, WHORM Subject File, RRL.

<sup>76</sup> "Job Performance Ratings for President Reagan, 01/20/1989-01/20/1989, Accessed Jan. 5, 2012. Available at [http://webapps.ropercenter.uconn.edu/CFIDE/roper/presidential/webroot/presidential\\_rating.cfm#.TzL93IEbFlc](http://webapps.ropercenter.uconn.edu/CFIDE/roper/presidential/webroot/presidential_rating.cfm#.TzL93IEbFlc)

with all the others, Ms. Mink had the grace to begin her letter with a congratulatory line while still noting in the second sentence that her organization had not supported Reagan's candidacy. She then expressed, "We have serious misgivings about the policies you have proposed. We fear they will not bring the prosperity and peace all Americans desire. Where they will threaten the livelihood and safety of Americans, ADA [Americans for Democratic Action] will oppose them." Specifically, Ms. Mink stated that the organization opposed the Kemp-Roth tax cut proposals as it would raise the federal deficit and require cutting funds to social programs such as education, medical care, housing, and the environment. She also urged the President to immediately begin new SALT talks and to reauthorize the 1965 Voting Rights Act before closing her letter by reassuring the President that the ADA would not hesitate to inform the President when they felt the President he had shirked his duties. Given Ms. Mink's forthright tone and political involvement\*, she undoubtedly followed through on her promise of maintaining contact with the White House.<sup>77</sup>

The media coverage of Reagan's Inauguration was also mixed, even before the Inauguration occurred. On January 2, the *New York Times* reported an unusual point of disgruntlement among various members of Congress. Reagan's Congressional Committee on Inaugural Ceremonies suggested that "semiformal attire would be appropriate" for the Inaugural ceremony, a variance from the congressional standard of business attire. Some, like Senators Robert Byrd (D-WV) and Strom Thurmond (D-SC), readily complied with the request while others, like Senator Larry Pressler (R-SD), expressed mild dissatisfaction at

---

<sup>77</sup> Letter, Patsy Mink to President Reagan, Jan. 24, 1981, ID #001326, SP100, WHORM Subject File, RRL.

\* Ms. Mink served as President of the Board of Americans for Democratic Action and was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives for over twenty years. In 2002, President George W. Bush renamed the Title IX Amendment of the High Education Act in honor of her pivotal efforts in drafting and supporting the Amendment's passage in 1972.

wearing what Pressler described as uncomfortable clothing. Representative Hamilton Fish Jr. (R-NY) was so disgruntled with the Committee's request that he sent a formal letter of complaint, saying "that wearing formal and otherwise out-of-date attire would create a bad image for the incoming Administration" and vowing to wear his traditional dark suit and dark overcoat instead.<sup>78</sup>

The media's mixed reactions continued after the Inauguration, but two themes overshadowed much of what Reagan said – the Inauguration's pomp and ceremony and Iran's release of the American hostages. First, the media noted how Reagan's Inauguration stood in stark contrast to Jimmy Carter's. As one *New York Times* article reported, Carter "fantasized the common man, walking down Pennsylvania Avenue, but Reagan fantasizes the business man, coming on strong in a limo." Many interpreted Reagan's grand Inauguration as a sign of renewed presidential power and maintained a wary skepticism during the administration's early days. But the nation could not hold back its joy over the hostages' release, and it is understandable for such an event to overshadow the reporting of a speech.<sup>79</sup>

## Conclusion

Ronald Reagan's Inaugural Address provides a unique balance between personal and public influence. Without the open call for suggestions, the speech would have read quite differently, as evidenced by the speech drafts other members of the eventual White House Office of Speechwriting sent to Ken Khachigian . . . ones that maintained a distinctly

---

<sup>78</sup> John Duka, "Inauguration Day '81: A Sartorial Controversy." Jan. 2, 1981. *New York Times*.

<sup>79</sup> Francis X. Clines, "Pomp, Fur Coats and Sun for the Happy New President. Jan. 21, 1981. *New York Times*. Agis Salpukas, "Businessmen Cite Need for Speedy Action." Jan. 21, 1981. *New York Times*. "Enter President Reagan." Jan. 21, 1981. *New York Times*.

different tone and message than the eventual speech. In contrast to Carter, Reagan is widely recognized as a master of the spoken word. Like Carter, Reagan's ability to develop his own message is largely overlooked. Reagan's reputation for delegating responsibilities to his staff combined with the reality that his administration employed skillful speechwriters overshadow his own talent as a word-smith. Carter and Bush both relied upon their speechwriting staff to aid the development of their Inaugural Addresses, a reality that this dissertation highlights, but the two Presidents played a far greater role in the development process than modern scholarship gives them credit.

Reagan wanted the speech to be a letter from his heart. Just as a father must warn his children, Reagan warned the nation. Just as a father encourages his children to achieve greatness, so Reagan encouraged the nation. This tone of calling America to its potential was close to the heart of his appeal. Reagan saw a bright future for America. True, there were challenges to overcome, but that was a necessary part of the growing process. Just as people learn through adversity, so do nations. Reagan expressed a firm belief that America's best days were yet to come. He knew that America's courage, tenacity, and patriotism ran deep. Reagan did not instill these characteristics within the nation; he merely reminded the people that they were there.

### **Chapter 3: George H. W. Bush's Vision for America "Inaugural Address" Friday, January 20, 1989**

#### **Introduction**

Historically, the vice-presidency has not served as a convenient stepping stone to the presidency. The majority of Vice-Presidents who have gone on to become President have done so through adverse circumstances – namely, the President dying by natural causes or by assassination. Few Vice-Presidents have succeeded in securing their party's nomination, let alone successfully campaigned their way to the Oval Office. Even though one must take into account the changes that have occurred in the electoral system in relation to the selection and election of the Vice-President across American history, only four men have served as Vice-President, then campaigned and been elected as President of the United States: John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, Martin Van Buren, and George H. W. Bush. There was a lengthy gap, 152 years, between Van Buren and Bush. Bush served as Ronald Reagan's Vice-President from 1981 to 1989 and then President from 1989 to 1993. Political historians observed this point of historical significance, and the *New York Times* was one of several newspapers who mentioned it in their coverage of the 1989 Inauguration ceremonies.<sup>80</sup>

Historical precedent was only one challenge Bush faced in pursuing the presidency. At 65, and with eastern patrician roots despite a long Texas-based career, Bush was perceived as representing the aging, moderate wing of the Republican Party, "a group that Ronald Reagan had pushed to the margins with his conservative ideology and middle-class, Sunbelt constituency." Removing himself from the shadow of the President under whom he served was no easy task. Reagan was larger than life but far from perfect. His

---

<sup>80</sup> Michael Oreskes, "For TV, a Festival of Glowing Images," Jan. 13, 1989, *New York Times*.

administration was marred by events such as the Iran Contra Affair, and the Democrats were more than willing to draw any association possible between these errors and Bush. At the same time, within a large part of American society, Bush's association with and endorsement by Reagan certainly helped Bush's ambitions.<sup>81</sup>

The third hurdle Bush had to overcome was his own political identity. Who exactly was George H. W. Bush? This was a dilemma Bush faced as he prepared to accept the Republican Party's nomination in 1988. Bush had to decide how to accept the nomination and relay his gratitude to the audience, but also how to reintroduce himself to the American people. Bush was not running for Vice-President; he was running for President. As speechwriter Peggy Noonan, who wrote Bush's convention acceptance speech as well as his Inaugural Address, explained, "He [Bush] was famous but unknown . . . people knew his name but not his thoughts." Bush was unknown in part because he had done his job in quietly supporting the President, offering advice and opinions when consulted; he was not in the spotlight during those eight years. As the Republican presidential candidate, however, Bush needed to step into center stage, make his positions clear, and re-introduce himself to the American people.<sup>82</sup>

Whereas Bush's convention acceptance speech was the first step in this re-introduction, his Inaugural Address was the final one. Even after the long campaign season and the lame-duck session, a segment of the American citizenry remained uncertain about the President-elect and where he planned to lead them. As the *New York Times* noted in early January, 1989, 30% of Americans had no strong opinion about Bush and an additional 20% of the population viewed him unfavorably. These were not good numbers with which to start

---

<sup>81</sup> Remini and Golway, 441-442.

<sup>82</sup> Peggy Noonan, *Simply Speaking: How to Communicate Your Ideas with Style, Substance, and Clarity* (New York: HarperCollins, 1998), 25-26.

an administration. Bush faced an uphill battle, but the President-elect and his team were not in a rush to establish policies that might spark political warfare from the outset. For this reason, Bush's Inaugural Address was not filled with policy-oriented rhetoric, but rather with the themes of his presidency that would coincide with his desired personal image – family, values, openness, and caring.<sup>83</sup>

As is made clear through the underlying messages within his Inaugural Address, George H. W. Bush was not Ronald Reagan. Bush tapped veteran White House speechwriter Peggy Noonan, the author of some of Reagan's most memorable speeches, including his address to the nation in the wake of the Challenger disaster and his Farewell Address, to compose his Inaugural Address. She and Bush had an excellent working relationship; Noonan knew Bush's rhetorical and personal style, knowledge that required much personal interaction and close study. As Noonan described, “[To find a person's sound] You have to . . . sit in his office and hear him talk to you and others, hear him answer the phone and talk about a show that was on TV last night. You have to get to the point that you can hear him in your head.” There is no doubt that Noonan was a skillful wordsmith. Although Noonan wrote for both Reagan and Bush, no one knowledgeable about Reagan's and Bush's respective speaking styles would deny that Bush's Inaugural Address matched his cautious personality, religiously-based moral beliefs, and a vision for a country in which Americans dedicated themselves to helping their fellow citizens.<sup>84</sup>

---

<sup>83</sup> New York Times article did not specify how many Americans viewed President Bush favorably. Michael Oreskes, “For TV, a Festival of Glowing Images,” Jan. 13, 1989, *New York Times*.

<sup>84</sup> Noonan, *Simply*, 103.

## Development

President-elect Bush had a distinct advantage over Presidents Carter and Reagan in preparing his Inaugural Address – he had access to the White House staff. Carter and Reagan both had speechwriting teams who assisted them on the campaign trail. So did Bush, whose campaign speechwriting team was headed up by journalist and congressional staffer Reid Detchon. But unlike Carter in 1976 and Reagan in 1980, Bush also had access to his vice-presidential speechwriting team as well as access to writers like Peggy Noonan who were part of Reagan’s staff during the lame duck period between the November election and the January inauguration. Given that Bush had relied so heavily upon Detchon for the day-to-day speeches during his campaign, it is significant that he instead taped Noonan for what were arguably two of the most important speeches of his political career.<sup>85</sup>

To reach a plausible answer for this conundrum, one must understand Noonan herself and her relationship with George H. W. Bush. Noonan describes that she was “born smack-dab in the middle of the century, in Brooklyn, New York . . . the third in an Irish-Catholic family of seven . . . who were in love with the Kennedys.” She went on to attend Fairleigh Dickinson University where she served as editor of the student newspaper during the tumultuous early 1970s. After college, Noonan worked for Dan Rather at CBS. More important, she and Rather worked well together, despite the fact that the two seemingly disagreed on everything. While at CBS, Noonan had a front-row seat for the media coverage of Reagan’s campaign and early years in the White House. She fell in love (ideologically) with Reagan. Noonan was determined to join the presidential speechwriting staff, so she noted her interest to everyone she knew who might have any sort of connection to the White

---

<sup>85</sup> “Speechwriting in the 1988 Presidential Campaign,” folder “Speeches and Backup Material [n.d.],” OA 13887-003, Office of Speechwriting – Dan McGroarty Files, Subject File, GBL.

House Speechwriting Office. Eventually, her perseverance worked and she gained an interview at the White House with the head of speechwriting, Ben Elliott. During the interview, Elliott bluntly asked Noonan why she wanted to work at the White House. Her reply, “Because I want to help the President . . . and I believe in him. I guess everyone gets a President, one President in their adult life who’s the one who moved them. For me, it’s Reagan.” Noonan refused to mince words, even then, and her gutsy resolve would win her both accolades and condemnation from her fellow speechwriters.<sup>86</sup>

During her time in the White House, Noonan had the opportunity to interact with both George and Barbara Bush on both a professional and personal level. As she relates in her bestselling book, *What I Saw at the Revolution: A Political Life in the Reagan Era*, Noonan felt perfectly comfortable sitting and talking over dinner with then Vice-President Bush or peppering him with questions as he walked from the “plane to limo to holding room to limo to plane” on the campaign trail. Her impromptu interviews yielded key information of that man for whom she was writing. In response to a question on America’s national character, Bush replied, “We are just plain the kindest nation in the world so that when a baby is starving in Ethiopia we reach out.” Noonan had a comfortable enough relationship with the Bushes that she could ask personal questions as well. In response to Noonan’s serious question of what causes him to hurt deep down inside, Bush answered, “What hurts? An abused child a scared child an unloved child.” In contrast, Noonan received a wide-eyed exclamation of “Why, Peggy!” from Barbara when she boldly asked the couple, “Well, what made you have a family anyhow? Why did you start having kids?” Noonan, slightly embarrassed, received reassurance from George Bush that it was a “perfectly appropriate

---

<sup>86</sup> Peggy Noonan, *What I Saw at the Revolution: A Political Life in the Reagan Era* (New York: Random House, 1990), 4, 6, 12, 30, 33-34.

question for your [Noonan's] generation." Bush even provided a list of words that had special meaning to him: "Family, kids, grandkids, love, decency, honor, pride, tolerance, hope, kindness, loyalty, freedom, caring, heart, faith, service to country, fair (fair play), strength, healing, excellence." Bush felt free enough to write personal notes to Noonan giving further insight into his character, personality, and political stance. Frequently, Bush would send his driver to Noonan's house, where he had to avoid what Noonan described as her "too-friendly German shepherd," to deliver the sealed envelope. Among these deliveries was a two-paged typed letter headed, "WHO I AM." These insights proved invaluable as Noonan wrote the key speeches for Bush and their influence is evident in Bush's Inaugural Address: (The phrases below are direct quotes from Bush's Inaugural Address; the word(s) in parentheses after the quotes list(s) the character trait(s) Bush provided on his list of "WHO I AM.")

And my first act as President is a prayer. (faith)

We live in a peaceful, prosperous time, but we can make it better. (hope)

We know what works: Freedom works. We know what's right: Freedom's right. (freedom)

America today is a proud free nation, decent and civil, a place we cannot help but love. (honor, pride, love)

We cannot hope only to leave our children a bigger car, a bigger bank account. We must hope to give them a sense of what it means to be a loyal friend; a loving parent; a citizen who leaves his home, his neighborhood, and town better than he found it. (family, kids, pride, loyalty, caring, excellence)

America is never wholly herself unless she is engaged in high moral principle. (decency, caring)

And I am speaking of a new engagement in the lives of others, a new activism, hands-on and involved, that gets the job done. (caring, service to country, pride)

Words like these would go on to form the foundation of Bush's rhetoric during his four years in office.<sup>87</sup>

Having the ability to ask Noonan to write the Inaugural Address was certainly an advantage, but it also presented a disadvantage. She was still a member of the presidential staff, which meant that she had other responsibilities aside from writing for Bush. Those duties included writing Reagan's "Farewell Address," which he delivered on January 11, 1989 – only nine days before the Inauguration. Writing such a pivotal Reagan speech meant that Noonan would have limited time to spend writing Bush's speech. This dual role also placed Noonan in a very unusual position. When she sat on a couch in the White House after delivering Reagan's final speech to begin musing over the President-elect's speech, she was sitting a mere "40 feet down from the retiring President [in the Oval Office] and 20 feet from the incoming President [in the Vice-President's office]." In contrast to Carter and Reagan, whose teams began the process of developing the Inaugural Address the previous year, Bush received the first draft of his Inaugural Address by fax on January 15 at 4:30 p.m. In her cover letter, Noonan apologized to the President-elect for taking so long to get him the text, but explained that "revisions on the President's speech took til [sic] Tuesday night." (The President delivered his "Farewell Address" on Wednesday.)<sup>88</sup>

Furthermore, because of her other responsibilities and desire to craft an excellent speech, Noonan requested help, saying:

A newly chastened Noonan, a kinder gentler Noonan, a Noonan who would never hit a presidential aide with a shove to make a strong impression on his mind . . . needs help.

---

<sup>87</sup> Noonan, *What I Saw*, 296-297, 298-303.

<sup>88</sup> Speech Draft, Jan. 15, 1989, folder "Inaugural Weekend, January 20-22, 1989: Friday, January 20, 1989," OA 90500-002, Office of the President – Daily Files, GBL. Maureen Dowd, "The 41<sup>st</sup> President: Speech Writer; A Stirring Breeze Sparks Feelings, Then Words for a President's Vision," Jan. 21, 1989, *New York Times*.

Richard Darman's helpfulness, which once I rejected when I was young and foolish, I now need. Bob Teeter, my best friend, is also needed. I still don't need Roger.

I need Sununu toonoo.

Will you tell them? Tell them not to rub my nose in it. Thank you.\*

This memo excerpt provides one with a sense of Noonan's sense of humor and relationship with Bush. It also highlights some of the interpersonal conflicts within Bush's team.

Noonan was on her way out when she wrote this memo. She had already decided to leave the White House, turn her political and rhetorical interests elsewhere, and focus upon raising her young son. Some would miss her; some would not. Arguably, based upon Noonan's comments, Roger [Ailes] would not be one of the team members who would mourn her departure.<sup>89</sup>

Unfortunately, Noonan took her personal files with her when she left the White House, so the presidential archival materials do not exhibit precisely what help she received. Noonan was entirely within her rights to take her files with her. Speechwriters' personal files are not considered White House property and thus are usually not included in the archives at

---

<sup>89</sup> Reagan, "Remarks to the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences in Los Angeles, California," Mar. 2, 1990. Accessed Jan 30, 2012. Available at:

[http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public\\_papers.php?id=1607&year=1990&month=all](http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=1607&year=1990&month=all).

Noonan, *What I Saw*, 319.

Speech Draft, Jan. 15, 1989, folder "Inaugural Weekend, January 20-22, 1989: Friday, January 20, 1989," OA 90500-002, Office of the President – Daily Files, GBL.

\* Richard "Dick" Darman held many positions within the Reagan Administration, including Assistant to the President, Deputy Secretary of the Treasury, and Assistant Secretary of Commerce. He then went on to serve as George H. W. Bush's Director of the Office of Management and Budget. Robert "Bob" Teeter was a Republican pollster and long-time adviser to George H. W. Bush. Although Noonan does not provide Roger's last name, it would be logical for this to be in reference to Roger Ailes, a man Bush once described as "my good friend and trusted adviser whose help was so important to me in my quest for the Presidency." In her book, Noonan notes Ailes' job as Bush's campaign media manager, which would explain why Bush continued his mention of Ailes with, "I'm not sure I hit that line just the way Roger wanted me to do it, but the eye contact was superb." It would also provide an adequate reason why Noonan and Roger would have a disagreement or two, thus explaining why she did not need his help with the speech. Governor John Sununu of New Hampshire served at George H. W. Bush's first White House Chief of Staff until 1991.

the presidential libraries. Only the official speechwriting and speechwriters' files are archived. Ken Khachigian, whose personal papers were used in depth in this dissertation's examination of Reagan's Inaugural Address, donated a large portion of his personal files to the Reagan Library in 2000. The Bush President Library archives revealed only three drafts of the 1989 Inaugural Address, and these were hidden in the President's Daily Files rather than in the Office of Speechwriting files.\* It is possible that these were the only three drafts sent to the President-elect. However, these three copies provide valuable information because they are all stamped "Bush Library Photocopy George Bush Handwriting." The first statement simply means that the file copies were, in fact, copies rather than the original heat-sensor fax paper on which they were delivered. (One can still see the dashed lines that the fax machine printed on the rolled paper indicating where the page should be torn to separate it from the following page as well as the uneven tearing that occurred.) The second statement means that the documents contain Bush's handwriting, as verified by one of the archivists at the Bush Presidential Library. Thus, even though there are only three drafts with no comments from external review, the reader has clear insight into Bush's thoughts on Noonan's work and how the speech progressed through its development.<sup>90</sup>

---

\* The Office of Speechwriting files held very little material relating to the Inaugural Address. There are three plausible reasons for this. First, Noonan had already declared her intention to leave and did much of her writing from home, which meant that all the communications to her would go to her home where they would stay in her personal files. Second, since Noonan had worked hand-in-hand with the President-elect and because Bush was the current Vice-President, he may not have solicited input for his Inaugural Address from his advisers and friends as Carter and Reagan had done. Third, since Bush served as both Vice-President and President, the Bush Presidential Library has twelve years of material to process. When this dissertation was being completed, virtually none of his vice-presidential papers were open for research. At the time his Inaugural Address was being developed, Bush was still Vice-President, so the inter-departmental memos would be part of the files not yet processed. The only pre-Inaugural communication included within the Office of Speechwriting files was a set of research memos, the content of which is integrated in the Analysis portion of this chapter.

<sup>90</sup> Speech Drafts, folder "Inaugural Weekend, January 20-22, 1989: Friday, January 20, 1989," OA 90500-002, Office of the President – Daily Files, GBL.  
Memo, Peggy Noonan to Bob Simon, Jan. 18, 1989, folder "GB Inaugural Address, 1/20/89," OA 6853, Office of Speechwriting – Speech File Backup, GBL.

Despite the absent material, it is still possible to examine the speech's rhetorical development. The three drafts span a mere nine days, with the first two drafts appearing on back-to-back days – January 15 and January 16 (the third draft copy was not sent by fax and does not contain a date header). Large chunks of the speech maintained their exact wording between the first draft and the final speech, whereas other sections were removed entirely. Many of the paragraphs that remained have a Bush-written “Yes” next to them in the right margin; whereas the paragraphs and/or statements included below had negative comments next to them (Bush's comments are included in parentheses):

It is also a day for ringing statements, and declarations equal to the moment.  
(ego)

High eloquence is a beautiful thing, but I am a plain spoken man and these words will not soar. My hope today is to simply take the stillness and talk as we did in a million unrecorded meetings through the recent campaign. (too personal too humble kind of)

For in a way a president is a light – and where he goes the light is, where he walks the light is shed, and people turn to see for the first time (too “soft”)

That [asking state-licensed psychiatrists to devote a minimum number of hours per month to treat the homeless mentally ill] is just one idea. There will be many ideas. The air will fairly crackle with ideas, if I have my way. (NO)

I approach you in good faith – and my hopes are as open as this hand. (?)

To the Soviet Union, let me say: We respect you and are heartened by what appears to be the progress made so far. But I will be frank: the new closeness between us reflects, in part, the triumph of hope over experience. Hope is good. And so is strength. (little too neg. ??)

In some ways, as a leader, I will not be the most moving. (too personal)

---

Memo, Peggy Noonan to Mary Lukens, Jan. 18, 1989, folder “GB Inaugural Address, 1/20/89,” OA 6853, Office of Speechwriting – Speech File Backup, GBL.

Letter, Federick Van Fleteren to Peggy Noonan, Feb. 19, 1989, folder “GB Inaugural Address, 1/20/89,” OA 6853, Office of Speechwriting – Speech File Backup, GBL.

Some of the statements that Bush disliked were immediately removed and are not present in the second draft. Noonan gave some a second attempt . . . and Bush once again expressed his displeasure. A prime example is the second statement included above: “High eloquence is a beautiful thing . . .” In the second draft Bush included a question mark in the right hand margin, but also crossed out the entire paragraph with two big “X” marks as well as diagonal slash marks. Noonan took the hint and the offending text, along with five pages of other material (the speech shrank from sixteen to eleven pages between the first and second draft) were never seen again. The third draft is very similar to the delivered text, but there are a few small but easily recognizable differences: (the text from the third draft is on the left; the text from the final speech is on the right)

President Reagan, on behalf of our nation I want to thank you for the wonderful things you have done for America. You have earned a lasting place in our hearts.

There is a man here who has earned a lasting place in our hearts and in our history. President Reagan, on behalf of our nation, I thank you for the wonderful things that you have done for America.

My first act as President is a prayer:

And my first act as President is a prayer. I ask you to bow your heads.

Help us remember, Lord; write it on our hearts. Amen.

Help us remember, Lord. Amen.

A new breeze is blowing and it asks for new action, new thinking, and a new engagement in the lives of others.

There is new ground to be broken and new action to be taken.

America today is a proud free nation, rich in technology, gifted in science and art. A good nation, decent and civil – a place we cannot help but love.

America today is a proud free nation, decent and civil, a place we cannot help but love.

Many are not able to care for themselves;  
they sleep on the grates in the winter.  
Civil libertarians say that now they have  
their liberty. But that is not freedom  
restored, it is responsibility ignored.  
There are children in the cities and  
elsewhere who have nothing, no love and  
no normalcy.

There are the homeless, lost and roaming.  
There are the children who have nothing,  
no love and no normalcy.

Given the existence of such alterations, there should have been a fourth draft sent to the President-elect which incorporated the changed wording. The teleprompter text, dated and time stamped as “1/19/89 – 10:00 am” includes most of the changes noted above, with the exception of the President’s request that the audience bow their heads with him in prayer, which, quite possibly, Bush added extemporaneously. Although the speech’s development was swift, it served its purpose in further introducing Bush to the American people and provided a basic framework for the ideals upon which his administration would operate.<sup>91</sup>

### **Analysis**

When considering Bush’s Inaugural Address, many individuals fixate upon a key phrase that the President repeated several times throughout the speech – “a new breeze is blowing.” A classic “Noonanism,” writer Peggy Noonan thought of this phrase while sitting on a sofa in the White House watching and listening to the bustling of people. As she explained, “It [the atmosphere in the White House that day] felt like a new breeze. There was a literal movement of air. A new history beginning today.” In a memo to the President-elect, Noonan noted this phrase as the speech’s “central metaphor” as a means of

---

<sup>91</sup> Speech Drafts, folder “Inaugural Weekend, January 20-22, 1989: Friday, January 20, 1989,” OA 90500-002, Office of the President – Daily Files, GBL.  
George Bush, “Inaugural Address,” Jan. 20, 1989. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=16610>. [hereafter noted as Bush, “Inaugural Address.”]

“communicating the dynamism and newness of your administration” to show that Bush was not Reagan’s clone. This metaphor is important, but it is not the heart of the speech. That privileged rhetorical position, the “central tone” as Noonan called it, was a religious quote attributed to many different people over the years, including St. Augustine, Philip Melancthon (Martin Luther’s theological collaborator), and Richard Baxter (English Puritan theologian): “In crucial things, unity – in important things, diversity – in all things, generosity.” Using this quote as a foundation, Noonan, and therefore Bush, called Americans to service to the betterment of their fellow citizens and fellow man.<sup>92</sup>

Following the standard with which so many Americans have become familiar, Bush began his Inaugural Address by addressing the VIPs, thanking his predecessor, and making a reference to George Washington. Although such comments sound commonplace, they did require thought. Specifically, Noonan wanted to be sure that the opening salutation was correct and that Washington’s Bible would be used. To do this, she enlisted the assistance of researcher Bob Simon, who assured Noonan that Judy McClennan, the Chief of Protocol at the Inaugural Committee, and Porter Rose, Barbara Bush’s Chief of Staff, had approved what Noonan had written and did not believe that anyone had been overlooked. The only additional person whose name was entered into the debate surrounding the salutation was the Rev. Billy Graham who would be delivering the invocation and benediction. Bob Simon noted that there was presidential precedent for including the clergyman in the salutation, including Presidents Reagan and Kennedy. Simon also confirmed that “The King James

---

<sup>92</sup> Maureen Dowd, “The 41<sup>st</sup> President: Speech Writer; A Stirring Breeze Sparks Feelings, Then Words for a President’s Vision,” Jan. 21, 1989, *New York Times*.  
Memo, Peggy Noonan to The Vice President, Jan. 15, 1989, folder “Inaugural Weekend, January 20-22, 1989, Friday, January 20, 1989,” OA 90500-002, Office of the President – Daily Files, GBL.

bible [sic] used by Washington in 1789 will [be] brought to the platform by Mrs. Bush for the President-Elect's use."<sup>93</sup>

The rhetorical components discussed above were commonplace, but what followed them was not. President Bush led the nation in a prayer. Even the openly religious Carter and Reagan did not do this. The prayer was a part of the speech from day one (Bush noted "like it" in the margin of the first draft) and maintained its themes of thanks, request for strength, and call to remember to help others throughout the development process. Some individuals and groups would take issue with a President issuing a prayer and requesting the American people to join with him and bow their heads. However, the prayer was sufficiently ecumenical that Bush would probably not be accused of imposing his Episcopalian beliefs upon the American people. But it was a prayer nonetheless and the President did specifically request the American people to join him in an act of religious worship, which could cause offense and accusations regarding the separation of church and state. To make his prayer nondenominational, Bush referred to God simply as "Heavenly Father" and "Lord." The prayer emphasized the social rather than the theological. Additionally, the prayer ended with a simple "Amen;" Bush did not use the phrase "In Jesus' name." Perhaps in a sign of a different era, none of the newspaper articles reporting on the Inaugural Address commented upon Bush's prayer.<sup>94</sup>

Following the prayer, the body of Bush's Inaugural Address can be subdivided into three sections: (1) the world reborn; (2) America reborn; and (3) America's commitment to

---

<sup>93</sup> Memo, Bob Simon to Peggy Noonan, Jan. 18, 1989, folder "GB Inaugural Address 1/20/89," OA 6853, Office of Speechwriting – Speech File Backup, GBL.

Bush, "Inaugural Address."

<sup>94</sup> Bush, "Inaugural Address."

Speech Drafts, folder "Inaugural Weekend, January 20-22, 1989: Friday, January 20, 1989," OA 90500-002, Office of the President – Daily Files, GBL.

the future. Within each of these sections, Bush maintained the metaphor of a new breeze blowing as well as the theme of service. Bush recognized the reality that America existed in a global context and was invested in issues and events around the world. He also put forth the premise that Americans had a responsibility to build a better America to assist other nations in gaining freedom.

### **The World Reborn**

Bush entered the presidency 200 years after George Washington. Similar to America's first President, he communicated that America was entering a "moment rich with promise." Bush had no way of foretelling the sweeping world events that would drastically change the world in 1989, but he could sense the wind of freedom blowing across the world, particularly Eastern Europe, and found hope and optimism in that belief. He was so optimistic that he declared "the day of the dictator is over. The totalitarian era is passing, its old ideas blown away like leaves from an ancient, lifeless tree." The blowing leaves prove an appropriate analogy in keeping with the new breeze metaphor, but Bush's declaration is questionable. If Bush was referring to the cracks showing within the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc, then it was an appropriate statement. Considering Bush's subsequent statement of "Great nations of the world are moving toward democracy through the door of freedom," this assumption of Bush's subject is probable. Gorbachev's changes were having sweeping effects across the Soviet Union, and the Eastern European countries were beginning to revolt against the dictatorial Communist regimes. However, if Bush was referring to only that section of the world, why was he ignoring the rest? Certainly, Eastern Europe had long been a primary focus of American foreign policy due to the agreements following World War II,

America's NATO alliances, and the Cold War tensions. America had also been integrally involved in Korea, Vietnam, Cuba, the Congo, Lebanon, Panama, and other areas of the world that had totalitarian governments. What of North Korea's Kim Il-sung, Cuba's Fidel Castro, or Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe (all of whom were in power when Bush delivered his speech)? Were they not dictators? In reality, Bush's statement was mere rhetoric – it sounded good even though it was inaccurate. It provided a measure of hope to Americans eager to forget the Cold War mentality.<sup>95</sup>

Despite Bush's statements regarding dictatorships and totalitarian governments being too broad, he did make a valid point: although the future "seems thick as fog," there was hope. Even if seeing into the future requires sitting and waiting, the "mists will lift and reveal the right path." The changes in Europe and the Soviet Union had not developed overnight; they had taken the better half of a century. In Bush's eyes, these gradual changes revealed an eternal truth – "freedom works . . . freedom is right." By embracing their innate human rights, the people of the world were embracing their natural freedoms – freedom of speech, freedom of movement, freedom of religion, freedom of thought, and beyond. By compelling those freedoms to emerge, the people of the world were giving themselves limitless possibilities for their future and gave them the ability to act upon what they knew – "in crucial things, unity; in important things, diversity; in all things, generosity." Freedom provided a shared goal, paving the way for all the people to work cooperatively for the greater good, despite personal differences.<sup>96</sup>

---

<sup>95</sup> Bush, "Inaugural Address."

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

## America Reborn

Unlike other parts of the world, America had a long history of freedom, a point Bush emphasized in transitioning to the second section of his speech. The United States did not have to experience rebirth in the same way as other parts of the world, but that did not mean that it had no areas in which it could improve. As Bush noted, America's decency and civility were admirable and understandable foundations for patriotic pride, but they should also spur Americans to look for ways to use their country's strengths for good. Americans should not make the accumulation of goods their goal and should desire to build a better country instead.<sup>97</sup>

This expression of American exceptionalism was much longer within the speech drafts where Noonan proposed that Bush highlight America as a country "rich in technology, gifted in science and art." Bush was to then continue his praise in saying, "We are a good people. We believe that there are things in life worth striving for, continents to be won. It is in our nature to move on. And art is honored here, and inquiry, and painting and poetry are judged worthy endeavors for the human heart." Again, as with Bush's statements regarding dictators, these are eloquent words, but what exactly do they mean? Continents to be won? Such a statement could easily be misconstrued as a call for conquest; America was willing to fight a moral war. Some, like Reagan, viewed the Cold War from a moral perspective of good versus evil, a reality that aroused domestic and international ire on multiple occasions. President Bush, having served as Reagan's Vice-President, would have maintained memories of those moments and understood the political folly of making a similar judgment within an Inaugural Address. The world's irritation would also be raised by Bush stating, "art is honored here." Was the President insinuating that art was not honored elsewhere or simply

---

<sup>97</sup> Bush, "Inaugural Address."

stating that freedom benefitted the arts? Had that line not been removed from the speech, one can only imagine the righteous indignation rising from countries like Italy and France that have a long, storied artistic tradition. But the President did have a point: freedom of expression does benefit the arts and, more often than not, that has been true in the United States. Good intentions are not sufficient reason for making ambiguous statements in a speech like the Inaugural Address and one can easily understand why these lines were edited out.<sup>98</sup>

Because Bush expressed that Americans were good at heart, or had the capability of being good at heart, he expressed that they could be better than they were at present. To Bush, being American meant more than having possessions because “they are not the measure of our lives.” More specifically, Americans could and should transfer their affections from material possessions to things less tangible – interpersonal relationships, community service, loyalty to family and country, and the like. In essence, by arguing this position, Bush was calling for a transformation of the popular definition of the American Dream. In contemporary society, the American Dream is most often associated with economic and social upward mobility. Bush called on the American people to reconsider what could be called the original American Dream – America as the land of freedom. The American people should desire to create a better world for their children than the one in which they currently lived . . . a kinder and gentler America. Bush recognized neither he nor the government could “teach us [the American people] to remember what is best in what we are,” but the President must do what he can to “celebrate the quieter, deeper successes that are made not of gold and silk but of better hearts and finer souls.” This was the heart of

---

<sup>98</sup> Bush, “Inaugural Address.”  
Speech Drafts, folder “Inaugural Weekend, January 20-22, 1989: Friday, January 20, 1989,” OA 90500-002,  
Office of the President – Daily Files, GBL.

Bush's call to service for the American people. There was work to be done – crime needed to be conquered, addictions to overcome, children who needed caring, and there were expectant mothers who needed “our care, our guidance, and our education, though we bless them for choosing life.”<sup>99</sup>

Although the speech files did not contain many letters providing suggestions for the Inaugural Address, there were two letters that have direct correlations with this point of Bush's text. The first arrived at the White House too late to be integrated into the speech (dated January 18, 1989), but the letter refers to Bush's previous use of the phrase “gentler, kinder society” and encourages the President to maintain that theme, which Bush did in his Inaugural Address. The second letter was sent well in advance of Noonan beginning her first draft; it was written on December 16, 1988. In the letter, Father Val Peter, Executive Director of Boys Town, the famous institution dedicated to helping needy children and families, urged the President to mention “the pressing issues of children and youth.” While on the campaign trail, President Bush had stopped to visit Boys Town in Nebraska, which endeared him greatly to the organization. Father Peter reminded the President-elect of Boys Town's motto, “He ain't heavy . . . he's m' brother,” saying that was “an excellent example of self-reliant people helping others” – a key point in Bush's speech. Father Peter also urged the President to emphasize the importance of America's youth because while they made up only 30% of the population, they were 100% of America's future. The archival materials do not provide any evidence that Noonan read the letter prior to writing Bush's speech. Also, although the letter was included within the speech file for the Inauguration, the letter includes a White House referral form noting the letter's forwarding to the Department of Education on March 8, 1989. One can only hope that the letter was not lost in the White House mail room

---

<sup>99</sup> Bush, “Inaugural Address.”

for three months and that it was forwarded to the Department of Education to support the Bush administration's initiatives relating to children's education.<sup>100</sup>

Bush's closing statement in his call to action is of significant importance and required skillful crafting in its wording because it was a policy statement regarding abortion. The word abortion is never used, but in saying "we bless them for choosing life," Bush was establishing a clear, pro-life stance. In an undated memo, Peggy Noonan wrote to George Bush explaining the changes she had made in response to Bush's concerns regarding the "reference to abortion" as she called it. Bush's memo to Noonan was not included in the file, but one can deduce much of the President's concerns from Noonan's responses, which she acknowledged were all openly political arguments for keeping the reference. The arguments were as follows:

1. It gives social conservatives something – we will be knocked for giving them nothing;

This is a valid point. Bush's Inaugural Address was filled with vivid metaphors, but lacked policy specifics. The conservative movement, buoyed by the Reagan administration, was looking to Bush to maintain their momentum. Bush could not afford to lose conservative support on his first day in office and a pro-life stance has long been a pivotal issue in winning or losing conservative support.

2. It takes some guts to say it;
3. And yet it's a gentle thing to say;

Noonan, being her usual, blunt self, was right. Most Presidents opt to avoid controversial topics in their Inaugural Addresses. Again, Presidents do not want to alienate a large

---

<sup>100</sup> Letter, Carnegie Samuel Calian to President-Elect George Bush, Jan. 18, 1989, Document Range 000457-227917CU, SP100, WHORM Subject File, GBL.  
Letter, Father Val J. Peter to President-elect Bush, Dec. 16, 1988, Document Range 000457-227917CU, SP100, WHORM Subject File, GBL.

segment of the population on their first day in office. However, while Bush made a pro-life statement, he did it in a gentle way. He did not say “abortion is wrong.” Rather, his administration would bless those who chose life. There was no mention to those who chose the other option.

4. It went over big in the convention when you mentioned ‘God bless those who chose life.’

There is also a measure of truth to the belief that if something worked once, do it again. Granted, the convention speech was given to a room full of Republicans, whereas the Inauguration would have a politically mixed crowd, so a positive reaction could not be guaranteed.

5. The abortion reference balances out – and at the same time gives backbone to – your later reference to tolerance and easygoingness.

This statement coincides with the points under argument three – Bush never mentioned those holding a pro-choice position. By calling on the American people to be tolerant of those with whom they disagree, Bush was indirectly saying that to himself as well in relation to the abortion debate.

6. Finally, it adds a compassionate moral equation to the speech. *Without condoning teen pregnancies.* (The italicized text was hand written next to the typed text.)

Noonan was correct in this observation. Bush’s statements referred to “young women . . . who are about to become mothers of children they can’t care for and might not love.” There is no specific age reference given. Bush was not shining the spotlight on any one group, nor was he condemning them. One must remember that this topic came at the end of Bush’s

focus upon the areas of society in which Americans needed to become involved and make improvements.<sup>101</sup>

Noonan closed her memo to Bush by promising that he would not “get snakebit on this [the abortion statement].” Furthermore, she promised that, if she was wrong, she would “personally commit *hari kari* in the reviewing stand, which will be very messy and probably get me in Chuck Conconi’s column as an ‘Inaugural First – Dead Speechwriter!!’” This was yet another example of Noonan’s personal sense of humor as well as her working relationship with the President-elect. The final decision, as Noonan notes in a handwriting postscript, was up to Bush, but Noonan was right. The President did not get “snakebit” on this point; he was not booed during his speech and the statement received little to no coverage in the press in the following days.<sup>102</sup>

### **America’s Commitment to the Future**

Bush’s emphasis regarding America’s ability to be reborn brought him rather abruptly to the third and final section of the speech – America’s Commitment to the Future. Bush made specific mention of different challenges the nation was facing in the present, then provided a proposed course of action that would lead the country into the future. These challenges were financial, social, political, and international. With each of these points, Bush made no promise that the road ahead would be easy. Nor did he guarantee that there would be no new challenges to face. What he did promise was a resolute spirit and commitment to the

---

<sup>101</sup> Bush, “Inaugural Address.”

Memo, Peggy Noonan to Mr. Vice President, folder “Inaugural Weekend, January 20-22, 1989, Friday, January 20, 1989,” OA 90500-002, Office of the President – Daily Files, GBL.

<sup>102</sup> Memo, Peggy Noonan to Mr. Vice President, folder “Inaugural Weekend, January 20-22, 1989, Friday, January 20, 1989,” OA 90500-002, Office of the President – Daily Files, GBL.

belief that America was fully capable of overcoming the challenges of the present to build a better future.

Bush was correct that the United States was in a financial crunch. Deficit spending was up and a recession hurt the nation's economy, but Bush had famously promised "no new taxes." Later, he would be forced to break this promise, to his political misfortune. As noted in the speech, Bush refused to play the "old" political game of solving problems by simply supplying public money. Given that America was facing a financial crunch, or "more will than wallet," this was not a wise decision in Bush's eyes. Rather, the nation and government should "make hard choices, looking at what we have and perhaps allocating it differently." In reality, Bush was proposing a standard budgetary review. However, Bush also proposed another solution. Rather than relying upon money to solve the country's problems, he would rely upon the American people's ingenuity and activism instead.<sup>103</sup>

Bush's remarks about committing to a better future blends well together with his second challenge – addressing America's social ills. Both the financial and social issues could be faced using a "new engagement," one that was "hands-on and involved, that gets the job done." Simply put, Bush was calling for community service. By working together rather than relying upon the government, Americans could ease the financial strain on the country and re-energize their communities. Working together meant everyone, men and women, old and young, working together. President Bush urged Americans to tap the "unused talent of the elderly and the unfocused energy of the young." With age there is wisdom and the World War II generation that, as Bush said, had "come of age," had much knowledge to share about tightening one's belt and working together behind a common goal. By working hand in hand, America could become the "thousand points of light," "an expanse of separate yet

---

<sup>103</sup> Bush, "Inaugural Address."

connected entities sprinkled across a broad and peaceful sky, which is America, the stretched continent” that he had famously said in his convention acceptance speech.<sup>104</sup>

The line “a thousand points of light” became one of the most famous phrases that Bush ever uttered, yet it was not without its controversy. As Peggy Noonan notes in her book, the phrase caused quite a political stir after someone from Pennsylvania “apparently called a radio talk show a few weeks after the speech and said the phrase a thousand points of light is from a Nazi hymnbook, or was a famous Nazi phrase.” The unsubstantiated accusation blitzed across the media and caused a stir of panic among the Bush campaign who started calling Noonan demanding to know in what Nazi hymnbook the light reference originated.\* Noonan, understandably, became concerned, but defended herself to the Bush team, saying, “Look, in the age of Joe Biden you don’t plagiarize, and if you do, you don’t plagiarize from Nazis, do you? ‘Cause that could really hurt the ol’ career!” Point taken, but that did not stop the media outlets from a research frenzy that yielded no results. Noonan herself doubted that it was even in the realm of possibility for a Nazi official to have said the same phrase, but developed a theory that the Pennsylvania listener (whom she described as “some old guy who’s losing his hearing or was drunk”) misunderstood the phrase and confused it with the “thousand year Reich.” Possible? Yes. Provable? No.<sup>105</sup>

The debate then moved away from the Nazis to other sources. Someone declared that the statement was from the Bible, which it was not. Someone else said that it was from *Beowulf*, a clear indication that that person had never read *Beowulf*. Ultimately, the media’s

---

<sup>104</sup> Bush, “Inaugural Address.”

Noonan, *What I Saw*, 312.

<sup>105</sup> Noonan, *What I Saw*, 312-313.

\* Bush faced similar accusations of using a Nazi phrase when he inserted “a new world order” within later addresses. Again, Bush was not using this phrase as an indicator of any inner Nazi sympathies, but this second example further points out the perils associated with crafting public rhetoric.

frantic research did reveal two parallels – Van Gogh and C. S. Lewis. The *Washington Times* reported that Van Gogh described stars as “points of light.” Coming from an artist, this would be a logical, physical description of the night sky. The *Times* also reported, citing specific page numbers within a specific edition, that C. S. Lewis had used the phrase “a thousand points of light” in one of his science-fiction books.\* In her book, Noonan relayed her surprise at learning this fact, and although she had never read the book herself, assumed the *Washington Times*’ research was valid, given the specific citation within the article. However, one of Noonan’s friends later revealed that the phrase was in Thomas Wolfe’s *The Web and the Rock*, a book that Noonan had read as a teenager. A far more important reality that this example shows is the necessity of careful research in planning a presidential speech. If there is an error, particularly an embarrassing one, the media will find it. One can only imagine the news headlines had the caller from Pennsylvania actually been correct in his claim that a “thousand points of light” was from a Nazi hymn.<sup>106</sup>

After unifying the country behind a social engagement, Bush’s third challenge was to entice Congress to do the same. Bush’s budget, one that he greatly desired to bring into balance, had to pass through the men and women in the Capitol first. The same was true of Bush’s other legislative goals; the Executive and Legislative branches had to reach a point of compromise and harmony rather than dissension and discord that had existed in recent history. Bush knew he was facing an uphill battle because, in the 101<sup>st</sup> Congress of 1989-1991, the Democratic Party held the majority in both the House (251-183 with 1 empty seat at the beginning of the term) and the Senate (55-45). Understanding this reality makes

---

<sup>106</sup> Noonan, *What I Saw*, 312-313.

\* Noonan did not specify which of C.S. Lewis’ works the *Washington Times* cited as containing “a thousand points of light.”

Bush's verbal extending of his hand specifically to "Mr. Speaker" (Representative Jim Wright, D-TX) and "Mr. Majority Leader" (Senator Robert Byrd, D-WV) understandable because both men were from the opposing political party. As proof of his sincerity, on January 21, President Bush sent a letter to both Wright and Byrd reminding them of his Inaugural offer to work together and requesting to meet with them at the White House later in the week. By saying that he was extending his hand, Bush was expressing his willingness to work with the Democrats, but that hand extension should not be misconstrued as a willingness to abandon his principles. Bush relayed in his speech, he wanted to return to the era of their fathers where "differences ended at the water's edge . . . when . . . the Congress and the Executive were capable of working together to produce a budget on which this nation could live." To Bush, this was one of those times where "in crucial things, unity" applied with complete certainty. Bush and Congress had their battles and disagreements, but, together, they were able to pass some key pieces of legislation, including the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act.<sup>107</sup>

Finally, Bush urged the American people to dedicate themselves to a new engagement with the international community. That would begin by the United States holding to its traditional policy of peace through strength. America would offer its hand in friendship, but Bush made it clear that America's hand could also become a strong and powerful fist. This fist would be used reluctantly; it was not America's first choice. Those who showed good will towards and kept their word in treaties and agreements with America had nothing to fear and would find their friendly actions reciprocated. However, just as

---

<sup>107</sup> Bush, "Inaugural Address."

Letter, George Bush to Jim Wright, Jan. 21, 1989, Document Range 000457-227917CU, SP100, WHORM Subject File, GBL.

Letter, George Bush to Robert Byrd, Jan 21, 1989, Document Range 000457-227917CU, SP100, WHORM Subject File, GBL.

positive actions towards the U.S. would be matched, so too would negative or harmful actions towards the U.S. be matched. Bush expressed his willingness to “continue the new closeness with the Soviet Union,” but one could safely assume that the Soviet Union was at the top of Bush’s list of countries he had in mind when referencing the reluctant fist. Bush was committed to embracing the future with hope, but also with strength and vigilance.<sup>108</sup>

After highlighting his three main foci, Bush closed his speech with a series of somewhat related statements centered around America’s goodness and potential. To Bush, the greatest symbol of America’s potential was its children, whom he thanked for participating in the Inaugural ceremonies by watching it on television in school. Even this seemingly small form of participation qualified under Bush’s call for a new engagement. The same was true for all those participating by watching the events live in Washington D.C., the mothers who taught their sons the battle hymns, and the elderly man who saluted the flag. Participation in government was the key to America’s future and one of the most effective ways of public involvement. After all, as Bush said, he was “neither prince nor pope.” He could not see into men’s souls, nor could he order people to obey his commands or force them to work together in cooperation. But he could speak of his yearning for “a greater tolerance, and easygoingness about each other’s attitudes and way of life.” However, there were some actions which the President was unwilling to tolerate, specifically, drug trafficking.<sup>109</sup>

In calling for the American people to help improve their fellow man and their country, President Bush knew that challenges lay ahead. His call to service required work and it required dedication. Bush knew that the “problems are large, but our heart is larger.

---

<sup>108</sup> Bush, “Inaugural Address.”

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

Our challenges are great, but our will is greater. And if our flaws are endless, God's love is truly boundless." For every challenge, Bush presented an optimistic, forward-looking response. His goals for the American people could be accomplished, and by working together, they would become reality.

### **Immediate Response**

Following the Inaugural Address, President Bush received the usual accolade letters, mailgrams, and postcards from the appreciative side of the American public. Many letters offered generic congratulations and praise for a job well done with the Inaugural Address. Such letters were commonplace, but others contained more specific information reflecting how different components of the speech spoke to particular individuals. For example, Marty Eddy, President of the Prisoner of War Committee of Michigan, sent a Western Union Mailgram thanking President Bush for "mentioning Americans being held against their will in foreign lands." Given Eddy's background, it makes sense that he would find Bush's commitment on that particular issue quite appealing. Mikhail Gorbachev relayed his appreciation for President Bush's commitment to continuing the improvement of U.S.-Soviet relations which would thereby substantially improve the international climate as a whole via the Soviet media, TASS. Gorbachev would have little reason to send a letter commenting upon the President's desire to help America's youth; he was rightfully concerned about America's foreign policies. Janet Webb, a mother with a 1 ½ year old baby, sent the President a penguin postcard saying that the President's words "about the legacy we will leave our children really moved me" and asking how she could be a point of light to help

make her community a better place to live. Again, the writer's background paralleled the letter's content.<sup>110</sup>

A portion of the American population was pleased with President Bush's Inaugural Address. In contrast, following the speech, a segment of the American public still found themselves undecided in their opinion of the new President. The first Gallup poll of Bush's presidency, covering January 24-28, 1989, show that 43% of those surveyed had no opinion concerning the new President. A second poll, run from January 27 to February 5, shows 33% of those surveyed holding no opinion towards Bush. These are extremely high numbers for that category. Bush would have much preferred higher numbers in the approve column (which stood at 51% and 55% respectively). Since these polls occurred after the Inaugural Address, it is clear that Bush's speech did not help cement the public's views of his administration. However, when compared with similar polls following Carter's and Reagan's Inaugurations, there is a similar trend. The January 30 to February 2, 1981, Gallup poll shows Reagan with a 36% no opinion rating and 51% approval rating. Carter fared slightly better with a 26% no opinion rating and 66% approval rating, but the first poll available was not taken until February 4-7, 1977. Based upon this data, the Inaugural Address served only as the President's introduction to the nation, it did not serve as a means of solidifying support, at least not between 1977 and 1989.<sup>111</sup>

---

<sup>110</sup> Assorted Letters to the President, Document Range 000457-227917CU, SP100, WHORM Subject File, GBL.

Mailgram, Marty Eddy to President George Bush, Jan. 20, 1989, Document Range 000457-227917CU, SP100, WHORM Subject File, GBL.

Transcript, Mikhail Gorbachev to Esteemed Mr. George Bush, Jan. 20, 1989, folder "Daily Press Releases – January 20-25, 1989," OA 13067-001, Press Office – Daily Press Releases Files, Chronological Files, GBL. Postcard, Janet Webb to The President, Document Range 000457-227917CU, SP100, WHORM Subject File, GBL.

<sup>111</sup> "Job Performance Ratings for President Bush (G.H.W.), 01/24/1989-01/08/1993, Accessed Jan. 5, 2012. Available at

[http://webapps.ropercenter.uconn.edu/CFIDE/roper/presidential/webroot/presidential\\_rating.cfm#.TzL93IEbFlc](http://webapps.ropercenter.uconn.edu/CFIDE/roper/presidential/webroot/presidential_rating.cfm#.TzL93IEbFlc)

The lack of support cannot be blamed upon a lack of media coverage. The *U.S. News & World Report* dedicated much of its January 30, 1989, issue to the new President, with its articles providing mixed reviews of Bush's Inaugural Address and the outset of his administration. Writer David Gergen's position is clear in his article's title – "George Bush's Balky Start." Gergen does not give much attention to the Inaugural Address, but he does highlight Bush's apparent lack of a clear agenda for his first 100 days in office, an impression Bush furthered by stating, "I don't have an agenda where I have to get six items done . . . I'm not thinking in terms of 100 days." Bush was likely attempting to shift the attention to a more long-term perspective, but his statement was not politically prudent and was corrected in a later interview with *Newsweek* Editor-in-Chief Richard M. Smith. Bush noted that one of his primary goals for his first 100 days in office was "I would like to have it written that we made major strides towards getting a grip with Congress on the budget deficit." Furthermore, as previously noted, Bush's Inaugural Address laid general plans, not specific ones, which would also encourage a negative perspective towards Bush's ambitions. The criticisms continued in the January 30, 1989, edition of *Newsweek*, where Jonathan Alter took the President to task for several things, including: (1) his patrician values of restraint and responsibility that "can make useful cudgels;" (2) believing that private giving could in any way substitute for government services; (3) encouraging a kinder, gentler America that would cause the country to be "outgunned in the fierce global marketplace;" (4) creating an administration built upon symbols rather than by policy; and (5) for wanting to be President

---

"Job Performance Ratings for President Reagan, 01/20/1989-01/20/1989, Accessed Jan. 5, 2012. Available at [http://webapps.ropercenter.uconn.edu/CFIDE/roper/presidential/webroot/presidential\\_rating.cfm#.TzL93IEbFlc](http://webapps.ropercenter.uconn.edu/CFIDE/roper/presidential/webroot/presidential_rating.cfm#.TzL93IEbFlc)  
"Job Performance Ratings for President Carter, 01/20/1977-01/20/1981, Accessed, Jan. 5, 2012. Available at [http://webapps.ropercenter.uconn.edu/CFIDE/roper/presidential/webroot/presidential\\_rating.cfm#.TzL93IEbFlc](http://webapps.ropercenter.uconn.edu/CFIDE/roper/presidential/webroot/presidential_rating.cfm#.TzL93IEbFlc)

without knowing exactly what he wanted to do as President. Alter was clearly not a friend of the President.<sup>112</sup>

In contrast to these negative perspectives, Harrison Rainie praised the timelessness of Bush's words, believing that the speech could have been uttered with equal stirring impact in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Rainie complimented Bush's calls for bi-partisanship, but also recognized that many Americans remained skeptical about Bush's policies and concerned over the state of the nation. *Time Magazine's* Michael Kramer also praised the President's speech, describing it as, "Kind words. Gentle words. Nothing flashy or particularly memorable. Just good, plain talk from the heart." Kramer also lauded Bush for signaling a departure from Reagan's "tacit approval" of selfish greed and appreciated Bush's ability to pick the right generalities, his expression of sensitivity and caring, and his dream of the full participation of the American people. Although Kramer recognized that Bush had not delivered one of the greatest presidential speeches of all time, he expressed his sincere appreciation for Bush's simplicity multiple times within the article.<sup>113</sup>

Bush also found a friend in a former presidential speechwriter – William Safire. As with all Inaugurations, the press covered every possible angle, including Bush's propensity for starting sentences with the word "and." Safire took Bush to task over this offense to the English language, opening his *New York Times* article with "And now the big news, strictly from the point of view of grammarians, about the Inaugural Address of President George

---

<sup>112</sup> David R. Gergen, "George Bush's Balky Start," Jan. 30, 1989, *U.S. News & World Report*, 34, folder "Inaugural Weekend, January 20-22, 1989," OA 90500-001, Office of the President – Daily Files, GBL. Jonathan Alter, "Bush Reaches," Jan. 30, 1989, *Newsweek*, 23-26, folder "Inaugural Weekend, January 20-22, 1989," OA 90500-001, Office of the President – Daily Files, GBL.

Richard M. Smith, "An Interview with Bush," Jan. 30, 1989, *Newsweek*, 32, folder "Inaugural Weekend, January 20-22, 1989," OA 90500-001, Office of the President – Daily Files, GBL.

<sup>113</sup> Harrison Rainie, "His Moment Arrives," Jan. 30, 1989, *U.S. News & World Report*, 19-22, folder "Inaugural Weekend, January 20-22, 1989," OA 90500-001, Office of the President – Daily Files, GBL.

Michael Kramer, "A New Breeze Is Blowing," Jan. 30, 1989, *Time*, 17-23, folder "Inaugural Weekend, January 20-22, 1989," OA 90500-001, Office of the President – Daily Files, GBL.

Bush: he has legitimized and popularized the use of the conjunction “and” to start a sentence. He used this dubious construction 16 times, 10 planned and 6 ad-libbed.” One could spend a lifetime focusing upon the social impact of presidential word choices upon American vernacular English, and that debate is not this dissertation’s aim. However, it does provide a point of context in noting how closely the media scrutinizes presidential rhetoric. Although Safire disliked Bush’s violation of conjunction usage, he thoroughly appreciated Bush’s use of the metaphor: “We meet on democracy’s front porch,” “a new breeze,” “blown away like leaves from an ancient lifeless tree,” “freedom is like a beautiful kite that can go higher and higher with the breeze,” and “the offered hand” to name a few.<sup>114</sup>

One must read to the end of Safire’s article to find his greatest praise for Bush’s speech. Safire emphasized the context of the speech and provided his thoughts regarding the speech in general, calling it:

Not in the inspiring class of Lincoln, F.D.R. and Woodrow Wilson, but better suited to the occasion than the offerings of George Washington and Andrew Jackson. Turning to recent times, I believe George Bush was not as eloquent as John Kennedy . . . or fitting as Lyndon Johnson . . . or surprising as Richard Nixon . . ., but far more uplifting than Jimmy Carter and on par with, or more authentic and quietly moving than, Dwight Eisenhower or Ronald Reagan.

The 1989 Inaugural Address was a good speech, suitably solemn and unifying, coherent and appropriately brief. It did not soar and cause listeners to tingle, but that is not the Bush style. A good speech is not a collection of crisp one-liners, workable metaphors and effective rhetorical devices; a good speech truly reflects the thoughts and emotions of the speaker, which is what this speech did. And as George Bush would say, “And that’s that.”

Coming from a presidential speechwriter, such accolades are high praise indeed. This may be the one of the few times that a member of the press felt that Bush’s delivered rhetoric was the equal or better than Ronald Reagan’s, but Safire was optimistic about Bush’s future.

Within his article, he went as far as presuming that Bush might “take another crack at this

---

<sup>114</sup> William Safire, “On Language; Marking Bush’s Inaugural,” Feb. 5, 1989, *New York Times*.

line [an awkward line from the Inaugural Address referenced earlier in the paragraph] in his second Inaugural.”<sup>115</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Bush’s Inaugural Address is a prime example of his simple, straightforward rhetoric and his heartfelt desire to see America come together in mutually-beneficial service. That service, while morally and ideologically based, had the potential to cross the many social boundaries existing within the United States in the late 1980s. Bush’s administration was looking forward – the dawn of a new decade and the rebirth of American idealism. Bush’s Inaugural Address established him as his own man while extending some of Reagan’s principles, namely a communal reliance rather than reliance upon government.

Just as Peggy Noonan had to learn about Bush, so too did the American people. Unlike his two predecessors, President Bush was not as actively involved in the development of his Inaugural Address. One could hypothesize that Bush’s lack of personal engagement hurt him rhetorically, but there is little concrete data whereby to prove or disprove that theory. What the research within this chapter reveals is that Bush did not develop his own draft for the Inaugural and he did not have his staff hold an open call for suggestions. Instead, Bush relied upon someone with whom he was familiar and had worked with on an earlier occasion. Peggy Noonan was certainly a qualified writer for the task, but, interestingly, few scholars credit her as the speech’s author. Indeed, in performing the initial research for this chapter, it was a *New York Times* article, not a book, that finally revealed her as the speech’s author.

---

<sup>115</sup> William Safire, “On Language; Marking Bush’s Inaugural,” Feb. 5, 1989, *New York Times*.

Bush entered the presidency with his own goals, but his rhetorical and leadership style sometimes made those ambitions and policies difficult to discern. The question of whether Bush succeeded in his desires to create a kinder and gentler America raises conflicting answers. Bush did succeed in some reforms, but his inability to rein in the deficit ultimately led to his political loss to a rhetorically gifted and widely educated Arkansas governor, Bill Clinton.

## Concluding Comparisons

### Timeless v. Historical

A particular group or individual constructed the Inaugural Address; a particular man delivered the Inaugural Address; and a particular audience at a particular point in time heard the Inaugural Address as the formal self-introduction of a President. By analyzing the Inaugural Address as not merely the newly elected President's first public speech, but as the opening statement in expressing the President's vision for America via his spoken goals, ideologies, and perspectives, a scholar of the presidency can develop a greater understanding of the Inaugural Address within the continuum of American history. One could dissect each speech in search of eternal truths like Martin Van Buren's "All the lessons of history and experience must be lost upon us if we are content to trust alone to the peculiar advantages we happen to possess" or John F. Kennedy's "Ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country," but to do so runs the risk of voiding the speech of its rightful historical context. The setting is pivotal to understanding the speech.

Some scholars might claim that the Inaugural Address is, by its very nature, a piece of Aristotelian *epideictic* rhetoric which "praises or blames on ceremonial occasions, invites the audience to evaluate the speaker's performance, recalls the past and speculates about the future while focusing on the present, employs a noble, dignified literary style, and amplifies or rehearses admitted facts." There is a respected tradition of viewing these addresses in just that way. For example, in *Presidents Creating the Presidency*, Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson support the view that the goal of the Inaugural is to create a piece of timeless rhetoric. Campbell and Jamieson consider the Inaugural Address as a ceremonial occasion linking the past and future together in the present, as a time for the President to

affirm shared principles, and as an opportune moment to ask the audience to remember traditional values. Campbell and Jamieson argue that Inaugural Addresses “transcend the historical present because they are focused upon the “eternal present.” This dissertation does not seek to deny the commonalities present within Inaugural Addresses nor their categorization as *epideictic*. That is a different approach, one that does not stand in opposition to the methodology employed here. However, in acknowledging certain characteristics of the Inaugural Address to prove their argument of timelessness, Campbell and Jamieson have necessarily ignored others. They have given careful attention to method, form, and general themes while overlooking the specific message at work in each given address. Making reference to the Soviet Union was not a timeless concept; if removed from George H. W. Bush’s Inaugural Address and inserted into either of Abraham Lincoln’s, the reference would make no sense. Reagan thanking Carter for helping to heal the nation would likewise be out of place in John Adams or Dwight Eisenhower’s addresses. Pointing this out is not to belabor the obvious, but to remind readers that while these speeches *may* have some timeless qualities, they have qualities specific to their times in order to be coherent.<sup>116</sup>

This dissertation does not argue that each Inaugural Address was written with no knowledge or consultation of earlier Addresses or that each one contains no similarities to prior speeches. Indeed, several speechwriters and Presidents included within this dissertation read other Inaugural Addresses for inspiration. There was awareness on the part of the speech teams that this specific form of American public discourse is a genre with established precedents. Many writers have tried to capture George Washington’s tone and dignity in giving tribute to America’s greatness, for example. As Campbell and Jamieson note, an

---

<sup>116</sup> Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Presidents Creating the Presidency: Deeds Done in Words* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 29-30, 46.

examination of all the presidential addresses throughout American history reveals recurring elements, including unifying the audience, rehearsing national values, setting forth administrative philosophy, and enacting the presidential role.<sup>117</sup>

This dissertation does argue that there is no established or expected formula for the Inaugural Address. Each President determines for himself what his message will be; this most frequently involves the President's "vision for the immediate future," a vision the President takes quite seriously. This is why I do not stress the timelessness aspect. If timelessness were such a pivotal concern of those writing the Inaugural Address, then why, within the hundreds of pages of memos and drafts for Carter's, Reagan's, and Bush's Inaugural Addresses was there no mention of this concept?

The answer is simple. First, timelessness is not determined by any author; it is determined by the reader/interpreter well after the speech is finalized and delivered. Second, the speechwriters were not focused upon the eternal; they were focused upon the present and what words would help the new administration set the right tone for the next four years. That is a theoretical and methodological keystone to this dissertation born out by archival research. If this were not the case, then sending an open call for suggestions, a reality overlooked in contemporary scholarship, would be a worthless endeavor. Acknowledging the public's impact upon a speech completely changes the reader's scope. The speech is no longer the creation of one man or one man's administration; it is a cooperative endeavor reflecting the views of a many. It is relatively easy to level a complaint against a President for something he said in a speech. It is not a simple task to argue against all the individuals

---

<sup>117</sup> Robert Schlesinger, *White House Ghosts: Presidents and Their Speechwriters* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2008), 269.  
Remini and Golway, xi, xiii.  
Campbell and Jamieson, 32-47.

fulfilling the supporting roles who helped develop that statement. Today's scholarship focuses primarily upon the President, the orator, without consideration from whence his ideas came. This dissertation hopes, in its own small way, to encourage a broader approach to presidential rhetoric.

### **Connectivity of an Era**

Examined individually, one Inaugural Address defines a moment in time; examined in clusters, Inaugural Addresses define an era. Each chapter within this section establishes the individual Inaugural Address within its particular moment of time and expands upon the existing scholarship for each of the three speeches. How, then, are Carter's, Reagan's, and Bush's Inaugural Addresses connected to one another in presenting a vision for America during the late Cold War era? The three Presidents all embraced the challenges of the present and held an optimistic view of America's future by emphasizing the American spirit and national core values. In other words, their present concerns were close enough in time and *zeitgeist* for the speeches to be relevant and related to each other.

As stated in the introduction to this section, the Inaugural Address is not the time to blame or accuse one's predecessor, no matter how ideologically opposed one was to a previous administration. However, the previous President's actions are very much present within the three Inaugural Addresses examined herein. The outgoing President is not mentioned by name other than in the "thank you" section. No, the Inaugural Address does not criticize a particular policy or ideology from the previous administration with which the new President disagrees. Rather, the reference is inferred by the challenges the nation faced

at the time in question. The new President subliminally notes the outgoing President's deficiencies.

One domestic challenge referenced by all three Presidents was the issue of employment – the inability of citizens to find work or the unwillingness to do work. All three noted that the economic times in the United States could have been better. For Carter and Reagan, this meant tackling inflation; for Bush, this meant tackling the budget deficit. The three men's problems were connected – Carter's policies impacted Reagan's policies which impacted Bush's policies. Each President is denied the luxury of entering office with a clean slate and a budget in the black. Each must play with the cards they are dealt; sometimes the cards are better than others. For the late Cold War era, the economic playing cards showed no hidden aces and certainly not a full house. Despite these odds, each President remained optimistic that improvements were possible. One of Carter's closing goals was "that we have found productive work for those able to perform it." He sought job creation to help the economic problems. Bush also emphasized jobs, saying that idle industry had thrown workers unnecessarily into unemployment. For America to be productive once again, all Americans should have the ability to get back to work. Bush took a slightly different approach and argued not just for people to get to work, but to work together and work towards goals that were more eternal than human possessions. Working to build better communities and better families would thereby create a better labor environment and a stronger, more prosperous America. A prosperous, strong America was necessary not only for domestic strength, but for international strength as well.<sup>118</sup>

---

<sup>118</sup> Carter, "Inaugural Address."  
Reagan, "Inaugural Address."  
Bush, "Inaugural Address."

An international challenge that all three Presidents referenced, unsurprisingly, was the Cold War. Even though each man treated the Cold War differently due to contrasting, and sometimes conflicting, ideologies, each man believed that it was a conflict that could be overcome through perseverance, domestic and international strength, and international friendship. (Indeed, given that Carter went on to refer to the Cold War in the past tense later in his presidency, one could argue that he viewed the Cold War as already over. However, that position did not mean that Carter felt the world was a place without conflict between the Soviet Union and the United States, as is evidenced by his Inaugural Address.)\* Notably, Bush was the only one to address the Soviet Union by name within his Inaugural Address; Carter referred to “the world” and Reagan referred to “enemies of freedom” and “adversaries.” Given the time period, however, the intended reference is clear.<sup>119</sup>

All three men firmly held the position that the United States would overcome the adversity of the era, largely through the promotion of ideals and values abroad – human rights (Carter), peaceful strength (Reagan), the hand of friendship (Bush). Most of all, each President expressed a key reason why America would successfully overcome the adversity at hand: the indomitable American spirit. All three men viewed Americans as a resilient lot; a less complimentary adjective would be “stubborn.” Americans were too determined to see their great experiment fail due to a lack of fortitude and commitment to what made their

---

\* By way of directly contrasting ideologies, a prime example exists between President Carter and President Reagan. Carter firmly believed that the world of 1977 could not be explained in the simplistic terms of free world versus Communist world. Rather, than its traditional definition, the Cold War, if it still existed, it was a war of values upon which Carter could base his fight for nuclear disarmament and human rights. In contrast, Reagan had no such qualms about defining the Cold War using such words as “right and wrong,” “good and evil,” “free and oppressed,” and others. Where Carter sought the more neutral gray zone, Reagan stood firmly by his stark black and white appraisal.

<sup>119</sup> Carter, “Inaugural Address.”  
 Thomas A. Langston, *The Cold War Presidency: A Documentary History* (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2007), 372-374.

nation great from its inception – liberty. For Carter, Reagan, and Bush, liberty was the key characteristic that would help America overcome the international challenge of the Cold War; the endurance of those freedoms would lead to a stronger, kinder America filled with citizens who cared not only for their fellow Americans but for people around the world. Liberty is one of the great traditional values within the United States. American values make up one of the four commonalities that Campbell and Jamieson analyze within their book, but the two authors also recognize that “traditional” values have different meaning to different people, something of which the President and his speechwriters must have been keenly aware. The leeway provided under freedom in relation to one’s legal rights under the Constitution is always debated, but one rarely hears an argument that Americans should possess fewer freedoms.<sup>120</sup>

What was the consensus presidential vision for America from 1977-1989? Carter, Reagan, and Bush all expressed a vision of a brighter tomorrow. Some individuals might complain that this vision is too vague or trite, and they make a valid point. Empty words cannot succeed; they must be supported with action. But such detractors miss a crucial historical point. As emphasized in the 1977, 1981, and 1989 Inaugural Addresses, Americans had the ability to hope for and achieve a brighter tomorrow while others in the world did not. Americans possessed a resolute spirit that had not been crushed by repressive regimes, most notably Communist governments, in other parts of the world. Americans were willing to fight, both actively and passively, to ensure that others around the world might have the opportunity at a better future. Americans could look forward to the future while others feared what each new day would bring forth. Why were Carter, Reagan, and Bush so

---

<sup>120</sup> Carter, “Inaugural Address.”  
Reagan, “Inaugural Address.”  
Bush, “Inaugural Address.”

sure that the American ideal would continue and allow the dream of a bright future to continue? Reagan, in his Inaugural Address, said it best: “We are Americans.”<sup>121</sup>

---

<sup>121</sup> Carter, “Inaugural Address.”  
Reagan, “Inaugural Address.”  
Bush, “Inaugural Address.”

## Section II: Perspectives of Communism

### Introduction

Given the timeframe under consideration within this dissertation, the examination of presidential perspectives of Communism is both logical and necessary. It would be impossible to examine the Cold War era and ignore that ideology. Communism was at the heart of the conflict, although there were sharply divergent opinions regarding the conceptual underpinning of the Cold War as well as the policies which inspired the varying attitudes towards Communism. There were onlookers on both the Right and Left who disputed the existence of a unitary, Soviet-led Communist threat. World events such as the independent course of Yugoslavian Titoism or the Sino-Soviet split often exposed different notions at work in the West. Also, there was disagreement about when and whether the bipolar Cold War calculus, and the George F. Kennan-inspired Containment it invoked, applied to a given world situation, such as the Vietnam War. This dissertation does not seek to recapitulate or analyze all of these differing points of view. However, one should consider that the idea of a bipolar global conflict with respective headquarters in Washington and Moscow was extremely durable, if sometimes of doubtful reality. The fact that all the Presidents studied herein governed in a context which can fairly be termed “Cold War” acts as a starting point, but does not overshadow the different emphases of each administration.

The Cold War was not a traditional war, although there were indirect military exercises and casualties. Rather, the Cold War was an ideological struggle, with broadly discernible shape, in which the defense of opposing ideologies and their state systems spawned military, political, economic, and social tensions. Because nuclear arms were involved, and since the conceptual framework of the Cold War was so stark, there was an

element of fear never far from the surface of Cold War culture. As Kennan noted in his famed “Long Telegram” and *The Sources of Soviet Conduct*, the Cold War mentality presupposed a long showdown in which either the Soviet Communist or Western Democratic system would prevail.

America had a long history of anti-Communist rhetoric dating back to the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. During the Red Scare of the post-World War I years, this rhetoric took on a forthrightly anti-Soviet direction. That modulated during World War II’s alliances, but reawakened after 1945 when the Soviets politically dominated Eastern Europe. Churchill delivered his “Iron Curtain” speech in Missouri in 1946, and in the 1950s Joseph McCarthy most notoriously amplified the idea that Soviet forces were at work domestically and internationally, trying to undermine America’s position in the world. Such rhetoric waxed and waned in later years. Hardcore anti-Soviet political talk had, in general, become more subdued and tactful since McCarthy’s heated rants, but Communism was still a negative when discussed in mainstream American political discourse because it was still viewed as a threat to the American way of life. When Carter assumed office in 1977, Americans could still vividly recall just how close the country came to direct war in 1962 with the Cuban Missile Crisis. Americans remembered the sinking of the *USS Thresher* in 1963. The Navy rushed the ill-fated submarine’s production and testing due to the Cold War arms race, an error that cost 129 sailors their lives in what remains one of the deadliest submarine accidents in world history. Incidents such as the capture of the *USS Pueblo*, by North Korea, or the *USS Mayaguez*, by Cambodia’s Khmer Rouge, provided punctuated episodes of Cold War tension which might have escalated into broader fighting. The seminal National Security Council document NSC-68 of 1950 notably outlined the overarching idea of containing

Communism, which assumed that world Communism's spread was either pushed by or beneficial to the USSR. Among other developments, this idea led to American political and military involvement in East Asia, specifically the Korean and Vietnam Wars, as well as to the more successful commitment to NATO's defense of Western Europe. Strategic assessment of areas such as the Middle East and central Asia always took the Soviet position into account, which was why the Red Army's invasion of Afghanistan so disturbed the United States during the Carter years and after. Fears and tensions continued into the 1980s with the United States boycotting the 1980 Moscow Olympics and the Soviets returning the gesture by boycotting the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics.

The era of 1977-1992 heralded many changes to the Cold War political dynamic. Détente, the public commitment to peaceful involvement with the erstwhile foe, was an earlier change, begun in the Nixon administration. But as great a change as Détente was, even more drastic changes were in store. In keeping with the Afghanistan invasion and a generalized toughening in the Cold War atmosphere, Leonid Brezhnev built up the Soviet Union's military, supported allies and insurrection movements abroad, and largely ignored the economic cracks which began to show in the increasingly strained Soviet system. Yuri Andropov's ascension to power in 1982 caused American concern due to his historic role as leader of the KGB, but his brief tenure in office limited his impact upon historical events. His fondness for jazz even provoked hope among some Western analysts that Andropov might have a softer, pro-Détente side. Konstantin Chernenko, Andropov's colorless and aged successor in 1984, likewise had a very brief time in office, but made one particularly notable declaration – Mikhail Gorbachev was to be his successor. Gorbachev, the first Soviet leader born after the Revolution, assumed office in 1985. He was largely an unknown entity

in the West, although his relative youth and fitness formed a stark contrast to his elderly and infirm predecessors. Gorbachev gradually instituted a series of political and economic changes known as *glasnost* and *perestroika*. *Glasnost* and *perestroika* came to serve as catch phrases for Moscow's new commitment to openness in domestic and foreign policy. They epitomized Gorbachev's fresh determination to reform the creaky Soviet system in meaningful ways and are partially credited (or blamed, depending on one's perspective) for the USSR's swift demise.

Just as the Soviet Union faced political changes, so too did the United States. All three Presidents during the late Cold War era had served in the military. They understood the ramifications and implications of Cold War tensions, but handled the situation differently due to political experience and personal and/or party ideology. The United States began the era under Jimmy Carter, who expected the Soviets to possess a similar moral fortitude as his own, thus creating diplomatic frustration on both sides. Carter, who felt "burned" by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, was then replaced by the outspoken Ronald Reagan, who likewise held a firm belief in right and wrong. Reagan expressed his perspective in terms which had little difficulty translating across borders. Reagan repeatedly made it perfectly clear where he stood on issues relating to the Soviet Union and Communism. He had a multi-decade record of disparaging Soviet Communism before he reached the White House. Of the three, George H. W. Bush had the most international experience prior to assuming office. Where Carter and Reagan had to deliberate regarding how to best deal with the Soviet Union's existence, Bush faced the challenge of navigating the Soviet Union's demise – a monumental task for any leader.

Carter's, Reagan's, and Bush's treatment of and views toward the Soviet Union are visible within their speeches, but the speeches examined within this section were not aimed at the Soviet Union directly. The Presidents were not addressing a Soviet audience, but an American one. Furthermore, the speeches were as much a celebration of capitalist, free-society ideology as they were a criticism of Communist ideology. Of course, in a bipolar context, praise for one side correlated with criticism of the other. Carter, Reagan, and Bush were supporting and preserving the American ideal by attacking its most powerful nemesis – Communism, as supported by its international rival – the Soviet Union.

**Chapter 1: Jimmy Carter on Communism**  
**“State of the Union Address”**  
**January 23, 1980**

Carter’s position as a Washington outsider meant that he was a political unknown not only in the United States, but internationally as well. At the outset of his presidency, Carter had no established relationship with any of the Soviet leadership, nor did he have any established record when it came to Soviet international policies. The Soviets had little idea what to expect from the new President, especially when, as a presidential candidate, he frequently spoke of issues like arms control within a moral and spiritual context rather than a political and military one. Carter’s Inaugural Address, as related in Section I of this dissertation, also stated his goal of an outright ban of nuclear weapons, something no prior President had attempted. Additionally, Carter’s actions indicated a lack of understanding of the Soviet psyche which respected strength and scornfully manipulated weakness. In short, as former Ambassador and retired Lieutenant General Edward Rowny\* stated, “Carter lacked the experience required to be practical in dealing with the worldly Soviets. He fell into the trap of projecting his own sense of fairness and rationality onto his adversaries.” From the outset, Carter’s ideology and practice placed Soviet-American relations in a precarious situation. This uncertainty was clearly evident in his rhetoric, particularly his 1980 State of the Union Address (hereafter referred to as the 1980 SOTU).<sup>122</sup>

Carter’s 1980 SOTU Address came in the wake of two pivotal international events – Iranian militants’ seizure of American embassy personnel in Tehran and the Soviet Union’s invasions of Afghanistan in November and December 1979. A SOTU Address may not be

---

<sup>122</sup> Edward L. Rowny, *It Takes One to Tango* (Washington, D.C.: Brassey’s, Inc., 1992), 93-94.

\* Rowny also played a key role in SALT and START under Nixon, Ford, Carter, and Reagan. However, he strongly opposed Carter’s support of SALT II, a position which ultimately led to Rowny’s split with the Carter administration and his retirement from the army.

the expected setting for a major international policy speech, but Carter used it as such by equating the state of America's Union with the state of the world. This is not a far-fetched concept in a global environment. Thus, the 1980 SOTU largely ignores domestic issues like the economy and instead focuses heavily upon the Soviet Union and Middle East with a serious and tough rhetorical tone. One cannot help but note another aspect of the speech's timing. It fell at the start of a presidential election year. In November 1979, Carter maintained an average approval rating of only 53%. Carter did receive an uptick in the approval ratings in December, primarily due to crises in Iran, Afghanistan, and the Middle East in general, but he still faced a battle to restore America's faith in his leadership abilities prior to the November elections. The SOTU provided the perfect opportunity for the President to present his goals and attempt to reinvigorate the public's trust.<sup>123</sup>

The 1980 SOTU Address' theme is clearly America's security in the face of the Soviet threat. Concern over the state of affairs around the world was not limited to the political class. The Carter mail sample files contain letters expressing concern over nuclear arms and the state of human rights in the Soviet Union throughout Carter's administration. Carter was not out to give a school lesson. The American public was very much aware of threats posed by the Cold War environment, particularly the militarily-oriented Soviet Union. What Carter felt the American public did not know, or at least needed a reminder of, was his ability to meet and conquer those threats. The 1980 SOTU was Carter's chance to prove that he was the best man for the job, that he would and could keep America safe from the Soviet menace. Neither the Cold War nor the Soviets formed a core of Carter's initial 1976 election

---

<sup>123</sup> Deborah Kalb, Gerhard Peters, and John T. Woolley, eds., *State of the Union: Presidential Rhetoric from Woodrow Wilson to George W. Bush* (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2007), 795-796.

Jeffrey M. Jones, "Obama's November Approval Weak from Historical Perspective: Only Carter had lower job approval during November of his third year," Dec. 2, 2011. Accessed Dec. 22, 2010.

<http://www.gallup.com/poll/151106/Obama-November-Approval-Weak-Historical-Perspective.aspx>

campaign, but international events have a way of moving that defies political wishes. By 1980, Carter found himself in the grips of a Cold War presidency he never expected, likely facing a Republican challenger, Ronald Reagan, who already had a reputation as a Cold Warrior. Of course there was the Iran hostage crisis. Also, there was the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the 1980 Moscow Olympics headed for an American boycott, renewed war in Indochina involving Vietnam, China, and Cambodia, and a widespread public unease that the United States had become too compliant regarding national security. Carter needed to appropriate and control the Cold War context if his presidency was to continue.<sup>124</sup>

## **Development**

Interdepartmental memos show that the Carter speechwriting team was well aware of the political and rhetorical challenge they faced in developing the 1980 SOTU Address. Their memos show a resolved determination to get the speech just right, which included revamping the entire speech development process. A memo dated November 21, 1979, opens with a rebuke: “Last year the lack of an organized approach to the production of the State of the Union Message resulted in a serious last minute overload situation in the speechwriters’ office.” The same memo then outlines the speechwriting procedure from the previous year and reiterates the new system, which included starting the idea solicitations two weeks earlier, holding a speech planning meeting with key personnel, and circulating the first draft a week before Christmas to leave January open for revision and polishing.<sup>125</sup>

This emphasis upon a new speechwriting procedure might be casually overlooked as merely a logical part of improving departmental efficiency. Such an assumption, however,

---

<sup>124</sup> Letters to the President, Weekly Presidential Mail Sample, Boxes 1-4, White House Central Files, JCL.

<sup>125</sup> Memo, Bob Meyers to Al McDonald, Nov. 21, 1979, folder “State of the Union Address – Upcoming, 10/79-1/80,” box 30, Office of the White House Staff Director – Alonzo L. McDonald Speech Files, JCL.

does not take into consideration a key reality – the Carter speechwriting office had a history of repeatedly establishing new procedures to guide the developmental process. On November 5, 1979, White House Staff Director Alonzo “Al” McDonald sent a memo to the President reassuring him that the new speechwriting system appeared to be gaining traction, but required immense discipline from the staff and continued “support and insistence” from the President. With the staff adjusting to the new system, they would then shift their attention to “improving the quality of the drafts coming to you [the President.]” These memos provide insight into Carter’s continued displeasure with his speechwriting staff, a monumental issue given the amount of rhetoric a President speaks in an average month. Carter maintained a very hands-on role in the speech development process throughout his administration. His personal notes are seen on speech drafts throughout the archive files. But Carter remained unsatisfied with the speech process, as Al McDonald’s memo to Zbigniew Brzezinski dated May 8, 1980, reveals with startling clarity:

In our 10:00 a.m. meeting this morning, the President said we must work out a better process for dealing with foreign policy speeches. He said that he wants to sit down with you, Warren Christopher and me to make sure that we have an agreed step-by-step process for putting these together with sufficient lead time for him.

This was not a memo from 1977; it is from 1980, Carter’s last year in office. Carter was still unhappy with his staff’s speechwriting protocols four years into his administration. If the President felt that he did not have enough lead time on speeches in 1980, one can assume that he did not have sufficient lead time earlier in his administration either. A team’s and a system’s cohesion typically improves as time passes. This clearly was not the case in the Carter White House because a memo dated September 30, 1980, opens with the line, “The President has been much upset recently because his speech drafts have not been arriving as

early as he wants them. This is going to be a continuing plague right through the election.” Carter was unhappy up until the very end of his term of office.<sup>126</sup>

However, the dissention was not simply between the President and his staff. It was also within the different staff offices, as evidenced by the staff response to the proposed revised schedule for preparing foreign policy speeches (as referenced in the earlier memo). On May 8, 1980, McDonald and Brzezinski sent a proposed five-step “Process on Foreign Policy/National Security Speeches” to the President. This memo received an “eyes only” response from one of Carter’s key speechwriters, Hendrik “Rick” Hertzberg, who complained to Al McDonald:

Dr. Brzezinski has not permitted me to read or comment on his proposed procedure. I gathered from the conversation you and I had this morning that he has instead gone directly to the President with it, minus any input from me. This, I think, bodes ill for the future.

Hertzberg went on to criticize the proposed procedure since, in his opinion, it would take eleven days to complete the five steps. Hertzberg also took a personal swipe at Brzezinski, calling him “photophobic,” and explaining that “he simply prefers to work in the dark” where his practices cannot be scrutinized and held to the established, aboveboard procedure. By this time, Brzezinski had a reputation as the most hawkish of Carter’s foreign policy team. More dovish figures, such as Cyrus Vance, either felt marginalized or were already out of the administration. This infighting was not just ideological, but personal. Brzezinski’s move into close proximity to the President caused jealousy and unease among advisors whose access did not match it. As noted in subsequent memos on May 14, Al McDonald did his

---

<sup>126</sup> Memo, Al McDonald to The President, Nov. 5, 1979, folder “State of the Union Address,” box 30, Office of the White House Staff Director – Alonzo L. McDonald Speech Files, JCL.  
Memo, Al McDonald to Dr. Brzezinski, May 8, 1980, folder “State of the Union Address,” box 30, Office of the White House Staff Director – Alonzo L. McDonald Speech Files, JCL.  
Memo, Al McDonald to Phil Wise, Sep. 30, 1980, folder “State of the Union Address,” box 30, Office of the White House Staff Director – Alonzo L. McDonald Speech Files, JCL.

best to appease Hertzberg by adding some of his suggestions to Brzezinski's proposal. The President also gave his own input on May 15, making specific notes to include the Department of State at an early point in the process.<sup>127</sup>

Rick Hertzberg also protested a decision in May 1980 to not allow the speechwriting office to send a representative with the presidential advance team to Europe. As Hertzberg noted in his passionate appeals, speechwriters had traditionally been a part of such trips to gain insight into the venue where the President would speak, to spend time talking with local individuals as well as embassy staff, and to give the speechwriter uninterrupted time to develop what the President should say. Given the length of Hertzberg's pleas (two pages and five pages respectively), this was not a minor issue in his eyes. Furthermore, Hertzberg believed that this was not a simple overlook; it was a policy change – a change made without consultation between the pre-advance office and the speechwriting office.<sup>128</sup>

Although an attempt may have been made, the Carter administration was unable to keep its internal quarrels private. In the early part of 1979, James Fallows, a member of Carter's speechwriting staff, resigned. But Fallows, one of the younger and more promising policy specialists in Democratic Party circles, did not leave quietly. Instead, he committed one of the cardinal sins of politics – he took his grievances to the press. The May 1979 edition of *The Atlantic Monthly* had a stressed-looking Jimmy Carter splashed across its front cover with the bold headline, "The Passionless Presidency by James Fallows." At the heart

---

<sup>127</sup> Memo, Zbigniew Brzezinski and Al McDonald to The President, May 8, 1980, folder "State of the Union Address," box 30, Office of the White House Staff Director – Alonzo L. McDonald Speech Files, JCL.  
Memo, Rick Hertzberg to Al McDonald, May 13, 1980, folder "State of the Union Address," box 30, Office of the White House Staff Director – Alonzo L. McDonald Speech Files, JCL.

Memo, Al McDonald to Dr. Brzezinski, May 14, 1980, folder "State of the Union Address," box 30, Office of the White House Staff Director – Alonzo L. McDonald Speech Files, JCL.

<sup>128</sup> Memo, Rick Hertzberg to Phil Wise, Jun. 2, 1980, folder "State of the Union Address," box 30, Office of the White House Staff Director – Alonzo L. McDonald Speech Files, JCL.  
Memo, Rick Hertzberg to Al McDonald, Jun. 5, 1980, folder "State of the Union Address," box 30, Office of the White House Staff Director – Alonzo L. McDonald Speech Files, JCL.

of Fallows' article was the cutting perspective that while Carter "offered his person to the nation," not an inconsiderable gesture, he was not enough for the task at hand. Fallows described Carter as "a stable, personally confident man . . . usually patient, less vindictive than the political norm," and that was where the accolades ended and the criticisms began. Fallows made it clear that his goal was not to attack the President out of bitterness, for he felt none, but out of sadness for the dream of an administration that might have been. Fallows had great hopes for Carter at the outset of his presidency. He was charming and a genius "at using a phrase, a gesture, a code word that his listeners assumed to be of greater significance than it was." For these reasons, Fallows overlooked presidential candidate Carter's personal and political faults. But as President of the United States, Fallows could ignore those faults no more.<sup>129</sup>

Fallows attacked Carter's ignorance of his job, his inability to explain his goals, his lack of passion to improve himself, and his choice to surround himself with people who had the same limitations as himself. The entire article reads of hopes dashed and dreams unfulfilled by the Carter presidency. Fallows depicted Carter as an idealist, a man who expected the government to work in actuality as it would on paper and who would do the tasks himself, if necessary. Fallows also created the image of a President invested only in those projects which interested him most. The mundane tasks requisite of governmental office were passed off to panels of minions. The article appeared at a time when Carter's administration was widely viewed as troubled, and he himself as vulnerable. In Washington, the perception compounded itself and caused the White House problems.<sup>130</sup>

---

<sup>129</sup> James Fallows, "The Passionless Presidency: The Trouble with Jimmy Carter's Administration," *The Atlantic Monthly*, May 1979. Accessed Dec. 22, 2011. Available at <http://www.theatlantic.com/past/unbound/flashbks/pres/fallpass.htm>.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*

Fallows also attacked the President in relation to his oratory skills . . . or lack thereof. Fallows highlighted the reality that Carter was a better extemporaneous speaker than a prepared speaker, but accused Carter of taking no time to improve his rhetorical skills. To Fallows, Carter was guilty of simplifying ideas when he meant only to simplify the words with which he expressed those ideas. There is an important difference between the two, one which a speechwriter would know very well. Fallows also accused the President of not making the necessary adjustments to adapt speeches to fit different audiences. To Carter, an audience was an audience; they were all a mass of people who required the same treatment. Perhaps Fallows' greatest frustration was that Carter refused to practice a speech as it needed to be practiced. This is an interesting point given Carter's insistence during the speechwriting procedure revisions that he have enough lead-time to adequately go over a speech. Specifically, Carter wanted at least a full day or two to prepare, which is not an insignificant amount of time. But, according to Fallows, Carter would only read through the text once or twice because "three or four rehearsals would have left him unable to deliver the speech" because his voice wore out. This again goes back to Carter's lack of training in speech delivery, a difficulty that possibly could have been corrected under the tutelage of a speech therapist. But such an action required something which Fallows indirectly accused the President of being unwilling to do: admit that you might be wrong or inadequate. The accusation that Carter was incapable of learning from his mistakes because he was unwilling to admit his own faults was earth-shattering. It became part of the anti-Carter dossier of complaints. The upright President was increasingly seen as rigid. This was not a comment from a far-right, anti-Carter Republican hardliner; it was a comment from one of Carter's own. This statement, along with the rest of the article, caused political waves that Carter and

his team would attempt to smooth during his final year-and-a-half in office. Fallows' revealing article explains why the Carter speechwriting office was still revising its procedures in 1980 and why the President would focus so heavily upon an attempt to establish himself as the "man of the hour" to protect America against the Soviet threat in the 1980 SOTU Address.<sup>131</sup>

The speechwriting office's organizational challenges aside, the speech coordinators worked diligently to ensure that they received all the necessary departmental input for the SOTU Address. This included the usual procedure of soliciting suggestions, transforming the pertinent suggestions into a working draft, and then continuously revising to obtain a finished product which pleased everyone involved, particularly the President. Their goal was to have all the responses by December 10, have a staff planning meeting on December 12, present the initial speech outline and strategy to the President by December 13, and circulate the first draft by the evening of December 17. This was an ambitious schedule, but the archival materials indicate that, for the most part, the schedule went as planned.<sup>132</sup>

The external suggestions were relevant and taken into consideration, as will be discussed during the Analysis portion of this chapter. However, the key point in developing the 1980 SOTU Address was the December 12, 1979, staff conference. This meeting included key members (or their representatives) of the Carter administration, including officials from the White House Speechwriting Office, White House Public Outreach Office, White House Council's Office, White House Staff Secretary's Office, White House Press Secretary's Office, National Security Council, and others. This meeting of the Carter

---

<sup>131</sup> Fallows, "The Passionless Presidency."

<sup>132</sup> Memo, Al McDonald and Rick Hertzberg to Lloyd Cutler, Nov. 30, 1979, folder "President's Speeches – State of the Union, 11/79-1/19/80," box 108, White House Staff Offices – Lloyd Cutler Files, JCL. State of the Union Schedule, Dec. 10, 1979, folder "State of the Union Address – Upcoming, 10/79-1/80," box 30, Office of the White House Staff Director – Alonzo L. McDonald Speech Files, JCL.

administration's "best and the brightest" developed the foundational philosophies and actions that would become the SOTU Address.<sup>133</sup>

Special Assistant to the President Robert S. Meyers sent a "Memorandum for the Files" that provides evidence that the administration planned an emphasis on foreign policy within the 1980 SOTU from the outset. The questions the team needed to answer were, "What foreign issues should be included and what ones should not?" Iran and the American embassy hostages were hot issues at the time, but the team felt it was best to avoid referencing it too heavily in the SOTU, lest a major event occur in the interim, thus requiring a presidential announcement, and diminishing the SOTU Address. Hence, the group agreed that it was a better option to discuss Iran in a press conference format instead. There is no indication within the four-page document that the Carter team discussed including the Soviet Union within the speech at that point in time. Considering the final draft's heavy emphasis upon the Soviets, this is unexpected and does not provide the factual information necessary for determining the exact origin of the speech's Soviet focus.<sup>134</sup>

Instead of the assumed transition from Iran to the Soviet Union, what followed was an emphasis upon rhetorical logistics. The team first discussed the idea of circulating a SOTU Message a couple days in advance of the SOTU Address to avoid "the tendency to load the address with programmatic material."\* The SOTU Message was a document over seventy pages in length which outlined, in great detail, President Carter's historic relationship

---

<sup>133</sup> Memo for the Files, Robert S. Meyers, Dec. 12, 1979, folder "State of the Union Address – Upcoming, 10/79-1/80," box 30, Office of the White House Staff Director – Alonzo L. McDonald Speech Files, JCL.

<sup>134</sup> Memo for the Files, Robert S. Meyers, Dec. 12, 1979, folder "State of the Union Address – Upcoming, 10/79-1/80," box 30, Office of the White House Staff Director – Alonzo L. McDonald Speech Files, JCL.

\* Anne Wexler's and Al From's memo to the President emphasized the need to utilize the thematic rather than the programmatic. They pushed this idea since the beginning of a new decade called for the President's vision for the future and the international crises would draw even more attention to the President's ability to lead the country into the future.

with Congress. Indeed, Carter's "Record of Progress" reads quite impressively, including such claims as:

confidence in the government's integrity has been restored, and respect for the government's openness and fairness has been renewed;

major parts of a comprehensive energy program have been enacted; a Department of Energy has been established to administer the program; and Congress is on the verge of enacting the remaining major parts of the energy program;

the government has been made more effective and efficient; the Civil Service system was completely reformed for the first time this century;

critical social problems, many long ignored by the Federal government, have been addressed directly and boldly:

Carter's administration then outlined a list of over ten major categories – each with sub-points – that comprised the President's "highest legislative priorities." These categories were as wide-ranging as they were lengthy, including such things as "Ensuring Economic Strength," "Enhancing Basic Human and Social Needs," "Building America's Military Strength," and "Preventing the Spread and Further Development of Nuclear Weapons." In summary, the SOTU Message paved the way for Carter's team to shape the SOTU Address however they wished. If anyone criticized the SOTU for what it did not contain, the administration could simply state, "The President explained his position on that issue in the SOTU Message."<sup>135</sup>

---

<sup>135</sup> Memo for the Files, Robert S. Meyers, Dec. 12, 1979, folder "State of the Union Address – Upcoming, 10/79-1/80," box 30, Office of the White House Staff Director – Alonzo L. McDonald Speech Files, JCL. State of the Union Message, Jan. 21, 1980, folder "State of the Union Drafts with Staff Comments, 1/23/80 [2], box 12, Hendrik Hertzberg Collection, JCL. Memo, Anne Wexler and Al From to The President, Jan 9, 1980, folder "1/23/80 – State of the Union [Address] – Background Material – White House Staff," box 62, Speechwriter's Office – Chronological File, JCL. Jimmy Carter, "The State of the Union Address Delivered Before a Joint Session of the Congress," Jan. 23, 1980. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid-33079>. [hereafter noted as Carter, "State of the Union Address."]

Second, the planning team concentrated on the most crucial component of any speech – the message. The members reviewed proposed draft options and made decisions that later impacted the speech’s outline, but they did not establish a formal outline during the meeting. Jody Powell, Carter’s Press Secretary and long-time friend, urged that U.S. economic issues must be addressed at the outset of the speech. Others exhorted the President to continue his emphasis upon telling the truth to the American people. The general consensus was that the speech must not be overly negative, despite the challenges facing the nation. After all, America was entering a new decade full of new hopes, new dreams, and new possibilities. The danger was that the public might seek a new President, too. Also, one unnamed individual commented that the speech should not be “over-done, since the President does not do over done things well.” Appropriately, this remark was scratched out on the memo, indicating that it should be removed before the official memo was released, and most likely would have been seen by the President himself. By avoiding such characteristics, the speech team wanted to make Carter appear a “reliable, confident leader” who was “moving the country in the right direction” and in control of the United States’ destiny. It was, after all, an election year. Ultimately, Carter’s team decided the 1980 SOTU Address would cover three themes or messages: (1) that the nation was entering a pivotal transition point in its history; (2) that the nation needed a clear, realistic assessment of its present situation; and (3) that the nation required a clear vision of the future in the form of the speech’s three main sections: “A Secure Nation, A Just Society, A Peaceful World.”<sup>136</sup>

---

<sup>136</sup> Memo for the Files, Robert S. Meyers, Dec. 12, 1979, folder “State of the Union Address – Upcoming, 10/79-1/80,” box 30, Office of the White House Staff Director – Alonzo L. McDonald Speech Files, JCL. Memo, Al McDonald, Rick Hertzberg, and Gordon Stewart to Martin Kaplan, Dec. 13, 1979, folder “State of the Union Address – Upcoming, 10/79-1/80,” box 30, Office of the White House Staff Director – Alonzo L. McDonald Speech Files, JCL.

Third, the team held a debate over the speech's length. The length has a direct and obvious impact upon the content: one can incorporate significantly more material in a thirty minute speech than in a fifteen minute speech. The length also determines the amount of time the commentators would have to, as Jody Powell put it, "take the speech apart." This was a valid point. Media outlets set aside full blocks of time for the SOTU Address. If the media allots 60 minutes of air time for the speech and the President speaks for 45 minutes of that time (including applause), then there are only 15 minutes left for on-air feedback. In contrast, if the President speaks for only 30 minutes, then the commentators have an equal amount of time as the President, which diminishes the majesty of the SOTU ritual. On the other hand, the reality was that, due to advance copies of the speech going to the media, it really did not matter how long the President spoke, as the media would be ready with comments no matter what the speech's length. Furthermore, as emphasized before, Carter was not a master of the prepared speech. Giving him more words to speak would not make him more eloquent. The staff felt it was better for Carter to be concise and let the SOTU Message back up what he said verbally. Ultimately, the team agreed upon a 15-minute speech that would likely stretch to 30 minutes with applause.<sup>137</sup>

With the organizational meeting complete, the speech staff entered the arduous process of writing the speech itself. Although Carter would later make vast edits to the final drafts, the speechwriters received relatively little direct input from President Carter at this point. The planning team sent their recommendation summary to the President for his approval and modification, but when they met with the President in person on December 14, he had not reviewed the materials in advance of the meeting. During the meeting itself,

---

<sup>137</sup> Memo for the Files, Robert S. Meyers, Dec. 12, 1979, folder "State of the Union Address – Upcoming, 10/79-1/80," box 30, Office of the White House Staff Director – Alonzo L. McDonald Speech Files, JCL.

President Carter was described as only thumbing through the materials. His brief comments relay his desire for a simple speech, one that was resolute in tone and that told the truth.

These principles surrounded his ultimate belief that the speech should “clearly have political appeal to the U.S. people for his reelection,” while balancing the necessity of addressing certain themes like social and economic justice, world hunger, trade, and the Middle East peace process. The notes from the meeting do not indicate Carter being concerned with a challenge from the Republicans; rather he was worried about a rival from within his own party. In fact, Carter’s reelection prospects were gravely harmed by his lengthy primary fight against the insurgent campaign of Senator Ted Kennedy (D-MA). The notes reference Carter wanting to head off any unanswered questions as to why “Kennedy” should seek the presidency. Of course this meant Ted Kennedy, who had declined to run 1976, but had the ambition and backing for a future campaign. For Kennedy’s name to even be mentioned in the same sentence as the word “presidency” at this point in Carter’s tenure is significant. It gives the impression of a nervous incumbent President seeking to hold onto power from not only his enemies, but his allies as well. It speaks to the vulnerability factor mentioned earlier. Carter’s aim was to preserve his presidency and buy himself more time in the Oval Office. While one speech rarely provides a golden ticket into political office, it can provide additional footing upon which to build momentum, and momentum was something that President Carter needed in 1980.<sup>138</sup>

Although Carter’s input prior to the speech’s drafting was more general in nature, others gave far more specific suggestions. In a multitude of counselors there is strength, but there is also usually an element of confusion because each person may bring a different

---

<sup>138</sup> ALM Notes, Meeting with the President on the State of the Union Message, Dec. 14, 1979, folder “State of the Union Address – Upcoming, 10/79-1/80,” box 30, Office of the White House Staff Director – Alonzo L. McDonald Speech Files, JCL.

opinion or suggestion to the discussion table. Such was the case with the 1980 SOTU Address. Granted, the White House speechwriting staff directly solicited suggestions for the speech, so the abundance of letters, memos, and drafts within the archive files come as no surprise. Some, like Science Advisor Frank Press, sent brief memos addressing the speech's overall theme. In Press' case, he felt it should be "optimistic that this Nation has a bright future if we work together to achieve it," a theme very reminiscent of earlier Carter speeches. Government departments and agencies sent statements that had a direct impact upon their particular governmental entities, which they wanted to be included. Such was the case with the Director of Central Intelligence who sent three paragraphs of "suggested language on intelligence matters." The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), the Commission on Civil Rights, Department of the Interior, Tennessee Valley Authority, Office of the Vice President, and the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency also all submitted suggested wording on various topics.<sup>139</sup>

The speechwriters faced the difficult task of reviewing the suggestions and compiling their own thoughts, all while hearing Carter's guidance in the back of their minds. Ultimately, the speechwriting staff created a stack of drafts categorized into three different series – "A," "B," and "P" – with multiple drafts within each series. The series with the fewest drafts in the files was the "A" series; "B" and "P" both have around six numbered drafts. However, the logic behind the categorization is unclear because there is rhetorical and

---

<sup>139</sup> Memo, Frank Press to Al McDonald and Rick Hertzberg, Dec. 3, 1979, folder "State of the Union Address – Upcoming, 10/79-1/80," box 30, Office of the White House Staff Director – Alonzo L. McDonald Speech Files, JCL.

Memo, Stansfield Turnep to Alonzo McDonald and Rick Hertzberg, Dec. 7, 1979, folder "State of the Union Address – Upcoming, 10/79-1/80," box 30, Office of the White House Staff Director – Alonzo L. McDonald Speech Files, JCL.

Memo, Robert Frosch to Rick Hertzberg, Dec. 10, 1979, folder "State of the Union Address – Upcoming, 10/79-1/80," box 30, Office of the White House Staff Director – Alonzo L. McDonald Speech Files, JCL.  
Assorted Memos, folder "State of the Union Address – Upcoming, 10/79-1/80," box 30, Office of the White House Staff Director – Alonzo L. McDonald Speech Files, JCL.

thematic continuity within all three. Overall, “A” is not distinctly different from “B” or “P.” Evidence of this fact is the commonality of key phrases within all three series that are also present within the final draft. These phrases, worded below as they appear in the final speech, included:

As we meet tonight, it has never been more clear that the state of our Union depends on the state of the world. And tonight, as throughout our own generation, freedom and peace in the world depend on the state of our Union.

At this time in Iran, 50 Americans are still held captive, innocent victims of terrorism and anarchy. Also at this moment, massive Soviet troops are attempting to subjugate the fiercely independent and deeply religious people of Afghanistan.

I’m determined that the United States will remain the strongest of all nations, but our power will never be used to initiate a threat to the security of any nation or to the rights of any human being.

And we will continue to support the growth of democracy and the protection of human rights.

Our excessive dependence on foreign oil is a clear and present danger to our nation’s security.

Fourth, we will continue our progress in providing jobs for America, concentrating on a major new program to provide training and work for our young people, especially minority youth.

For this vision to come true, we must sacrifice, but this national commitment will be an exciting enterprise that will unify our people.

The statements above provide only a few examples of the parallels in wording between the drafts and the final speech.<sup>140</sup>

---

<sup>140</sup> Speech Drafts, folder “1/23/80 – State of the Union [Address] – Drafts with Staff Comments, File No. 1,” box 62, White House Speechwriters Office – Chronological File, JCL.

Speech Drafts, folder “State of the Union Drafts with Staff Comments, 1/23/80,” box 12, Hendrik Hertzberg Collection, JCL.

Speech Drafts, folder “1/23/80 [Material for State of the Union Address],” box 166, Office of the Staff Secretary, JCL.

Speech Drafts, folder “State of the Union (1980) [CF, O/A 731], box 282, DPS – Eizenstat Files, JCL. Carter, “State of the Union Address.”

This continuity, however, belies the presence of major differences between the drafts. There were great changes in structure and rhetoric, particularly between the earliest drafts written in late December and early January and the later drafts written after January 10. Early drafts took Carter's triple focus of (1) A Secure Nation, (2) A Just Society, and (3) A Peaceful World literally, creating a distinct three-point outline with rough transitions from one point to the next. The December 21, 1979, draft, which was circulated among the staff, ends the section titled "A Secure Nation" with the following sentence: "This is how we must fight this battle." This was followed by a new section headline, "A Just Society," beginning with, "After a secure nation, our second overriding goal is a just society. A just society is one in which every citizen can fulfill his or her potential." Despite the potential exhibited in these early statements, based upon the feedback they received, the speechwriting staff did what they self-described as "virtually a complete rewrite," including a brand new outline – "an introduction, a section on 'facing the facts,' and a conclusion." These changes strengthened the speech, but they leave the reader pondering why they did not occur earlier. The memo containing the speechwriters' explanation of the rewrite along with the revised draft did not circulate until January 11, 1980, well after the team's original deadline. The entire picture does not show a smooth and efficient operation, and lends credence to the image that the White House team was working under duress.<sup>141</sup>

In addition to the speechwriters' and President Carter's edits, other White House department heads gave valuable feedback on the circulated drafts. Those comments were

---

<sup>141</sup> Memo, Al McDonald, Rick Hertzberg, and Gordon Stewart to Lloyd Cutler, folder "1/23/80 – State of the Union [Address] – Background Material – Departments & Agencies [2]," box 62, White House Office of Speechwriting – Chronological File, JCL.

Memo, Al McDonald, Rick Hertzberg, and Gordon Stewart to The President, Jan. 11, 1980, folder "State of the Union Address – Upcoming, 10/79-1/80," box 30, Office of the White House Staff Director – Alonzo L. McDonald's Speech Files, JCL.

frequently blunt and pointed. For example, Brzezinski's Military Assistant, William Odom, sent a listing of six points that "need to be added to or sharpened in the President's speech draft." Al McDonald's memo included only one positive statement regarding the draft. McDonald quickly transitions to the negative issues of the speech by writing, "The tone appears much too weak for the substance." This comment was mirrored in memos from advisors Al From and Stuart Eizenstat. Chief Domestic Policy Advisor Eizenstat also rebuked the speechwriting staff for almost totally omitting the economy, believing that it deserved far more attention than it had received. One must, however, take such comments in stride. They were not personal attacks; these individuals were simply doing their jobs. If they felt there was an issue with the speech, it was their duty to say so. It was all part of the administration working together toward a common objective.<sup>142</sup>

## **Analysis**

Carter's 1980 SOTU Address stood in stark contrast to his 1978 and 1979 addresses, which maintained the traditional emphasis upon domestic issues and policies, as well as a distinctly optimistic tone regarding America's future. But times had changed. The popularity Carter had enjoyed as a new President had waned, and international conflicts in Central Asia, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia threatened America's sense of security.

---

<sup>142</sup> Memo, William E. Odom to Zbigniew Brzezinski, Jan. 14, 1980, folder "State of the Union Drafts with Staff Comments, 1/23/80 [1]," box 12, Hendrik Hertzberg Collection, JCL.

Memo, Al McDonald to Zbig Brzezinski and Rick Hertzberg, Jan. 18, 1980, folder "1/23/80 – State of the Union [Address] – Drafts with Staff Comments, File No. 1," box 62, White House Speechwriters Office – Chronological File, JCL.

Memo, Al From to Rick Hertzberg, Jan. 14, 1980, folder "1/23/80 – State of the Union [Address] – Drafts with Staff Comments, File No. 1," box 62, White House Speechwriters Office – Chronological File, JCL.

Memo, Stu Eizenstat to The President, Jan. 19, 1980, folder "State of the Union (1980) [CF, O/A 731] [2], box 282, DPS – Eizenstat Files, JCL

Memo, Stu Eizenstat to Rick Hertzberg, Jan. 19, 1979, folder "1/23/80 – State of the Union [Address] – Drafts with Staff Comments, File No. 1," box 62, White House Speechwriters Office – Chronological File, JCL.

Thus, Carter's approach to the SOTU needed to change as well. Carter's optimistic tone was still present, based upon his belief in a better future for the American people, but it was tempered with a firm resolve and a hint of warning absent in his earlier SOTU Addresses. The crises in Iran and Afghanistan caused Carter to shift his attention away from his preferred emphasis, domestic issues, in order to preserve the United States' global position. To Carter, the United States could not be considered outside of the context of a global society; the United States would not remain safe unless the world also remained safe; and the United States would not succeed unless the world also succeeded. But this position represented a potential electoral problem: at the time, public perception associated the Republican Party with robust defense policy more so than it did the Democratic Party. Generally, a Republican candidate was more likely to support the necessity of military strength and intervention to bring peace, whereas a Democratic candidate would typically pursue military reductions and diplomatic negotiations. As a Democrat, Carter could not afford to alienate his party base with fears that the President was willing to engage in another Vietnam War to ensure that the world, and thereby American interests, remained secure.<sup>143</sup>

Carter's 1980 SOTU Address was to contain an introduction, a section on "facing the facts," and a conclusion highlighting Carter's view of America's character. Even to the untrained eye, this is a broad outline, one which results in a broad speech that moves intermittently among several topics, including the American embassy hostages in Iran, the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan, nuclear disarmament, and American domestic and

---

<sup>143</sup> Jimmy Carter, "The State of the Union Address Delivered Before a Joint Session of the Congress," Jan. 19, 1978. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=30856>.

Jimmy Carter, "The State of the Union Address Delivered Before a Joint Session of the Congress," Jan. 23, 1979. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=32657>.

economic security. Although these topics are all separate entities, they are not clearly organized within the speech. They periodically overlap and tangential material is inserted between the main topics. In reality, the speech reads more like a transcript of the President speaking extemporaneously than a speech two months in the making.<sup>144</sup>

## **Introduction**

Carter's introduction is a mere three sentences, beginning with the requisite greetings to congressional leaders and the American people. While brief, Carter incorporates a vast amount of information into his words. From Carter's three sentences, the American people could quickly grasp that this would not be a cheerful speech because of the immediate focus upon the challenges the nation had faced in the previous months. Carter presented the thesis statement for his speech: "As we meet tonight, it has never been more clear that the state of our Union depends on the state of the world. And tonight, as throughout our own generation, freedom and peace in the world depend on the state of our Union." These two sentences, comprising the majority of Carter's introduction, laid a clear argument for what Carter was about to explain in further detail. It did not elaborate on why America *should* care about international events seven time zones to the east, but why it *must* care and why it *must* act in accordance with traditional American ideology.<sup>145</sup>

The idea of an interconnected, global society was not new. Likewise, the idea of multiple nations joining together in a cooperative endeavor was not new. But there was what Carter perceived as a "clear and present danger" in 1980 – the terroristic actions of those

---

<sup>144</sup> Memo, Al McDonald, Rick Hertzberg, and Gordon Stewart to The President, Jan. 11, 1980, folder "State of the Union Address – Upcoming, 10/79-1/80," box 30, Office of the White House Staff Director – Alonzo L. McDonald's Speech Files, JCL.

<sup>145</sup> Carter, "State of the Union Address."

holding Americans hostage in Iran and the military aggression of the Soviet Union upon the Afghan people. The Iranian hostage crisis was a direct affront to the American people. After all, the Iranian militants were holding American citizens captive in flagrant violation of international law. These images of American diplomats being mistreated by shouting, flag-burning Iranians were a nightly news feature. But while it was an American issue, the philosophy behind the event was of concern to the rest of the world. If unchecked, the likelihood of additional hostages being taken to further political goals would increase and any country that the terrorists perceived as unsupportive of their cause would be a target. America had a duty to its neighbors and allies to prevent the spread of terrorism. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan provided a parallel, although contrasting, example. Unlike Iran, the American people would not see the direct impact of the Soviet invasion. The question was, “If left unchecked, whom would the Soviets invade next?” To Carter, there could be no delay. The response had to be swift, resolute, and powerful. It could not simply be a moment of rhetoric, although Carter personally strengthened the rhetoric within this portion of the speech to directly accuse the Iranians of blackmail. Furthermore, the rebuke could not come from the U.S. alone; it had to come from the world.<sup>146</sup>

Carter resolved that these challenges could and would be met. Furthermore, the United States and its allies would win because of their inherent military and moral strength. In Carter’s words,

I’m determined that the United States will remain the strongest of all nations, but our power will never be used to initiate a threat to the security of any nation or to the rights of any human being. We seek to be and to remain secure – a nation at peace in a stable world. But to be secure we must face the world as it is.

---

<sup>146</sup> Carter, “State of the Union Address.” Speech Draft, President’s Marked Up First Draft 1/20/80, folder “1/23/80 [Material for State of the Union Address] [3],” box 166, Office of the Staff Secretary – Presidential Handwriting File, JCL.

Carter made the clear distinction that America was not seeking to impose itself upon other nations, a statement very similar to one he made in his Inaugural Address. America wanted to work with the world, but the American people could not turn a blind eye to the unpleasantness of life. Americans could not ignore their brothers and sisters who were held captive; neither could the Americans ignore the plight of the Afghan people.<sup>147</sup>

### **Facing the Facts – Iran**

Within the SOTU Address, Carter opted to talk about the Iranian hostage crisis first. It was an event that would overshadow his last year in office. On November 4, 1979, a group of Iranian students and militants stormed the U.S. Embassy compound in Tehran in support of the Iranian Revolution. By January 23, 1980, when Carter gave the SOTU Address, the hostages had been captive for a mere 80 of the eventual 444 days they would be held prisoner. From the outset, there was intense and widespread public anger towards the Iranians, as well as widespread frustration at the Carter administration's inability to obtain the hostages' release. Thousands of Americans phoned the White House demanding a response. The Carter Administration preferred a relatively low-key diplomatic effort to negotiate with the Iranians, even enlisting the help of the Palestinian Liberation Organization with which the United States had strained relations historically. The status of the deposed Shah had become an issue. He was a former American ally, deposed in 1979, who sought medical attention in the United States before eventually taking refuge in Egypt, where he died of cancer in 1980. It is easy for an individual to criticize Carter and his team's decisions, but one must recognize the President's palpable desire to ensure that all the Americans returned home safely and his reluctance to commit any action that would

---

<sup>147</sup> Carter, "State of the Union Address."

jeopardize that goal. At this point in the crisis, Carter's determination was to resolve the standoff peacefully while projecting a firm image to Iran. Carter proclaimed in his Address, "If the American hostages are harmed, a severe price will be paid. We will never rest until every one of the American hostages are [sic] released." Carter originally wanted to include the following five-point resolution:

First, to protect the present and future interests of the United States;

Second, to preserve the lives of the American hostages;

Third, to seek in every possible way their safe release;

Fourth, as long as possible to avoid bloodshed, which would likely cost the lives of our fellow Americans;

Fifth, to arouse and to maintain action among other nations [of the world] to help in ending this abhorrent violation of the moral and legal standards of a civilized world.

Many of these points were integrated into the text of the final speech, but they did not appear in a list format. Furthermore, this list was partially the result of Stu Eizenstat urging the President to rework the language in relation to Iran so that it was much more firm and repeated to the American people the steps that the country had already taken in protest of the hostage crisis. Ultimately, pressures would lead Carter to authorize a rescue attempt in April 1980. This risky mission failed, and resulted in casualties and American political and military humiliation. These are historical realities, but none of these developments could have been foreseen at the time of the SOTU Address. Simply put, because of its relevance to American society, the Iranian crisis was a logical first point in drawing attention to America's position within the world.<sup>148</sup>

---

<sup>148</sup> Bernard Gwertzman, "President's Trip to Canada Today Put Off Because of Teheran Crisis," *New York Times*, Nov. 9, 1979, Section A1.  
Carter, "State of the Union Address."

## Facing the Facts – Soviet Union

For Carter, the broader, more fundamental challenge was the Soviet Union. This speech was not the only time Carter referenced the Soviet Union. A search for “Soviet Union” within *The American Presidency Project* reveals that Carter mentioned the Soviet Union nearly 100 times in speeches, announcements, proclamations, and question-and-answer sessions in 1977 alone. However, within the 1980 SOTU Address, Carter was uncharacteristically firm and critical in his depiction of the Soviet Union. Furthermore, Carter uses the terms “Soviet(s)” or “Soviet Union” over thirty-one times in this speech alone. Material relating to the Soviet Union is found in 25% of the speech, and the Soviet Union is indirectly involved (by means of Carter’s urging an appropriate American response to the international threats in which the Soviet Union was involved) in other portions as well.<sup>149</sup>

Carter’s focus upon the Soviet Union in the 1980 SOTU Address was largely the result of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Throughout the latter part of the 1970s, the Soviet Union continued to spread its influence throughout the Third World. It sponsored national liberation movements, aided friendly regimes, and united with them as allies under the auspices of the Brezhnev Doctrine, which held that once a nation entered the Soviet sphere, it could not exit. There were Marxist-Leninist reasons why this doctrine made sense within Soviet logic, but to most in the West it seemed aggressive and dangerous. One of Détente’s primary aims was easing East-West relations and creating a peaceful coexistence with the United States; it also paved the way for the Soviet Union to spread Communist

---

Speech Draft, President’s Marked Up First Draft 1/20/80, folder “1/23/80 [Material for State of the Union Address] [3],” box 166, Office of the Staff Secretary – Presidential Handwriting File, JCL.

Memo, Stu Eizenstat to The President, Jan. 19, 1980, folder “State of the Union (1980) [CF, O/A 731] [2], box 282, DPS – Eizenstat Files, JCL

<sup>149</sup> Carter, “State of the Union Address.”

ideology as a means of countering the United States and Western influence on a non-military level. Despite this expansion, Carter expressed his optimism about improved relations with the Soviets with regularity, calling them “partners” and “friends” and kissing Brezhnev on the cheek during the SALT II negotiations. He kept to the sentiment that Americans needed to overcome their inordinate fear of Communism, which the Cold War had done so much to propound. Many experts, like Paul Kengor, a Professor of Political Science and expert on the late Cold War era, consider the Soviets’ invasion of Afghanistan to be the Carter administration’s “wake up call.” It was that event which necessitated a break with the earlier, more benign approach that stressed managing the U.S.-Soviet relationship to avoid crisis. The prospects of the Red Army invading a neighboring nation, which could be seen as a major step towards boosting Soviet influence in the sensitive Middle East, led to the Carter Doctrine. The Carter Doctrine was the presidential promise unveiled in the 1980 SOTU that the United States would consider the oil resources of the Arabian Peninsula to be a vital national interest.<sup>150</sup>

There is a marked difference in Carter’s rhetoric towards the Soviets after the invasion that is particularly evident within the 1980 SOTU. The innocent optimism was gone, having been replaced not by scathing hatred or even philosophical opposition, but by a tone of chastisement and rebuke. In this speech, Carter was not expressing a position of being firmly anti-Soviet or anti-Communist, but of scolding the Soviets for their actions and warning them against taking similar actions in the future. Importantly for the upcoming

---

<sup>150</sup> Paul Kengor, *Dupes: How America’s Adversaries Have Manipulated Progressives for a Century* (Wilmington, DE: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2010), 358-360.

election campaign, Carter's projected sense of betrayal left him open to charges of naïveté regarding the Cold War.<sup>151</sup>

In examining Carter's perspective of Communism within the context of the 1980 SOTU Address, one must first consider how he addresses Communism. The reality is that he does not, directly. In keeping with his established practice, Carter refers to the Soviets or the Soviet Union, never using Communist or Communism. Prior to 1980, Carter used the term "Communism" a mere dozen times in his public addresses. This word choice mirrors Carter's desire to maintain friendly relations with the Soviets and other Communist regimes, but it also presents an interesting dilemma given the Cold War environment. Was it possible to separate the Soviet Union as a nation from the Soviet Union as an ideology? Essentially, this is what Carter was trying to do rhetorically. He concentrated upon the Soviets as a people and as a government, without including the political ideology which created that government and upon which that people operated – the wedge strategy. Politicians use this method as a means of statecraft to separate comments about a country's government and its people, which allows for political criticism without attacking the people as a whole. One could argue, from a historical perspective, that using a wedge strategy to separate the Soviet Union's people and Communism was not possible because the two were inextricably linked.

The Soviet Union rose as a result of the Revolutions spurred by Lenin and Trotsky. The founding idea of the regime was that of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. To Western ears, this sounds like an oxymoron. But according to Soviet logic, the Communist Party was the sole legitimate representative of the Soviet people. The Soviet Union maintained its vise-grip upon its satellite affiliates and republics by ensuring the stability of like-minded regimes who deferred to Moscow's leadership, not just as the most powerful Communist nation, but

---

<sup>151</sup> Kengor, 362.

as the leader of the worldwide Communist movement. Communist regimes which did not accept Soviet primacy, such as the People's Republic of China and Yugoslavia, were considered unreliable and even treacherous. Rebellions, like those in Hungary, were harshly suppressed as they threatened to eliminate not only the political link between that country and the Soviet Union, but also the necessary ideological-practical link between the two. The national entity of the USSR and Communism fell together, just as it did within other Communist nations. Carter's attempt at separating these two entities was likely for the sake of political friendship or perhaps due to influence of sentiments popular in the 1970s which withered in the 1980s.

Due to the inseparable relationship between the Soviet Union and Communism, an examination of the 1980 SOTU provides insights into Carter's perspectives of Communism as an ideology. First, the reality that Carter did not directly say "Communism" would indicate that either (1) he did not view the ideology itself as a direct threat to American security or (2) he did not wish to antagonize Brezhnev and the Soviets or any of the other international Communist regimes. Both of these explanations are hypothetical, but they are also plausible, given Carter's record of expressing a belief in America's moral fortitude, expressions of desire to "free America from its inordinate fear of Communism, and trusting in Détente's ability to usher in an era of peace and harmony through incentives rather than containment."<sup>152</sup>

Second, in the 1980 SOTU, Carter was not complimentary towards the Soviets. He firmly condemned the invasion of Afghanistan and had done so from the beginning. In a December 28, 1979, press conference, President Carter called the Soviet invasion a "gross

---

<sup>152</sup> Stephen E. Ambrose and Douglas G. Brinkley, *Rise to Globalism: American Foreign Policy Since 1938* (New York: Penguin Books, 2011), 283.

interference in the international affairs of Afghanistan” and a “blatant violation of accepted international rules of behavior.” The invasion itself, aimed at shoring up a shaking revolutionary regime in Kabul, drew intense American news coverage. The media and the President depicted the Soviets as troublemakers who refused to abide by the established rule of order in the world. This refusal stemmed from ideological incompatibility – Communism versus free society. Here, Carter found himself operating within the Cold War context which predated his presidency. Carter expressed a similar stance in his “Address to the Nation on the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan” in early January 1980, where he stated that the invasion posed a serious threat to world peace, was a purposeful violation of international law, was a deliberate subversion of a religious government by an anti-religious one, and had caused great nervousness around the world. Carter maintained this precedent in the SOTU Address by making five statements regarding the Soviet Union: (1) the Soviets’ actions presented a serious challenge to the world; (2) the invasion of Afghanistan was “a radical and aggressive new step;” (3) the Soviets had created “the most serious threat to the peace since the Second World War;” (4) the Moslem world was justified in its outrage against the Soviets; and (5) the Soviet Union “must pay a concrete price for their aggression.” Carter also remarked that the Iranians should realize that the “real danger to their nation lies in the north, in the Soviet Union” and not with the United States, since the Soviets’ ideology was based on Marxism, which openly supported violent revolution to bring about change.<sup>153</sup>

---

<sup>153</sup> Jimmy Carter, “American Hostages in Iran and Soviet Intervention in Afghanistan Remarks to Reporters,” Dec. 28, 1979. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*.

<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=31881>.

Jimmy Carter, “Address to the Nation of the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan,” Jan. 4, 1980. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*.

<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=32911>.

Carter, “State of the Union Address.”

Carter labeled the Soviets as a threat to the entire world and argued that their reprehensible behavior warranted international punishment beyond rhetorical condemnation. Carter urged the nations of the world to join with the United States in imposing economic sanctions upon the Soviet Union, particularly a ban from fishing in U.S. waters, access to technological and agricultural equipment, and specified trade goods. Furthermore, Carter led the call for a boycott of the 1980 Moscow Olympic Games. Some of America's allies also refused to send athletes. Other nations left the decision in the hands of the athletes themselves, ultimately sending a reduced contingent to the Games. The boycott was painful for the Soviets, who planned to make their 1980 Olympics a great international display of the merits of the Communist system.<sup>154</sup>

Third, Carter emphasized the relevance of the Soviet threat within contemporary society. He did this by two means: providing a brief history of the Cold War and explaining the invasion within the larger context of peace in the Middle East. Carter described the U.S.-Soviet relationship since World War II as moments of cooperation, competition, and confrontation. Carter followed the three "C"s with a progressive, decade-by-decade summary. He highlighted the NATO alliance in the 1940s, Containment in Korea and the Middle East in the 1950s, the Berlin Airlift and Cuban Missile Crisis in the 1960s, and the nuclear arms negotiations of the 1970s. Throughout this section, Carter emphasized what "we," the American people, had done together. However, what Carter labeled as a "Soviet" threat, others would define as a "Communist" threat. This is a matter of perspective and of semantics. But the semantics were important, and the terms of reference had been in place for decades. The Vietnam War, and earlier events such as the Joe McCarthy scare, did much

---

<sup>154</sup> Carter, "State of the Union Address." Ambrose and Brinkley, 287.

to discredit the loose rhetoric of anti-communism. But Soviet behavior kept reviving the utility of the terminology.<sup>155</sup>

### **Facing the Facts – American Involvement in the Middle East**

Carter's relaying of historical information provided the foundation for understanding the American-Soviet relationship in 1980; namely, that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was a direct threat to the American people. The invasion shattered the perceived peaceful international environment, re-opened the question of Soviet conquest in order to spread Communism, and revived the debate surrounding containment. What would the United States' response be if the Soviet Union followed the Afghanistan invasion with a take-over of Iran, or Iraq, or Turkey? Mercifully, the United States did not have to answer that question. But the United States did have to concern itself with Afghanistan since, as Carter explained, it brought "Soviet military forces to within 300 miles of the Indian Ocean and close to the Straits of Hormuz, a waterway through which most of the world's oil must flow." "Oil" was the key word. America was heavily dependent upon Middle East oil to keep the economy running. Access to and protection of Saudi Arabian oil had been a strategic keystone of every American presidency since Franklin Roosevelt met King Ibn Saud aboard the *USS Quincy* in 1945.<sup>156</sup>

In Carter's eyes, to keep America safe, America had no choice but to keep the world safe as well. Carter was not proposing a bellicose approach to international policy; he was trying to rally public interest and support in opposition to an event almost half a world away. Carter worried that the spreading of Soviet Communist influence around the world would

---

<sup>155</sup> Carter, "State of the Union Address."

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*

endanger the United States. To keep itself and the world safe, the United States had to succeed in the efforts Carter outlined within the speech, including political action, military improvements, international assistance, and the preservation of the American ideal.

The SOTU Message, circulated the week prior to the Address, outlined Carter's political goals, including legislative action, but the President also emphasized two key measures within the speech itself. First, Carter called for a new charter to "define the legal authority and accountability" of the United States' intelligence agencies, namely the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Central Intelligence Agency. Yet, within his call for this action, which the drafts reveal he personally added to the speech, Carter presents an interesting paradox. He states that the United States would "guarantee that abuses do not recur." Using the word "recur" indicates a governmental recognition of historical abuses. In this case, the list of misconduct would include the FBI's files on anti-war protesters and civil rights groups who were exercising their First Amendment rights of free speech. These examples of misconduct led, in part, to the 1975 Church Committee, whose findings led to the founding of the FISA (Federal Intelligence Surveillance Act) and FISC (Federal Intelligence Surveillance Court) as well as the resignation of CIA Director William Colby. Carter's wording was vague – a conciliatory gesture to the findings of a Democratic Senator's leadership on a highly publicized reform committee. Although Carter was guaranteeing freedom from domestic abuse, he also called for tighter control of sensitive intelligence information and for increased freedom in collecting international intelligence. Carter desired more control over the intelligence services' actions and increased results, one of the points that contributed to the turmoil existing between Carter's administration and the CIA. Carter's pick for Director, Admiral Stansfield Turner, led a painful transition away

from a traditional Human Intelligence emphasis towards a more technologically-focused approach, which resulted in dislocation and hurt feelings at an agency still reeling from its rough handling by the Senate during the 1970s.<sup>157</sup>

Second, the President called for a reduction in America's dependence upon foreign oil, another topic regularly appearing within his political rhetoric. Carter recognized that progress had been made, but additional strategic legislation addressing conservation, solar power, price caps, and incentives for other fuel development needed to be passed. Carter acknowledged the states' and the American peoples' efforts in meeting these goals, noting the national reduction in petroleum and gasoline consumption as well as the adoption of gasoline conservation goals. However, Carter was willing to force his will upon the American people by establishing an oil import ceiling. Any imports above that ceiling would be subject to an additional fee. Carter was touching upon a very sensitive topic. The gas shortages of the 1970s were fresh in the country's mind. As an example, the image of Carter wearing a cardigan sweater, which earlier might have been seen as a part of his charming personality, was uncharitably linked to the hassle of lowering home thermostats. Turmoil in Iran and Afghanistan only exacerbated energy problems. These international problems, combined with Carter's deregulation of gas prices, caused the price of a gallon of gas skyrocketed and energy – which seemed a promising subject for Carter when he created the cabinet-level Department of Energy in 1977 – turned into a political liability.<sup>158</sup>

In the face of Soviet military aggression, President Carter proposed various military improvements. New weapons systems, previously connected to expensive defense budgets

---

<sup>157</sup> Carter, "State of the Union Address."  
Speech Draft, P-1, Jan. 20, 1980, folder "1/23/80 [Material for State of the Union Address] [2]," box 166, Office of the Staff Secretary – Presidential Handwriting File, JCL.

<sup>158</sup> Carter, "State of the Union Address."

and blamed for problematizing Strategic Arms Limitation Talks, were not associated with his administration at this point. But such improvements were necessary if Carter believed in his own proclamation that American would remain “the strongest of all nations,” a phrase he coined in his speech edits. Soviet actions had to be balanced by American actions; this was a fundamental principle of the Cold War. Yet there was no simple way to accomplish this goal. Producing more of one particular weapon was not the answer; nor was increasing the defense budget during tough economic conditions a simple option. Carter understood these realities, which is why he presented a multi-faceted reminder and proposal to the American people within the SOTU Address. Carter reminded the American people that steps had already been taken to assure American military superiority, including budget increases in coordination with the Five-Year Defense Program. The United States had also worked to strengthen ties with other NATO nations, which allowed a shorter military response time as well as a faster deployment of intermediate-range missiles if need be. There was ongoing talk about the improvement of military reaction time, including the idea of a Fast Reaction Force. (The politically-connected Marine Corps argued that such a force already existed, and they were it.) The United States had also increased and strengthened its presence in the Indian Ocean, which would greatly reduce the American military’s response time to any Middle-East or East African crisis. Despite all these improvements, Carter recognized that there was still more work to be done.

Carter, intricately involved with strategic arms limitation negotiations, was not trying to be a warmonger. He specifically stated that “preventing nuclear war is the foremost responsibility of the two superpowers.” This is why he had dedicated so much time to SALT II. However, to meet the growing threat, Carter and U.S. military officials needed to think

long-term, and that meant discussing the possibility of imposing a military draft. One can imagine the country's collective shudder when Carter uttered those three fateful words – “impose a draft” – because the memories of draft card burnings and protest marches from the Vietnam War era were still fresh. Ending the draft was an intrinsic part of the anti-Vietnam War agenda. Re-imposing it would be a mammoth political controversy. Carter needed to be very careful in his wording. He emphasized that America's volunteer forces were sufficient to meet the present danger. However, Carter was unsure if the status quo for volunteer enlistments would remain reliable into the future. The questionable future was why he made the decision to reestablish the Selective Service System, thereby establishing an entity to facilitate a draft in an emergency. Not only did Carter make the political decision to reestablish the Selective Service as an entity, but he made the personal decision to add this point to the speech.<sup>159</sup>

Carter expressed a belief that actions within America itself would greatly bolster the country's safety and security, and that the United States needed to invest itself in other countries. This was a point emphasized in a general sense throughout all the drafts, but Carter expanded it by providing specific examples that he wanted to include. In a handwritten addendum page added on January 20, 1980, Carter noted that the 1979 peace treaty between Egypt and Israel should be included within the speech. This treaty, negotiated as part of the Camp David Accords, was Carter's greatest foreign policy achievement. It marked the long-awaited diplomatic resolution to Israeli-Egyptian military conflict. The Accords took place at the secluded presidential retreat in Maryland's Catoctin Mountains,

---

<sup>159</sup> Carter, “State of the Union.”

Speech Draft, President's Marked Up First Draft 1/20/80, folder “1/23/80 [Material for State of the Union Address] [3],” box 166, Office of the Staff Secretary – Presidential Handwriting File, JCL.

Speech Draft, P-1, Jan. 20, 1980, folder “1/23/80 [Material for State of the Union Address] [2],” box 166, Office of the Staff Secretary – Presidential Handwriting File, JCL.

and resulted in the spectacle of Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Egyptian President Anwar el Sadat coming together in agreement, visiting one another's nations, and ushering in a new era in the Middle East. Appropriately, Carter expended a great deal of time and effort to bringing the Egyptian and Israeli leaders together to negotiate a resolution to the relative satisfaction of both nations. As his handwritten note stated, "Egypt and Israel is a notable achievement in our common effort to strengthen our friends and to enhance prospects for peace and stability." Although the treaty had far reaching consequences that are still debated today, at the time, it was heralded as a great political victory for the Carter administration. To this day, the Camp David Accords are one of the triumphs most associated with Carter's presidency, and he rightfully highlighted the Accords during the SOTU.<sup>160</sup>

Carter also drew attention to less known international endeavors, like furthering friendship with Third World countries and normalizing relations with the People's Republic of China. Carter stated the reason for pursuing relations with China was "to preserve peace and stability in Asia and in the Western Pacific." Even at that point, China was emerging as a sizeable international force. Following the Chinese Revolution, a large portion of the international community continued recognizing Chang Kai-shek's Nationalist government as the rightful Chinese governmental authority. Normalizing relations with Beijing, the logical next step after Nixon and Kissinger's Cold War opening to China, would necessitate breaking diplomatic relations with Taiwan since both governments claimed to be the legitimate authority over both mainland China and Taiwan. It was impossible to officially recognize both governments without creating antagonism. The political leadership of the

---

<sup>160</sup> Carter, "State of the Union Address."

Speech Draft, President's Marked Up First Draft 1/20/80, folder "1/23/80 [Material for State of the Union Address] [3]," box 166, Office of the Staff Secretary – Presidential Handwriting File, JCL.

time recognized that renewing and strengthening the Washington-Beijing connection would serve as a positive step in checking Soviet power in a way that continuing relations with Taiwan would not. Over time, the majority of nations transitioned their diplomatic ties away from the Taiwanese government in favor of mainland China's Communist government. But China\* was not the original second example in the speech; Turkey was, because of its important geographic position on "NATO's Asian flank." China was not included as an example until the P-1 Draft on January 20, a mere three days before the speech's delivery.<sup>161</sup>

Pakistan, the last country Carter focuses upon in the 1980 SOTU Address, had long struggled to maintain its independence and security. During the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971, Pakistan saw the eastern half of its country secede and become independent Bangladesh. The country then experienced a brief five years of civilian rule under Zulfikar Ali Bhutto before a coup d'état restored military authority in the country in 1979. While Pakistan struggled to find stability, it played an important role in American Cold War calculations, partly because India maintained friendly relations with the Soviet Union. Pakistan, on the other hand, was resolutely anti-Soviet and thus emerged as an American ally. The United States provided military aid to the country, but now Pakistan faced a new external threat: the Soviet presence in Afghanistan. If the Soviets continued their march southward, the most direct route would take them through Pakistan, a point originally noted in the speech drafts. The speech referred to Afghanistan as a "buffer between the Soviet Union and Pakistan." Neighboring Iran was once the United States' friend, but had become an adversary. Pakistan, on the other hand,

---

<sup>161</sup> Carter, "State of the Union Address."

Speech Draft, B-5, 1/17/80, folder "1/23/80 – State of the Union [Address] – Drafts, File No. 1," box 62, White House Speechwriters Office – Chronological File, JCL.

Speech Draft, P-1, Jan. 20, 1980, folder "1/23/80 [Material for State of the Union Address] [2]," box 166, Office of the Staff Secretary – Presidential Handwriting File, JCL.

\*The inclusion of China within the P-1 Draft is of an unknown origin because it is not handwritten, but rather part of a two-page insert typed on a different machine than the original speech draft.

was friendly and more vulnerable, which is why Carter urged Congress to reaffirm America's commitment to the country as well as to provide "additional military and economic aid." The drafts initially included the exact dollar amount of the aforementioned aid – \$400 million over the next eighteen months. The reason for concern about Pakistan and the intended aid was American access to oil. If the Soviet Union cut through Pakistan, the Soviet Union would be in a position to destabilize the entire region and disrupt the flow of oil to the West. The four countries (Israel, Egypt, China, and Pakistan) that Carter references to within the 1980 SOTU Address each played a key role in international events of the time. They also all maintained a level of connection to the two major international issues Carter addressed – the Iranian hostage crisis and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.<sup>162</sup>

### **American Character**

Finally, Carter ended his speech by explaining the American ideal, a theme that was present in so many of his speeches. Throughout the drafts, this ideal took many forms. The earliest drafts emphasize "truth" because "in the hands of a free people [truth] is the most powerful weapon on earth." Truth is still present in the January 9, B-3 Draft, but it takes a secondary role to the American "imagination to dream great dreams." In highlighting this freedom, the speechwriters added text from a readily recognizable document – the United States Constitution. The speechwriters wanted the President to read the Preamble as a means of focusing upon American unity – "We the people." The Preamble lasted a respectable twelve days before it was cut on January 21, at the urging of Al From, who found closing the

---

<sup>162</sup> Carter, "State of the Union Address."

Speech Draft, B-5, 1/17/80, folder "1/23/80 – State of the Union [Address] – Drafts, File No. 1," box 62, White House Speechwriters Office – Chronological File, JCL.

Speech Draft, B-4, 1/18/80, folder "State of the Union Drafts with Staff Comments, 1/23/80 [2]," box 12, Hendrik Hertzberg Collection, JCL.

speech with truth and the Preamble “a little abstract and just not concrete enough . . . The speech ought to tell the people that the President knows where he wants to lead them and that he’s leading them there.” Harry McPherson also disliked the Preamble, calling it “too pat.” He encouraged the President to “double back and pick up the original theme” which is what the speechwriters ultimately did, as will be discussed later. Despite these rhetorical negotiations, Carter still held his optimistic view that America could be better than it was at present. As Carter said within the speech, “America need have no fear. We can thrive in a world of change if we remain true to our values and actively engaged in promoting world peace.” Cynics might chuckle that it was impossible for Carter to give a speech without mentioning Human Rights as a strategic value, but one must give him credit for staying true to his core message. Freedom and rights were also at the core of American values. After the Cold War, many Eastern European leaders made specific mention of such issues as the 1975 Helsinki Accords and the Carter administration’s support for human rights as being powerful forces for change behind the Iron Curtain. So, in keeping with Carter’s theme throughout the speech, America could not expect to retain those privileges if it did not seek to expand those privileges to peoples around the world. This was why Carter expressed the following: “Our support for human rights in other countries is in our national interest as well as part of our own national character.” Here, Carter referred to his Democratic predecessor, Woodrow Wilson, who famously linked American values and South American foreign policy.<sup>163</sup>

---

<sup>163</sup> Carter, “State of the Union Address.”

Speech Draft, B-1, 12/17/79, folder “State of the Union Drafts with Staff Comments, 1/23/80 [2],” box 12, Hendrik Hertzberg Collection, JCL.

Speech Draft, B-3, 1/9/80, folder “State of the Union Drafts with Staff Comments, 1/23/80 [2],” box 12, Hendrik Hertzberg Collection, JCL.

Speech Draft, P4, Jan. 21, 1980, folder “State of the Union Drafts with Staff Comments, 1/23/80 [2],” box 12, Hendrik Hertzberg Collection, JCL.

Memo, Al From to Rick Hertzberg, Jan. 14, 1980, folder “1/23/80 – State of the Union [Address] – Drafts with Staff Comments, File No. 1,” box 62, White House Speechwriters Office – Chronological File, JCL.

Another part of America's character was its resilience. America was facing tough times economically due to price fluctuation and inflation. Carter accused OPEC of creating the rising oil prices that caused skyrocketing inflation in the United States. Such actions did impact the U.S. economy, but would have been an insufficient cause of economic destruction given the natural complexity of a global economy. Carter then quickly transitioned to practical solutions to ease the average American family's economic strain. This list included everything from balancing the federal budget, to removing government red-tape for businesses, to providing job training for young people and minorities, to increasing productivity. This listing first appeared in the January 11 copy of Draft A-2, the first draft following the speechwriting office's overhaul. Other Presidents, when discussing how to lower expenditures, had used the same recommendations found on Carter's five-point list.<sup>164</sup>

Carter closed the SOTU Address with one final dimension of American idealism – the “new spirit of unity.” Carter had utilized the theme of a “new spirit” in over thirty-five public addresses since his Inauguration in 1977. To Carter, this new spirit was the key to America's economic, ideological, and physical revitalization. It would make the America that Americans wanted become reality. To Carter, that “America we want” was one that was peaceful, strong, and free, possessing equal rights and opportunities for all citizens. This was an ambitious goal, which was why Carter called on the American people to be willing to sacrifice and work collectively to make it come true. Together, there was nothing that the

---

Letter, Harry McPherson to Anne Wexler, Jan. 17, 1980, folder “State of the Union Drafts with Staff Comments, 1/23/80 [1],” box 12, Hendrik Hertzberg Collection, JCL.

<sup>164</sup> Carter, “State of the Union Address.”

Speech Draft, A-2, 1/11/80, folder “1/23/80 – State of the Union [Address] – Drafts, File No. 1,” box 62, White House Speechwriters Office – Chronological File, JCL.

American people could not accomplish. On the other hand, as opponents would note, asking for sacrifice was not always a ticket to electoral success.<sup>165</sup>

### **Immediate Response**

Unlike other speeches, the text for the SOTU Address is always circulated to the media as well as Congress before the speech is actually delivered. Hence, there is ample opportunity for well-prepared, analytic, and prompt responses. In this instance, two Republican Congressmen, Senate Minority Leader Tom Stevens (Alaska) and House Minority Leader John Rhodes (Arizona), collaborated in an ABC interview on January 28 to present the customary opposition party response to the President's speech. Stevens and Rhodes immediately took the President to task over his foreign policy, claiming that it had no credibility, was designed for an idealistic world that did not exist, and was partially responsible for the international crises Carter addressed. In summary, they accused Carter of maintaining a foreign policy of inaction and permissiveness, one that the Soviets and their allies took advantage of thoroughly. They also criticized the President for committing to a conventional defense of the Persian Gulf, possibly without consulting with America's allies first and without the conventional military capability to do so.<sup>166</sup>

Within the interview, there were points of reluctant or mixed support. For example, Senator Stevens agreed with the President's goal to increase America's defense capabilities. However, he criticized the President for allowing America to fall behind in the first place, citing specifically the President's decision to cancel production of the B-1 bomber and the opposition from Democratic Senators who sought defense spending cuts. Congressman

---

<sup>165</sup> Carter, "State of the Union Address."

<sup>166</sup> State of the Union: A Republican Response, Jan. 28, 1980, folder "State of the Union Address, 1980," box 30, Speechwriter's Office – Subject File, JCL.

Rhodes concurred with the President's proposal to revitalize the Selective Service, but noted that a bill proposing to do that very thing had been introduced in the House, supported by House Republicans, and defeated because the Carter administration opposed it. Rhodes accused the President of changing his position on that issue. Third, although the Senator and Congressman appreciated Carter's new-found commitment to increasing defense spending, they felt the money was worthless, considering the administration's devotion to the weaponry of the day. In their eyes, the administration lacked the foresight to invest towards the future. Despite some minor points of agreement, the interview was a definitive criticism.<sup>167</sup>

Stevens and Rhodes were not the only ones making their voices heard following the SOTU Address. A particularly striking headline from *U.S. News & World Report* read, "A State-of-the-Union Address With Hard Words for Russia." The article provided only a brief commentary on the speech, but its first sentence noted, "It was a tough speech." Although a generalization, one would consider such a statement a compliment since the President had stated his intentions to be firm and truthful. Another article called the speech a "forceful stroke that has added for the moment to the momentum of his victory Monday night in Iowa and complicated the task of his opponents." According to the *New York Times*, 83% of the American television audience tuned in for the President's address. This equaled around 80 million viewers, not an insignificant number in light of Carter's relatively low popularity at the time. A large viewing audience is not an indication of support, but it is an indication of interest, which would enable the President to reach the American people with his message.<sup>168</sup>

---

<sup>167</sup> State of the Union: A Republican Response, Jan. 28, 1980, folder "State of the Union Address, 1980," box 30, Speechwriter's Office – Subject File, JCL.

<sup>168</sup> "A State-of-the-Union Address With Hard Words for Russia, *U.S. News & World Report*, folder "State of the Union Drafts with Staff Comments, 1/23/80 [1]," box 12, Hendrik Hertzberg Collection, JCL. Hedrick Smith, "Carter's New Momentum," *New York Times*, Jan. 24, 1980. The searchable archive files lacked letters from the public relating to the 1980 SOTU.

As one would expect, during the speech there were moments of silence and moments of applause, moments of partisan support and moments of bipartisan support. Overall, the media depicted the Congressional support for the President's message as positive, although one article did end with a quip that, if nothing else, the President had "scared the Republicans and startled Senator Kennedy," who was challenging President Carter in the Democratic primaries. Carter's more resolute tone in the SOTU Address made it more difficult for Kennedy to challenge the incumbent President on his foreign policies.<sup>169</sup>

Carter also had another audience, far away, whose response to the speech would not be categorized as positive – the Soviets. The Soviets were "outraged" as one news article reported. The Soviet media described Carter's "doctrine" of protecting national interests in the Middle East, "a colonialist plan for the enslavement of the peoples of the Arab East and conversion of the area into raw materials base for American imperialism." This showed that American politicians were not the only ones who could sling Cold War insults.<sup>170</sup>

A second outspoken critic was Ronald Reagan, who claimed, "Mr. Carter's failure to 'act decisively' after the Iranian seizure of the American Embassy 'provided the Russians with the final encouragement to invade Afghanistan.'" Reagan also called the speech a "meaningless gesture" that would create nothing except "a new bureaucracy," and Carter himself "deceitful or a fool" if he truly believed that the Iranians would seek American protection against the Soviet enemy to the north. Considering Reagan's position as Carter's

---

Wayne King and Warren Weaver, Jr., "Washington Talk: Briefing; State of the Audience," *New York Times*, Jan. 28, 1987.

<sup>169</sup> James Reston, "Roaring into the 50's," *New York Times*, Jan. 27, 1980.

Hedrick Smith, "Carter's New Momentum," *New York Times*, Jan. 25, 1980

<sup>170</sup> James Reston, "Roaring into the 50's," *New York Times*, Jan. 27, 1980.

likely opponent in the fall election, it was understandable for Reagan to desire the media's attention to clarify his own political stance on the issues.<sup>171</sup>

Unfortunately for Carter, the SOTU Address did not aid his public approval ratings in the long run. According to Gallup polling data, in the time period of January 1-7, 1980, President Carter had an approval rating of 56%, a disapproval rating of 33%, and an 11% no opinion rating, fairly respectable percentiles as far as presidential ratings are concerned. Following the SOTU, during the January 25-28, 1980, sampling, the President's approval inched up a minuscule 2% to 58%, his disapproval rating lowered slightly to 32%, and the no opinion also dropped to 10%. However, the next sampling, February 1-4, 1980, saw the President lose what little ground he had gained: 55% approval, 36% disapproval, 9% no opinion. An examination of the polling data for the remainder of President Carter's time in office reveals that, in reality, the week following the SOTU was the high point of Carter's public approval ratings. After that week, his approval ratings steadily dropped (reaching a low of 31% in two different polls) and his disapproval ratings steadily increased (reaching 58% at the end of June). In November 1980, Carter faced the ultimate public referendum when Governor Ronald Reagan resoundingly defeated the incumbent President.<sup>172</sup>

## Conclusion

The 1980 SOTU Address provides a lesson in how current events directly impact a President's actions and words. The speech took its eventual form out of political necessity.

---

<sup>171</sup> James Reston, "Roaring into the 50's," *New York Times*, Jan. 27, 1980.

Hedrick Smith, "Carter's New Momentum," *New York Times*, Jan. 25, 1980

Bernard Weinraub, "Reagan Blames Carter 'Failure' for Soviet Move: Joins in G.O.P Criticism of the President's Speech," *New York Times*, Jan. 25, 1980.

<sup>172</sup> Job Performance Ratings for President Carter, 02/04/1977-12/05/1980, Accessed Jan. 5, 2012. Available at: [http://webapps.ropercenter.uconn.edu/CFIDE/roper/presidential/webroot/presidential\\_rating.cfm#.TzL93IEbFlc](http://webapps.ropercenter.uconn.edu/CFIDE/roper/presidential/webroot/presidential_rating.cfm#.TzL93IEbFlc)

The international events Carter faced during his administration would have been daunting for any President. These challenges could not be ignored; Carter had to give a political and rhetorical response. As this chapter reveals, the organizational structure of the Carter White House inhibited the President's ability to provide a solid response. The disorganization in developing speeches directly impacted Carter's lack-luster delivery. Without a consistent, firm message, Carter's leadership came into question.

By 1980, President Carter was in the position where he had to prove that he was the man to keep America and the world safe. To achieve that goal, Carter altered his rhetorical tone, adopted a more resolute stance against the Soviets and their Communist ideology, and proposed a new foreign policy doctrine aimed at preserving American interests in the Middle East against terroristic and Communist threats. Within the speech, Carter also maintained his faith in America's future and sought to arouse a similar optimism within the American people. In part, Carter's clarification of his foreign policies helped him secure the Democratic nomination going into the 1980 election.

However, this success was short-lived. In the months immediately following the 1980 SOTU, Carter's approval ratings plummeted; he faced a bruising primary challenge; and he lost the fall election. Despite his attempts to the contrary, particularly within the SOTU Address, Carter had failed to convince the American people of his ability to provide the best leadership. To a large extent, the issue of the Cold War and Soviet Communism, which seemed remote when he delivered his Inaugural Address, turned out to be a major influence on his one-term presidency.

**Chapter 2: Ronald Reagan on Communism**  
**“Remarks at the Annual Convention of the National Association of Evangelicals”**  
**March 8, 1983**

**Introduction**

Ronald Reagan was a man who was unafraid to speak his mind. He clung tenaciously to his beliefs and verbalized those beliefs in a simple, yet polished manner. Whenever a politician is willing to speak as Reagan spoke, there will be moments of rhetorical brilliance as well as political controversy. Such was the case with Reagan’s “Remarks at the Annual Convention of the National Association of Evangelicals” (hereafter referred to as the “Evil Empire Speech”), delivered on March 8, 1983. By itself, the Evil Empire Speech was a work of rhetorical genius. It was balanced in form, smoothly delivered, and brutally honest in content. It is a quintessential example of Reagan’s anti-communist perspective, a view that periodically scared those Americans holding more moderate or liberal perspectives. Most importantly, however, is the reality that the Evil Empire Speech was dual-focused. Reagan was examining the United States just as much, if not more, than he was the Soviet Union.<sup>173</sup>

The speech is best known by its nickname – the Evil Empire Speech – and, just like the Brandenburg Gate Speech, the Evil Empire Speech contains far more than the one memorable line where Reagan used the phrase “evil empire.” Yes, the speech’s content relates to the USSR, but Reagan only utilized both the words “Soviet” and “Communism” five times within the speech. In comparison, Reagan said the word “American(s)” nine times and “you” (or a derivative thereof), in reference to the American audience, over thirty times. The speech was very much directed at Reagan’s audience – American evangelical pastors. Thus, it makes sense that the speech would center upon America: American actions and

---

<sup>173</sup> Gil Troy, *Morning in America: How Ronald Reagan Invented the 1980s* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 261.

beliefs, with the Soviets serving as the easiest point of comparison. After all, America was still embedded within the Cold War – politically, militarily, philosophically, and morally – and the Evil Empire speech directly correlates with that reality.

One may ask, “Why is this speech used as an example of a President’s perspective on communism?” The answer is twofold. First, the speech makes very clear points regarding Reagan’s views of Communism. These remarks may not appear in every section of the speech, but they are readily obvious to anyone who reads the speech. Second, as previously stated, the speech is best known by the nickname the “Evil Empire Speech.” The “Evil Empire” was the Soviet Union. In political and media circles, direct usage of such a bald term was very much out of fashion. But the underlying attitude in the public mind was not. The speech is not known as the “Faith and Practice in America” speech, yet that is what Reagan discussed the most within it. Cultural association is the key and society has determined to remember this speech in relation to Communism.

## **Development**

To understand Reagan’s speech, one must first understand the political movement behind the invitation and the invitation itself. The “Religious Right” emerged as a national political force in the years preceding Reagan’s election and continued that influence during his time in office. Sometimes referred to as the “Moral Majority” (after a movement led by Pastor Jerry Falwell), sometimes as the “Christian Right,” and sometimes as “Christian Conservatives,” the phenomenon was, by any name, a testament to the rise of politically-active, overtly religious Americans. Carter’s publicized Baptist faith led many Americans to understand such terms as “born-again” in 1976 and worked to Carter’s benefit that election

year. The rightward-trend of this voting bloc made it a strong part of Reagan's coalition in 1980. Reagan would logically treat his growing voting bloc with respect, which was a key reason why he accepted the invitation to speak before the National Association of Evangelicals in March 1983.

President Reagan was not the first President to address the National Association of Evangelicals (hereafter referred to as the NAE). On February 22, 1976, President Gerald Ford gave a 1,200-word address on the theme of American freedoms at the combined conventions of the National Religious Broadcasters and the NAE. Hence, the precedent of inviting selected Presidents was already established; Reagan was not entering new territory. Indeed, to refuse the invitation would have been a political insult. Moreover, Presidents speaking to church groups was not at all unusual. John F. Kennedy's famous Houston speech to Baptist ministers is widely credited with helping neutralize qualms about a Catholic President.<sup>174</sup>

Second, as evidenced below, the NAE's invitation was not the first time they had interacted with the Reagan White House. Robert Dugan, Jr., then Director of the NAE wrote two letters on December 3, 1982. The first was to President Reagan. In this letter, Dugan invited him to speak at the national convention which would be held March 8-10 in Orlando, Florida. Mr. Dugan stated, "We would be delighted to have you address us on whatever subject you wish" but did comment that national defense would certainly be a possibility since some evangelicals were beginning to support a nuclear freeze. Mr. Dugan also expressed a preference for the President to speak at the climactic March 10 banquet if possible and assured the President that he "would seldom have a more friendly and

---

<sup>174</sup> Gerald R. Ford, "Remarks at the Combined Convention of the National Religious Broadcasters and the National Association of Evangelicals," Feb. 22, 1976. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=5606>.

appreciative audience.” The second letter went to James Baker, Reagan’s Chief of Staff. In this letter, Dugan made four key points. First, he notified Baker of the invitation sent to the President. Second, he repeated the strategic possibility of discussing national defense since other religious groups (most notably the National Council of Churches and the National Conference of Catholic Bishops) had drifted to the political left on this issue. Third, he reminded Baker that evangelicals comprised a third of the American voting population. Fourth, Dugan emphasized his personal history of publicly supporting the President. He also added a hand-written postscript: “P.S. Thank you again for that fine meeting on September 14. Reported it in October newsletter.” Clearly, there was a certain level of rapport between the NAE and the Reagan White House, and the invitation was an outgrowth of that existing relationship. Furthermore, that relationship continued after Reagan’s address as he spoke again at the NAE’s 1984 convention.<sup>175</sup>

It is unclear what conversations may have taken place behind closed doors, but the paper record makes it clear that a mere six days later, William Sadleir, the Director of Presidential Appointments and Scheduling, sent a recommendation form to Red Cavaney from the White House Public Liaison Office, requesting his office’s recommendation regarding the NAE’s invitation. This communication shows that the White House acted quickly upon receiving the invitation. Thus, one can assume that the White House put a high priority upon this invitation because, if they had not, Sadleir’s recommendation form would probably have been delayed. Furthermore, the form is clearly marked that the Liaison Office recommended that the President accept the offer since the NAE was a “Very, very supportive

---

<sup>175</sup> Letter, Robert P. Dugan, Jr. to President Reagan, Dec. 3, 1982, folder “National Association of Evangelicals: Orlando, FL, 3/8/83,” boxes 85-86, Office of Speechwriting: Research Office, RRL.  
Letter, Robert P. Dugan, Jr. to James Baker, Dec. 3, 1982, folder “National Association of Evangelicals: Orlando, FL, 3/8/83,” boxes 85-86, Office of Speechwriting: Research Office, RRL.

group of churches who have been very helpful to us in working on the President's legislative initiatives." The response was due back to Frederick Ryan, Jr. in the Office of Appointments and Scheduling by December 17. Finally, the form was stamped "Approved" and dated "12/22/82" for the President to speak on March 8, 1983. Finally, on January 21, 1983, William Sadleir sent a memo to William Henkel in the Presidential Advance Office requesting that he "Please implement the following and notify and clear all participants." The memo went on to confirm several important details: Reagan would address the NAE at its convention in Orlando on March 8; the time and duration of the address were "TBD;" Henkel should coordinate media coverage with the Press Office; and the First Lady's participation was not required. Sadleir CC'd seventeen other White House staff and officials on the memo, including Aram Bakshian, the Director of the Office of Speechwriting.<sup>176</sup>

However, Bakshian was not the writer tapped for the NAE speech. That responsibility fell to Tony Dolan. Dolan was a trusted, key member of the Reagan speechwriting staff for the administration's entire eight years. His compositions included a wide variety of materials for many different speakers, including Chief of Staff James Baker, Counselor to the President Edwin Meese, Central Intelligence Director William Casey, and President Reagan. The depth and breadth of Dolan's work shows his rhetorical skill, but it also shows his ability to channel the spirit and style of different speakers into his writing – a vital skill for a speechwriter.

Dolan's first draft included in the archival material at the Ronald Reagan Library is dated March 3, 1983, and time stamped at 1:00 P.M. What followed was a flurry of revisions

---

<sup>176</sup> Memo, William Sadleir to Red Cavaney, Dec. 9, 1982, folder "National Association of Evangelicals: Orlando, FL, 3/8/83," boxes 85-86, Office of Speechwriting: Research Office, RRL.  
Memo, William Sadleir to William Henkel, Jan. 21, 1983, folder "National Association of Evangelicals: Orlando, FL, 3/8/83," boxes 85-86, Office of Speechwriting: Research Office, RRL.

and memos. However, in contrast with some speeches, the developmental process was quite calm. First, none of the memos or edited copies was heated in tone. Each one simply relayed revisions or made suggestions of clarified points that Dolan should include. For example, on March 4, the White House Office of Policy Development made the following recommendation:

Since the President is mentioning infanticide and the Bloomington Baby in this speech, we ought to give a plug for our new anti-infanticide regulation which [Secretary of Health and Human Services] Margaret Heckler so strongly endorsed at her hearings on Wednesday. I have attached several draft paragraphs for this purpose.

The Policy Office was not suggesting a major change; they only wanted an administrative policy already included within the speech to be more clearly defined. Of the other department officials submitting edits, only one emphasized that he “would strongly recommend that these changes be made.” That man was Edwin Harper who served in the Office of Policy Development. Second, the speech progressed through a mere five circulated drafts over the space of four days. Granted, Dolan’s first draft was circulated only five days before the event thereby leaving little time for debate. Undoubtedly, Dolan had progressed through a series of his own personal drafts that were not circulated. Third, the drafts were all strikingly similar to the speech Reagan delivered. There were some changes in wording and some additions and subtractions of topical points, but nothing that would qualify as a major overhaul. For example, the first circulated draft included a brief paragraph on page three and another on page seven regarding the dichotomy between those holding to a decidedly liberal, secularist value system and the values of the American people at large. These paragraphs were eliminated. Likewise, on page four, a paragraph regarding the controversy within California over the abortion “squeal rule” and government acting “*in locus parentis*” was cut.

On page six, Reagan's remarks regarding America's declining education standards were also removed. In total, two pages of material were cut from the speech, reducing it from sixteen to fourteen pages.<sup>177</sup>

Furthermore, the biggest alterations to the speech were those of wording style and tone. The first draft was much more colloquial. When read, it sounds more like a casual, personal conversation than a speech to a large audience. Maintaining a conversational style is not necessarily bad, but it does lack the requisite level of professionalism expected of the President of the United States. These edited casual statements included:

From the joy and good feeling of this conference we [Nancy and the President] leave for the hurly burley of a political reception for the Florida GOP. (This sentence was revised to read: "From the joy and the good feeling of this conference, I go to a political reception.")

That is why I am so pleased to be here today with the people who are in the business of keeping America great by keeping her good. (This sentence was revised to read: "Well, I'm pleased to be here with you who are keeping America great by keeping her good.")

And don't get me wrong, I'm not attacking or attempting to silence these elites. I just think the difference between their view of the world and ours ought to be fully aired. (Removed from speech.)

So there you have it: the same liberal secularists who did a marvelous job of giving us inflation, recession, unemployment, unmanageable bureaucracy, trillion dollar deficits and a host of foreign policy debacles now want us to let them preempt parental rights and run the sex lives of our underage teenagers. (Removed from speech.)

You can see can't you how the First Amendment has been stood on its head? (Removed from speech.)

As evidenced by the quotes above, the original speech also contained stronger anti-liberal language than the final version. The first draft, at times, reads like a soapbox political rant.

---

<sup>177</sup> Speech Drafts, folder "Presidential Address: National Association of Evangelicals (Orlando) (Dolan) 03/08/1983," box 77, Speechwriting Office: Drafts, RRL.  
Speech Drafts, SP729, ID #073172, WHORM Subject File, RRL.

The final draft is still pointed, but it is restrained in its attacks. The archives provided a simple explanation for this change – President Reagan made his own edits to the March 5 draft. Reagan was the one who oversaw the wording, eliminated the colloquial sayings, and tweaked the speech’s themes by re-writing passages on a lined legal pad to make it easier to express what he wanted, just as he did with Khachigian’s draft of the Inaugural Address. Reagan even made a note on the top of the first page providing some instructions if his edits made the speech too short. This editing provides another example of the active role Reagan took in the speechwriting process and his clear sense of what he wanted to say to his audience. This is important to observe, because it supports the slowly growing public awareness that Reagan was intimately involved in crafting his own lines. He was not simply an actor mouthing scripts written by someone else, as his political opponents liked to think. Instead, he was directly involved in producing the lines he spoke, and in ensuring that his words reflected his long-held beliefs.<sup>178</sup>

Regardless of the changes that were made, the Evil Empire speech still experienced a comparatively brief and smooth developmental process, a rarity in the White House Speechwriting Office. Speeches must be perfect, so they are put under a high-powered microscope and examined from every angle possible and from every department possible. Given the speech’s emphasis on controversial moral issues, this uncomplicated development is astounding.<sup>179</sup>

---

<sup>178</sup> Speech Draft, Mar. 3, 1983, 1:00 p.m., folder “Presidential Address: National Association of Evangelicals (Orlando) (Dolan) 03/08/1983,” box 77, Speechwriting Office: Drafts, RRL.

Speech Draft, Mar. 5, 1983, Noon, folder “National Association of Evangelicals, Orlando, FL – 03/08/1983 (1 of 3),” box 85, Office of Speechwriting: Research, RRL.

<sup>179</sup> Memo, Robert B. Carleson and Michael M. Uhlmann to Aram Bakshian, Mar. 4, 1983, folder “Address: National Association of Evangelicals (Orlando) (Dolan) 3/8/1983 (3),” box 77, Office of Speechwriting: Speech Drafts, RRL.

Memo, Sven Kraemer to Tony Dolan, Mar. 4, 1983, folder “Address: National Association of Evangelicals (Orlando) (Dolan) 3/8/1983 (5),” box 77, Office of Speechwriting: Speech Drafts, RRL.

## **Analysis**

The reality that the Evil Empire Speech relates primarily to America with comparative analogies to the Soviet Union becomes readily evident when the reader examines the speech in its entirety. In focusing upon America, while at times integrating points together, the speech is divided into four sections: Faith and the Nation (Part I), Family and the Nation, Morality and the Nation, Faith and the Nation (Part II). That Nation is the United States. Use of “The Nation” epitomizes the centrality of American exceptionalism to Reagan’s belief set.

## **Faith and the Nation**

It is traditional for speeches to begin with a note of thanks and Reagan’s Evil Empire Speech is no exception. However, he did not wax eloquent with profuse thanks for the invitation or for the NAE as an organization. Rather, he thanked the audience, primarily composed of ministers, for their prayers on his behalf. An integral component of all the world’s major faiths is prayer. As a man of faith, Reagan understood the power and importance of intercessory prayer. He, like other Presidents before him, applied his religious faith in seeking wisdom for the many life-changing decisions he had to make. Reagan was not seeking accolades for such actions, for prayer is a very personal action. Rather, this was

---

Memo, Mary Frances Lowe to Aram Bakshian, Attention Tony Dolan, Mr. 4, 1983, folder “Address: National Association of Evangelicals (Orlando) (Dolan) 3/8/1983 (5),” box 77, Office of Speechwriting: Speech Drafts, RRL.

Memo, Lawrence A. Kudlow (McAllister) to Aram Bakshian, Mar. 4, 1983, folder “Address: National Association of Evangelicals (Orlando) (Dolan) 3/8/1983 (3),” box 77, Office of Speechwriting: Speech Drafts, RRL.

Memo, Edwin Harper to Richard Darman, Dave Gergen, and Aram Bakshian, Mar. 7, 1983, folder “Address: National Association of Evangelicals (Orlando) (Dolan) 3/8/1983 (2),” box 77, Office of Speechwriting: Speech Drafts, RRL. Edwin Harper’s memo notes that his changes had been cleared by Ken Starr in the Department of Justice, although no edited copies directly from the Justice Department were found in the files.

his way of thanking the audience for their prayers as well as appealing for their continued prayers.<sup>180</sup>

Reagan could have allowed this opening to become overly serious. However, he also possessed a less serious side and was willing to poke fun at himself and his audience by including a couple of jokes. Indeed, his famous sense of humor was often at work in serious moments. Jokes involving clergy are commonplace in American society. Sometimes they are innocently light-hearted and sometimes they are scathing and harsh. Reagan's jokes were the former. Reagan first joked that if anyone in the room ever received a "busy signal" when they prayed, that it was because Reagan was calling Heaven ahead of them, hogging the line. It would be very easy to hyper-analyze this joke by hypothesizing that Reagan believed his prayers took a higher priority or that his prayers were extremely long and thus prevented anyone else from being heard, but that would be conjecture and ruin the humorous purpose of the joke. None of his listeners would doubt the good nature of his jest, which served to set the collegial tone he wished to establish. He and his audience had something important in common: when in doubt, they consulted God. They had something else in common, too. They were proud, not ashamed, to admit that fact.<sup>181</sup>

Reagan's second joke poked fun at the religious character of politicians – another classic joke trope. Reagan related that a politician and an evangelical minister arrived together at Heaven's gate. (Dolan appropriately utilized an evangelical minister for this joke rather than a priest or clergy from another denomination.) The minister's heavenly room was simply furnished and the politician became very nervous over what he himself would receive, which turned out to be "a great mansion, with beautiful grounds and many servants."

---

<sup>180</sup> Reagan, "Remarks at the Annual Convention of the National Association of Evangelicals," Mar. 8, 1983. (hereafter noted as Reagan, "Evil Empire Speech.")

<sup>181</sup> Reagan, "Evil Empire Speech."

Shocked, the politician asked, “But how can you give me this mansion while that good and holy man only gets a single room?” St. Peter informed him that Heaven contains thousands of clergy, but that he was the first politician who ever made it.<sup>182</sup>

Reagan used the joke to make a point – there are many politicians who are “God-fearing, dedicated, noble men and women.” Reagan desired to bridge the perceived moral gulf between Washington D.C. and the rest of the country. One did not suddenly become an evil person, destined for Hell, once one moved inside the Capital Beltway. Reagan was out to prove that politics and faith were not incompatible. He did so by turning the audience’s attention to history and the Founding Fathers, who, as men of varying beliefs and religiosity, recognized God’s role in the world and the necessity of maintaining faith-based principles within the nation, particularly in the government and legal system. As long as America stayed true to its faith-based foundation, it would succeed.<sup>183</sup>

However, the speech also used the famous, if apocryphal, de Tocqueville quote, “And if America ever ceases to be good, America will cease to be great.” This was why Reagan urged the clergy to continue their prayers. He did not want to see America turn away from its foundation and values. Reagan acknowledged within the speech that this faith-based position put him at odds with the secularist sectors of American society. Secularism, which interprets history and tragedy “as the work of man rather than God,” has maintained a foothold in American society since its inception. Throughout American history there has been a tension between secularists and religionists, with various Presidents encamped on one side or the other. One of the most evident manifestations of the conflict between secularism and religion is the legal battle, still waging today, over the concept and constitutional

---

<sup>182</sup> Reagan, “Evil Empire Speech.”

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*

interpretation of separation of church and state. Although Reagan's own religiosity varied over his lifetime, as President, he was unwilling to surrender his religious beliefs of God's hand in the lives of man to those holding an opposing view that God (if they acknowledged Him) had little involvement in the world's everyday affairs.<sup>184</sup>

### **Family and the Nation**

Reagan correlated the rise of secularism and waning of faith within American society with the increased political debate over parental notification of minors seeking an abortion. Reagan expressed a resolution in the superiority of the family to the government. Abortion, that perpetual hot button issue, was controversial precisely because it represented conflicting impulses over where to draw the line between state and family values and power. By Reagan's lights, parents were to rule the home, not Washington.

Dolan's choice of wording for the President is noteworthy. Reagan used the term "illegitimate births." "Illegitimate" had long been used to describe a child born to two unmarried individuals: this is the first definition still listed within Webster's Dictionary. Throughout history, many societies have viewed sexual relations between unmarried individuals to be abhorrent, categorized as fornication, with the children of such relationships lacking that full legal status which comes from a religiously and civically-sanctioned parental union. During the 1950s, Reagan noted, social scientists began examining the life-long impact of illegitimacy upon children and pushed for a terminology change. This terminology change applied to emotionally charged terms such as "promiscuous," with society being urged to substitute "sexually active" instead, so as to, according to the speech, "prevent

---

<sup>184</sup> Reagan, "Evil Empire Speech."

Susan Jacoby, *Freethinkers: A History of American Secularism* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2004), 3, 7-8.

illegitimate birth or abortion.” Language choices became signs signifying not only one’s personal beliefs but also a political stance. Use of the terms like “Pro-Life” or “Pro-Choice” signaled to listeners where a speaker stood on these controversies.<sup>185</sup>

Reagan never plainly stated, “Abortion is wrong” in this speech, but he did make other inferences which reveal his view of the issue. Reagan first attacked the media’s reluctance to connect any attachment between morality and sex. He then highlighted the controversy between the executive and judicial branches of the government over parental consent. Reagan acknowledged society’s good intentions and the “sincerely motivated and deeply concerned” actions of a particular organization (presumably Planned Parenthood) in assisting unmarried girls who become pregnant. Reagan did not fault good intentions. His discontent hinged upon the lack of parental notification, which coincided with his philosophy that parents, not the government, were responsible for their children. To Reagan, the parent(s) had the right and responsibility to know that a daughter was seeking treatment of a pregnancy, particularly if abortion was being considered as an option. In keeping with that philosophy, the Reagan administration mandated that clinics receiving federal funds were required to notify the parent(s). Opponents of this position considered such a requirement an invasion of a young person’s privacy and a violation of individual rights, and sought a judicial injunction to prevent the policy’s enactment. This was not a fight Reagan was willing to lose, at least rhetorically. In the speech, he vowed to fight for the rights of parents and the rights of family, and that debate continued long after Reagan left office.<sup>186</sup>

---

<sup>185</sup> Reagan, “Evil Empire Speech.”

Rima Al-Mukhtar, “Social Boycott of Illegitimate Kids Unjustified,” *Arab News*, (Nov. 13, 2011), Accessed Nov. 20, 2011. Available at <http://arabnews.com/saudiArabia/article532897.ece>.

<sup>186</sup> Reagan, “Evil Empire Speech.”

Jill Lepore, “Birthright: What’s Next for Planned Parenthood?” Nov. 14, 2011. *The New Yorker*, 47, 52-53.

Reagan also vowed to contend for religious liberties in general. Reagan's view of governmental interference within the family paralleled his view of governmental interference within religious establishments and freedoms in general. To Reagan, it made no sense for the Supreme Court to open its proceedings with a "religious invocation" and for Congress to open sessions "with a prayer," while American schoolchildren were forbidden to pray at the start of their school day. Reagan's response to what he saw as an obvious inconsistency and injustice was to push for a constitutional amendment to return prayer to public schools. Reagan was old enough to remember a day when prayer in American public schools was the norm. That norm changed in 1962-1963 with two key Supreme Court decisions – *Engel v. Vitale* and *Abington School District v. Schempp* – which declared that official school prayer violated the First Amendment's Establishment Clause and ordained that schools could not sponsor religious activities. It was part of a much larger social debate about the proper relationship between religion and the so-called "public square." President Reagan and his audience held the position that there was plenty of room for the public expression of religion. From many evangelical's perspective, the opposition would not be satisfied until public religious expression was regulated. As referenced within the speech, Reagan intended to fight these judicial decisions through two efforts. The first was congressional legislation prohibiting schools from discriminating against religious forms of student speech. The second attempt was via a constitutional amendment to restore prayer to public schools.<sup>187</sup>

Reagan closed this section of Family and the Nation by returning to the issue of the sanctity of life and abortion. Again, Reagan never plainly stated that abortion is wrong, but neither did he support the progression of legal and social approvals towards abortion. This includes the Supreme Court's removal of unborn children's rights, the justification of

---

<sup>187</sup> Reagan, "Evil Empire Speech."

“abortion on demand,” as well as the attempts towards mercy killing of handicapped infants. To Reagan, infanticide was far more than just an abortion issue – it was also an issue of discrimination against handicapped individuals. From Reagan’s perspective, handicapped infants should receive the same legal protection as handicapped adults. However, as long as America’s moral compass was changing, the question of morality and life would remain hanging in the balance. This speech showed how Reagan’s approach to abortion did not simply focus on that one issue itself, but placed it in a larger context which reflected his larger beliefs, and those of his audience.<sup>188</sup>

### **Morality and the Nation**

In order to understand this portion of the speech, one must comprehend Reagan’s historical perspective. Reagan’s was a traditional approach to the topics within this speech. He was not a man interested in revising or reinterpreting history; neither was he inclined to discard that heritage for the newest and most fashionable philosophy of the time. Likewise, he was not interested in discrediting past American achievements, but rather in celebrating and maintaining a “positive view of American history.” For Reagan, revisionist ideas – like the idea that the Cold War resulted from American misunderstanding or hostility to the Soviet Union – were ridiculous. What was needed was the confidence to stand up for the original social or political arguments, which were correct. In his mind, there was no need to change what was not broken; the American traditional view had served the country well so there was not need to trade them in for something new that went against the old. For opponents who prided themselves either on their oppositional relationship to traditional American culture or their presumed “open-mindedness” when it came to reexamining home

---

<sup>188</sup> Reagan, “Evil Empire Speech.”

truths, this confidence in traditional positions and values was one of Reagan's most aggravating traits. It was also one of his most successful political stances.<sup>189</sup>

Considering Reagan's conservative views, it makes sense that the Evil Empire Speech would serve as a platform for traditional values. Plus, the speech's content is better understood when viewed in this light. Many would disagree. Realists might believe that change was inevitable and that it was necessary to make peace with it. Progressives might believe that change from traditional positions was desirable, and should come faster. Reagan made it quite clear in the Evil Empire Speech that he believed in right and wrong, good and evil – along very traditional lines. He was not interested in hearing that the Soviet Union and United States both represented varying shades of gray, nor in entertaining the prospect that the United States had much evil of its own. To Reagan, these were falsely-constructed arguments, despite their seeming sophistication. America was not only fighting an undeclared political and military war with the Soviet Union, but she was also fighting a spiritual war – one mandated by America's traditional values based upon Judeo-Christian values. This belief made the security of America's traditional, moral values all the more important.<sup>190</sup>

For a traditionalist like Reagan, an easy source of quotable material in support of his position on the existence of evil and sin in the world, as well as the necessity of confronting that evilness, was the Bible. Yet, aside from stating that “we're enjoined by Scripture and the Lord Jesus to oppose it [sin and evil] with all our might” and quoting Galatians 5:14, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,” Reagan used no other Scriptural references to support his argument. His evangelical audience would have readily grasped other applicable

---

<sup>189</sup> Reagan, “Evil Empire Speech.”

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*

biblical references such as Genesis 6:5, Isaiah 1:16, Jeremiah 14:20, Romans 5:12, and Galatians 1:4. Heavily quoting the Bible would have been an appropriate choice given the organization that he was addressing, but Reagan and his speechwriting team chose to do otherwise.

It is not uncommon for American Presidents to quote or allude to the Bible within their speeches. This dates to the earliest days of American history. Like Reagan in the Evil Empire Speech, other Presidents inserted points regarding the relation of the Bible and biblical principles and the American nation. For example, President Herbert Hoover gave a strong message in support of the Bible's role within American society on May 5, 1929, when he sent a note to be read before the National Federation of Men's Bible Classes Convention, saying:

There is no other book so various as the Bible, nor one so full of concentrated wisdom . . . The study of this Book in your Bible classes is a postgraduate course in the richest library of human experience. As a nation we are indebted to the Book of Books for our national ideals and representative institutions. Their preservation rests in adhering to its principles.

Another example comes from President Franklin D. Roosevelt who, on October 6, 1935, issued a statement on the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the printing of the English Bible in which he credited the influence the Bible had upon the "rise and development of the men and women who have been and continue to be the pathfinders and benefactors of our people," as well as the influence it had upon the Founding Fathers. Roosevelt ended his statement by urging the American people to "place a fresh emphasis upon its [the Bible's] place and worth in the economy of our life as a people" by reading it thoughtfully and reverently. A third example comes from President Lyndon B. Johnson, who stated that, "The Holy Bible was the most important possession that our forebears placed aboard their ships as they embarked for the

New World.” Johnson then quoted Abraham Lincoln who said, “In regard to this great Book, I have but to say, it is the best gift that God has given to men . . . But for it we could not know right from wrong.” Given his rhetorical emphasis upon evil and sin, the historical precedent of Presidents utilizing the Bible within their public addresses, and the fact that Reagan referenced a recent survey showing Americans’ religiosity, it is remarkable how little “religion” is present within the Evil Empire Speech.<sup>191</sup>

On the other hand, the relatively low “religion” level also makes sense when placed within the context of the speech. Reagan was not “preaching to the choir” at the NAE, although he did urge them to use their pulpits to denounce bigotry and prejudice. He was there to gain political support for nuclear policies which were necessary to keep the Soviet Union in check. This was not the easy task. There was already a Religious Left, represented by mainstream denominations, which argued that the Cold War and nuclear weapons were themselves evil, and that any measures which aggravated Soviet-American relations were wrong. This “principled neutralism” was a moral abdication, as far as the President was concerned, since it refused to take into account the major differences between free and communistic systems. It also mirrored larger contemporary reluctance to wrestle with such old-fashioned ideas as “evil” and “sin.” Reagan used the existence of evil and sin within the world as a platform upon which he could base other moral imperatives. He was not afraid to interpret the Cold War in terms of good *versus* evil. This discussion of morality proved to be

---

<sup>191</sup> Herbert Hoover, “Message to that National Federation of Men’s Bible Classes,” May 5, 1929. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*.

<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=22095>.

Franklin D. Roosevelt, “Statement on the Four Hundredth Anniversary of the Printing of the English Bible,” Oct. 6, 1935. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*.

<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=14960>.

Lyndon B. Johnson, “Remarks at a Ceremony Marking 1966 as the ‘Year of the Bible,’” Jan. 19, 1966. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*.

<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=27559>.

Reagan, “Evil Empire Speech.”

the perfect venue for what became one of Reagan's most famous verbal attacks on the Soviet Union and his "final point" within the Evil Empire Speech.<sup>192</sup>

A foundational component of Reagan's rhetoric and thought was anti-Communism, both before and during his presidency. But Reagan's rhetoric was different than most because he maintained his blunt, forthright style. Elsewhere in the West, a more nuanced language had taken hold. Citing bellicose Soviet language as evidence of malign intentions was considered outré. Indeed, in some circles it had become rude to draw attention even to the most obvious symbols of Soviet injustice, such as the Berlin Wall. This propensity became an issue when the exiled Nobel Prize winner, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, sought refuge in the United States. The Ford administration was concerned that hosting him in Washington would be considered provocative to the Soviets. In contrast, Reagan never quailed about criticizing the Soviet system. As referenced in the Evil Empire Speech, a mere nine days into his presidency Reagan held a press conference where he fielded a question regarding the future of Détente. Reagan replied that, in his eyes, the Soviet Union had manipulated Détente for their own gain, saying:

They [the Soviet Union] . . . have openly and publicly declared that the only morality they recognize is what will further their cause, meaning *they reserve unto themselves the right to commit any crime, to lie, to cheat*, in order to attain that, and that is moral, not immoral . . .

Openly calling the Soviets criminals, liars, and cheaters was not something that previous Presidents had recently done, not necessarily because they did not agree with Reagan's position, but because they chose or refused to do it. Given Reagan's history of statements like the one above, this portion of the Evil Empire Speech should have come as no surprise. Indeed, various scholars, including James Mann, view the Evil Empire Speech as the

---

<sup>192</sup> Reagan, "Evil Empire Speech."

culmination of Reagan's rhetorical and ideological offensive against the Soviet Union and Communism.<sup>193</sup>

Reagan's anti-communist perspectives did not center only upon its manifestations in the 1970s and 1980s. Just as he did in examining American traditional values, Reagan looked to Communism's foundational figures, Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin, both of whom were quite vocal in their contempt for religion and God. In *The Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels argued carefully that religion was an upper-class means of oppressing the proletariat. Furthermore, *The Communist Manifesto* openly states that "communism abolishes eternal truths, it abolishes all religion, and all morality . . ." This statement directly supports Reagan's paraphrasing of Lenin within the speech – "that they repudiate all morality that proceeds from supernatural ideas." Reagan, and Dolan as the speechwriter, was prudent in using Lenin to prove his point. An unsubstantiated, emotional tirade against Communist ideology would have undermined Reagan's position. However, few could argue with him paraphrasing Lenin because a small amount of research would prove that Reagan's facts were accurate. In fact, Reagan was using primary sources – Soviet scripture, so to speak. The only argument that could then be made against Reagan's statement lay with personal interpretation and application. There could be no arguing about what Lenin actually said.<sup>194</sup>

Reagan's interpretation of Communism's foundation, as outlined in the Evil Empire Speech, is: Communist ideology is evil because it made no allowance for any religion and established its own moral code based upon that which would further Communist ideology.

---

<sup>193</sup> James Mann, *The Rebellion of Ronald Reagan: A History of the End of the Cold War* (New York: Viking), 27-29.

Reagan, "Evil Empire Speech."

<sup>194</sup> Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (Accessed Nov.20, 2011). Available at <http://www.anu.edu.au/polsci/marx/classics/manifesto.html>.

Therefore, since the Soviet Union was the main perpetrator of Communism in the world at the time, the Soviet Union was evil.

Although this syllogism was repugnant to some (as is discussed within the Immediate Response section) Reagan never stated that everyone living within the Soviet Union was evil. Religiously literate readers can relate to the idea of hating the sin but not the sinner. However, he did make specific note of Communism's purposeful influence upon the younger generation through a reference to a speech he heard in California. A "prominent young man in the entertainment world" stated that because he loved his daughters more than anything, he would rather them die now with their faith in God intact than to be raised under Communism and lose that faith. Furthermore, while anti-communist, the Evil Empire Speech was not without hope, nor was it completely bellicose. Reagan urged his audience to pray "for the salvation of those who live in that totalitarian darkness," that they would experience the joy of knowing God rather than just the dark fear of living under Communism, and to make their voices heard in opposition to this totalitarian system. It was America's moral imperative to do so. His immediate audience would note that Reagan was not calling for the destruction of people living under the Soviet system, but for their salvation.<sup>195</sup>

### **Faith and the Nation**

Following his comments regarding the family and morality, Reagan returned to the issue of Faith and the Nation by issuing a series of challenges. First, the American people, and especially those present at the NAE Convention, should speak out against those wishing to place "the United States in a position of military and moral inferiority." Based upon the speech's content, on the military end, this meant supporting Reagan's military budget

---

<sup>195</sup> Reagan, "Evil Empire Speech."

increases and supporting the necessity of a larger nuclear arsenal. On the moral end, this meant supporting family rights, opposing abortion, and endeavoring to re-establish prayer in the schools. Thus, military preparedness was equated on moral grounds with social issues such as abortion and family values.<sup>196</sup>

Second, Reagan warned his audience against pride. It is an aspect of human nature to become complacent. Complacency breeds self-assuredness that everything is fine; there are no real enemies or battles for which we must prepare. Americans should not let their pride in their own ability prevent the nation from preparing for unseen future threats. Likewise, Americans should not become proud of their own morality. Reagan emphasized again that the real crisis Americans were facing “is a spiritual one; at root, it is a test of moral will and faith.” Pride in America’s moral superiority would only lead to her downfall. Here again was a carefully pointed religious message which a largely secular media would miss. Reagan was not, as critics of the Religious Right liked to believe, urging ministers to pat themselves on the back and take credit for being more moral than the rest of society. In fact, he pointed out that pride was a sin which all in the audience needed to guard against.<sup>197</sup>

Finally, Reagan expressed his belief that Americans could and would rise to the occasion and meet the military and moral challenges. He said that American freedom would win and Communism would lose, not because America possessed more military might, but because “the quest for human freedom is not material, but spiritual.” Since Communist philosophy did not allow room for religious expression, America held an automatic advantage. God was on America’s side, and with God on her side, there was nothing right

---

<sup>196</sup> Reagan, “Evil Empire Speech.”

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*

and good that America could not achieve. Here, Reagan's famous sunny optimism served him well and made the speech uplifting instead of grim.<sup>198</sup>

### **Immediate Response**

In direct contrast to the speech's tranquil development, the public response following the speech was heated and controversial. The responses from both the public and the media were distinctly polarized between those who hated the speech and those who loved it. Based upon the news clippings included within the archival files, a few newspaper articles did simply report on the speech. This included the *Orlando Sentinel* which printed the speech in its entirety without commentary attached. In contrast, the vast majority gave an opinion of some sort. It is a credit to the White House speechwriting staff that they did not collect only those news articles which presented the "Evil Empire" speech in a favorable light.<sup>199</sup>

The detractors' complaints hinged upon one (or more) of three standard arguments. They bemoaned Reagan as an international relations nightmare, disagreed with Reagan's general philosophical stance, or criticized Reagan's willingness to speak so freely on a religious topic. First, one can understand why the public would be sensitive towards a speech that was so clearly against America's Cold War foe. Many felt that Reagan should have been much more "politically correct," rather than calling the Soviet Union "evil." These detractors included *New York Times* columnist Anthony Lewis who described the speech as "primitive" before complaining, "What must the leaders of Western Europe think of such a speech? ... What confidence can they have in the restraint of an American leader

---

<sup>198</sup> Reagan, "Evil Empire Speech."

<sup>199</sup> Newspaper Article, "Test of President Reagan's Speech," *The Orlando Sentinel*, Mar. 9, 1983, folder "National Association of Evangelicals, Orlando, FL, 3/18/83" boxes 85-86, Office of Speechwriting: Research Office, RRL.

with such an outlook?” Lewis was exactly the type of commentator who viewed the rise of Republican-leaning religious voters with cultural as well as political distaste. William Rusher, publisher of the *National Review*, who cited Lewis’ column, was more conservative and restrained than Lewis in his writing, but he also expressed concerns over the policies Reagan outlined within the speech.<sup>200</sup>

In contrast to those individuals and writers who focused upon the international relations problems, others took issue with the speech on a philosophical level. Harold Berman wrote an article for the May 9, 1983, edition of *Newsweek* calling Reagan self-righteous and not understanding the true nature of evil in his portrayal of the Soviet Union. He went on to question, “Is it President Reagan’s knowledge of how the Soviet system actually operates that causes him to characterize it as evil, or is it his characterization of the system as evil that leads him to imagine how it operates?” Berman’s question is inoffensive if the reader focuses upon his examination of the mental process by which Reagan arrived at his conclusion rather than assuming that Berman was attacking Reagan’s stance. There certainly have been individuals throughout history that have drawn incorrect assumptions based upon faulty reasoning. However, by inserting the word “actually,” Berman was suggesting that Reagan did not understand the Soviet system and thus must have relied upon faulty logic in developing his philosophical position.<sup>201</sup>

Finally, others took issue with Reagan’s distinctly religious and moral tone. An article (cut out without the author’s name or source attached) began with the opening lines,

---

<sup>200</sup> Assorted Newspaper Articles, folder “National Association of Evangelicals, Orlando, FL, 3/18/83” boxes 85-86, Office of Speechwriting: Research Office, RRL.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*

Harold J. Berman, “The Devil and Soviet Russia,” *Newsweek*, May 9, 1983, folder “National Association of Evangelicals, Orlando, FL, 3/18/83 [1 of 3],” box 85, Office of Speechwriting: Research Office, RRL.

President Reagan committed an egregious breach of good taste, if nothing worse, in his speech before the National Association of Evangelicals in Florida – to judge from the reaction of substantial segments of the press. The President – good heavens – publically proclaimed his religious faith.

Other articles referred to the President as “Pastor Reagan” and mocked him for praying for the Soviets’ salvation from darkness. Some religious organizations lauded Reagan’s speech; other groups soundly criticized it, including a synod of Lutheran pastors from the York, Pennsylvania area whose letter opened with, “The undersigned Lutheran pastors take strong exception to President Reagan’s address before the National Association of Evangelicals on March 8, 1983.” The pastors based their disgruntlement upon the belief that Reagan “suggests that his agenda is the only true and moral Christian one” and that “He identifies Communism as ‘the focus of evil in the modern world,’ but the devil is our foe and he appears in many forms.” In a way, the Lutherans were unhappy because Reagan’s speech was not religious enough; Reagan’s words were open for interpretation by listeners because he did not provide a full statement of belief clarifying the religious application of what he said. Also, there was a variety of voices among the religious establishment. Many mainstream religious leaders were involved in the antinuclear and peace movements. They opposed anything that might ratchet up American-Soviet tensions on the grounds that it could cause a nuclear war.<sup>202</sup>

Reagan also received religious criticism from those who were not employed within the religious realm, including the eminent historian, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. Schlesinger, deeply associated with the Kennedy administration and a keeper of the Camelot image, was a Democratic Party intellectual and no friend to Reagan or the GOP. He rang a warning bell,

---

<sup>202</sup> Assorted Newspaper Articles, folder “National Association of Evangelicals, Orlando, FL, 3/18/83,” boxes 85-86, Office of Speechwriting: Research Office, RRL. Letter, York District Central Pennsylvania Synod Lutheran Church in America to Edwin Meese, Mar. 14, 1983, ID # 073173-End, SP 729, WHORM Subject File, RRL.

accusing Reagan of turning the Cold War into a “holy war” in his article, “Pretension in the Presidential Pulpit.” Schlesinger wrote that he hoped Reagan was kidding in describing the Cold War as a conflict between atheism and religion rather than totalitarianism and democracy. Schlesinger’s scathing criticism included the following remarks:

Mr. Reagan’s God

Even in the U.S. agnostics and atheists are not yet second-class citizens.

Any person who deludes himself into supposing he has special access to absolute truth, whether as revealed by Mark or Mohammed, Marx or Mao, or any other religious or secular prophet, can go about suppressing dissent and persecuting heresy with clear conscience.

Inordinate self-righteousness, the conviction that one is the appointed partner of the Almighty, is a perilous thing.

I suppose the president meant only “the phenomenon of evil” but succumbed to the pretentiousness of his speechwriters.

Mr. Reagan’s religion ... is peculiarly and indeed repellently self-serving.

Given Schlesinger’s historical support of the Kennedy family, one should not be surprised that he was not an admirer of Ronald Reagan. Schlesinger’s article would have appealed to different segments of the American population, but it greatly angered members of the religious community, including Dr. Edward Pauley, provost of the International Christian Graduate University, who wrote a response paper to Schlesinger’s article and submitted it to the *Wall Street Journal* for publication.<sup>203</sup>

In addition to the detractors, there was another group of people who were not pleased with Reagan’s speech – the Soviets. One individual, who had a greater authority than

---

<sup>203</sup> Assorted Newspaper Articles, folder “National Association of Evangelicals, Orlando, FL, 3/18/83,” boxes 85-86, Office of Speechwriting: Research Office, RRL.

Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., “Pretension in the Presidential Pulpit,” *The Wall Street Journal*, Mar. 17, 1983, folder “National Association of Evangelicals, Orlando, FL, 3/18/83 [1 of 3],” box 85, Office of Speechwriting: Research Office, RRL.

Edward H. Pauley, “A Response to ‘Pretension in the Presidential Pulpit’ an Article by Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.,” ID#135053, SP 729, WHORM Subject File.

Schlesinger to critique Reagan's religious standpoint, and did so, was the Patriarch of Moscow who wrote an open letter to the President that was published in the *New York Times*. The Patriarch's letter was both political and religious, but mostly religious. He criticized Reagan for entering the religious arena, disapproved of Reagan's application of his faith in condemning the Soviet Union, and was quite angry at Reagan's treatment of the Soviet Union in general. The Patriarch stated, "It is with bitterness and grief in my heart that I read your belligerent calls which sow the seeds of hatred and hostility against my motherland and threaten peace all over the world." In general, the Patriarch's letter carried a distinct "How dare you?!" tone. Considering the Russian Orthodox Church's complex relationship with the Soviet regime, the Patriarch would logically be sensitive to the dictates of Party government.<sup>204</sup>

That tone is consistent with all of the Soviet responses included within the archival material. In reality, many Soviets held a less than favorable view of Reagan long before the "Evil Empire" speech and this sentiment continued throughout his administration. Among other things, in June 1981, Leonid Brezhnev stated, ". . . things have gone so far that high-ranking representatives of the U.S. Administration do not disdain to spread open fabrications in the desire to distort and discredit the USSR's policy." In August 1982, Brezhnev and Erich Honecker (leader of the German Democratic Republic), relayed that, "The U.S. Administration has all but proclaimed a 'crusade' against the socialist community." In January 1984, the *Washington Post* reported that the Soviet government news agency said that "Reagan had resorted to blasphemy, cynicism, lies and ambiguity in his State of the Union address." These are merely a few of the accusations the Soviets leveled against

---

<sup>204</sup> "An Open Letter, To: His Excellency, Mr. Ronald Wilson Reagan, From: His Holiness Pimen, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia," *New York Times*, Apr. 3, 1983, SP 729, WHORM Subject File, RRL.

Reagan. They also accused him of desiring to start a nuclear war, of constantly lying in his public addresses, and of utilizing propaganda to influence international opinion. These were cards frequently played against Reagan. The anti-nuclear movement was very prominent at the time. There were intimations that Reagan's religion had apocalyptic implications, suggesting that he might even be willing to countenance a nuclear war. This would become a far less effective avenue of political attack after Reagan's disarmament approach to Mikhail Gorbachev in Reykjavik, Iceland. But that was three years away.<sup>205</sup>

Neither Reagan nor those in his administration were fools. They knew they would face harsh criticism for the speech because its content was not a pleasant stroll through the park nor was it "politically correct." They also knew that portions of the speech would be taken out of context, a point expertly explained in William Willoughby's article in the *Washington Times Magazine*:

Unfortunately, by the time someone who wasn't here [in Orlando], who doesn't know the difference between an evangelical and an evangelist, and quite obviously does not know the significance of the strength of the 45-million-member evangelical religious force in this country, re-runs your story through his rusty, trusty typewriter, much of the impact of the story is lost. You read your own story in the newspaper and wonder where it came from.

Unless one was willing to read the speech in its entirety and make an attempt at understanding its context, an individual would quite easily draw the incorrect conclusion about what Reagan had said and thereby how it applied to world events. Reagan and his staff were very much aware of the criticism they were facing, and even acknowledged this reality in the form letter sent to some of the individuals writing in support of the speech. The letter read,

I appreciate your support for my speech before the 41<sup>st</sup> Annual Convention of the National Association of Evangelicals. *I was not surprised that the "other*

---

<sup>205</sup> Assorted articles and memos, ID # 073173-End, SP 729, WHORM Subject File, RRL.

*side” had so much to say about my talk.* As usual, the “knee jerk” reaction was well oiled and functioned on cue! Frankly, I think they ought to thank God that we live in a country where the clergy can assemble freely and by choice listen to a speech by their President.

In a way, Reagan’s thank you note was a continuation of his speech. He used the opportunity to once again point out a flaw in the Soviet system and how the same scenario was quite different within the United States.<sup>206</sup>

As evidenced by the thank you note above, not everyone was unhappy with the speech. Reagan’s critics were balanced out by his approvers. These lines of approval and encouragement included:

That was a wonderful and courageous thing for you to do . . . Mr. President, thank God for you.

Congratulations on your marvelous speech in Orlando, Florida, on March 8<sup>th</sup>! It was truly a mighty sermon, based on the spiritual and moral principles on which our great Nation was built.

God has used you in a very unique way not seen before. Your message of March 8<sup>th</sup> in Orlando has shaken the Communist world . . . Your speaking of the Soviet Union as an “evil empire” has actually amplified its evil before all mankind.

Please keep doing what you are doing. We are all behind you. We got the Devil on the run. I hear he is tired after the speech you gave down in Florida.<sup>207</sup>

---

<sup>206</sup> William Willoughby, “Reagan’s Religious Savvy,” *The Washington Times Magazine*, Mar. 16, 1983, folder “ID # 073173-End,” SP 729, WHORM Subject File, RRL.

Letter, President Reagan to George Champion, Jr., Mar. 17, 1983, folder “ID # 073173-End,” SP 729, WHORM Subject File, RRL.

<sup>207</sup> Letter, President Reagan to George Champion, Jr., Mar. 17, 1983, folder “ID # 073173-End,” SP 729, WHORM Subject File, RRL.

Letter, Archbishop Joseph Tawil to President Reagan, Mar. 10, 1983, ID # 135062, SP 729, WHORM Subject File, RRL.

Open Letter to the President, Carl McIntire to President Reagan, Apr. 11, 1983, ID # 136960, SP 729, WHORM Subject File, RRL.

Letter, Paul Troutman to President Reagan, Apr. 19, 1983, folder “ID # 073173-End,” SP 729, WHORM Subject File, RRL.

In addition to the positive letters, there were also news articles which congratulated the President on his religious savvy and willingness to speak plainly. William Willoughby's article stated, "I am quite impressed with the theological prowess of the man who sits in the Oval Office." *The Washington Times* also included an article titled, "Telling the Simple Truth about the Soviets," which applauded Reagan's willingness to expose the Soviet system for what it was without glossing over any unseemly aspects. Other articles from papers including the *Orlando Sentinel* and various student-run university newspapers also ran positive editorial columns and articles on the speech.<sup>208</sup>

Examining the responses to the Evil Empire speech should create few surprises for anyone at all familiar with the late Cold War era. It is logical that the response would be polarized because America was not, and is not, a politically unified country. The country's division is easily seen in Reagan's approval ratings from March 1983. From March 11 to 14, Reagan had a 41% approval rating, 49% disapproval rating, and 10% no opinion rating. Those percentiles held steady within a seven point range until the fall election when Reagan's approval rating improved to 53%. It is also understandably how and/or why the speech would be taken out of context by various individuals and media outlets. That practice also has not changed. Reagan went on to handily win re-election in 1984, despite issuing such a politically-charged and controversial speech in the year before an election.<sup>209</sup>

---

<sup>208</sup> William Willoughby, "Reagan's Religious Savvy," *The Washington Times Magazine*, Mar. 16, 1983, folder "ID # 073173-End," SP 729, WHORM Subject File, RRL.

Jeffrey Hart, "Telling the Simple Truth about the Soviets," *The Washington Times*, Mar. 23, 1983, folder "National Association of Evangelicals, Orlando, FL, 3/18/83 [1 of 3]," box 85, Office of Speechwriting: Research Office, RRL.

Assorted Articles, folder "National Association of Evangelicals, Orlando, FL, 3/18/83 [1 of 3]," box 85, Office of Speechwriting: Research Office, RRL.

Assorted Articles, folder "ID # 073173-End," SP 729, WHORM Subject File, RRL.

<sup>209</sup> "Job Performance Ratings for President Reagan, 01/20/1989-01/20/1989, Accessed Jan. 5, 2012. Available at [http://webapps.ropercenter.uconn.edu/CFIDE/roper/presidential/webroot/presidential\\_rating.cfm#.TzL93IEbFlc](http://webapps.ropercenter.uconn.edu/CFIDE/roper/presidential/webroot/presidential_rating.cfm#.TzL93IEbFlc)

## Conclusion

The “Evil Empire Speech” clearly defines Reagan’s negative views of Communism, but it also reveals his belief that the best way for America to defeat Communism and win the Cold War was to maintain its historic, faith-based foundation. It was a case of textual resistance to the dominant trend that held the view that only by modifying or abandoning those values could the United States truly progress in the modern world. Military defense and political negotiations would play their necessary and valuable roles as well; however, by maintaining its values, America could continue as the historic “city on a hill,” whose beacon of hope and freedom would shine as an example in the darkest corners of the globe. The President understood that the nation was not ready to lay aside those time-honored ideas. Reagan was unwilling to stand idly by and allow those foundations to be eroded in the name of secularism and political correctness. He knew his beliefs; he stood by them; and he knew that the NAE was the perfect group to stand alongside him.

In addition to Reagan’s views on Communism, this chapter reveals two important points about American society. First, it provides a prime example of how a sound bite culture can completely change the public’s perception of a speech. Sound bites lack context. The “Evil Empire Speech” is popularly understood as anti-Communist speech when its focus is really upon Reagan’s view of the United States’ moral condition. Second, this chapter exhibits the important role that religion plays in American politics. One of the primary reasons why Reagan’s team accepted the invitation was the powerful evangelical voting base. His message matched his audience and helped solidify the NAE’s support in advance of the 1984 election. This chapter serves as a reminder that readers must lay aside preconceived ideas and understand the underlying motivations of a speech before drawing conclusions.

**Chapter 3: George H. W. Bush on Communism**  
**“Beyond Containment: Texas A&M Commencement Address”**  
**May 12, 1989**

**Introduction**

In contrast to President Carter, George H. W. Bush was a well-known figure both within the United States and overseas before he occupied the White House. As Ronald Reagan’s Vice-President and in conjunction with his other political positions, Bush had ample opportunity to travel abroad, meet with foreign officials, and establish professional relationships. These relationships, particularly the one created with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, would prove most useful during Bush’s four years in the Oval Office, but only time would reveal the two leaders’ ability or inability to work together.

Phone conversations between the White House and West German officials shed light on the level of caution with which President Bush approached his diplomatic relationship with the Soviet leader. On February 9, 1989, Bush had a phone conversation with Wolfgang Schäuble, Minister for Special Tasks and Head of the Chancellery in West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl’s cabinet, and soon to become Kohl’s Minister of the Interior. The President related that “each time Gorbachev makes a forthcoming, interesting speech, it was all the more important for the Alliance to stay together.” Also, one may well speculate on what exactly qualified as an “interesting” speech, but Bush was keeping with other U.S. officials who watched with caution Gorbachev’s propensity towards “grand gestures” during public appearances. Furthermore, one can appreciate the Cold War stance of the United States and its European allies, particularly West Germany, to remain unified in opposition to Soviet policies in Central and Eastern Europe and in other parts of the world. This unity concept was at the very heart of foreign policy during the Cold War. It was always

especially important in the case of West Germany, since there was a record of Soviet attempts to pry the Federal Democratic Republic away from NATO by dangling the prospect of unification with the German Democratic Republic in exchange for neutrality.<sup>210</sup>

Bush continued the conversation, saying, “So we are in a thoughtful mood here in Washington” and that he was “sure Gorbachev understood this and was willing to wait until the United States was ready to proceed.” Bush repeated this position in a later phone conversation with FDR President Weizsaecker, in which Bush reiterated that he believed “it was important to review policy carefully before moving ahead” and that “Gorbachev understood this.” These statements are near replicas of statements President Bush made as President-elect in December 1988. When asked by a member of the press, “What conditions would have to be met for you to have a summit with Gorbachev and do you expect to have one in 1989?” Bush’s answer included the following assertion:

There is no expectation that we will or won’t. I mean it just simply has not been discussed . . . I don’t want to send out a signal that looks – that singles - signals recalcitrance or unwillingness to -to think anew. Or unwillingness to -to try to build on what clearly has been progress in a relationship. But I don’t want to send out the other signal, which is one of being – acting hastily or feeling compelled to act very quickly before we have formulated our plans. And I honestly believe, from a conversation I had with General Secretary Gorbachev, that they do understand that.

Bush’s cautious rationale is understandable and was in keeping with his image as a thoughtful leader, one who was not prone to rush into a decision. His expressed determination to not undermine the diplomatic accomplishments of his predecessors is likewise admirable. Since transcripts of the President’s phone conversations with Gorbachev are currently unavailable, one must for the present take Bush at his word that he believed Gorbachev was accepting and understanding of the President’s actions. And, if one takes

---

<sup>210</sup> Phone Conversation, The President and Minister Wolfgang Schaeuble, Feb. 9, 1989. Accessed Dec. 30, 2011. Available at: [http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/pdfs/memcons\\_telcons/1989-02-09--Schaeuble.pdf](http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/pdfs/memcons_telcons/1989-02-09--Schaeuble.pdf).

social nuances into account, this belief may be all the more plausible because, in Russian culture, one does not usually greet a stranger with a big smile. Smiles are reserved for friends. A new person must wait to establish a relationship, and then a smile will be received. For this reason, many Russians view Americans as insincere because Americans will smile at anyone whether they have a relationship with that person or not. Thus, Bush's period of waiting, talking, listening, and consulting with international friends and intermediaries, would allow both Bush and Gorbachev to size up the other man before entering into political negotiations.<sup>211</sup>

Bush appeared comfortable with his decision to take his time in developing direct relations with the Soviet Union, at least rhetorically. In contrast, many politicians and members of the media, loudly complained that the President was "moving too slowly," a point that the President recognized in his conversation with Weizsaecker. The press wanted him to be more "Reaganesque" and use the bully pulpit to establish national policy. However, Bush was not a man to be intimidated, nor was he a political or military ignoramus. He knew better than to underestimate Gorbachev, which is why he cautioned President Weizsaecker that America and its allies could not allow "Gorbachev to win a propaganda offensive. We must be sensitive to our local public opinion, but also must stay together and not be naïve." Gorbachev's rise to power represented a changing of the Soviet guard from the old to the new. Although the West did perceive him as more open than his predecessors, he was a man who could not and should not be underestimated. Gorbachev was dedicated to the glory and strength of the Soviet Union and, as President Weizsaecker

---

<sup>211</sup> Phone Conversation, The President and President Richard von Weizsaecker, Feb. 24, 1989. Accessed Dec. 30, 2011. Available at: [http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/pdfs/memcons\\_telcons/1989-02-24--von%20Weizsaecker.pdf](http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/pdfs/memcons_telcons/1989-02-24--von%20Weizsaecker.pdf).

Robert Pear, "U.S. Plays Down Gorbachev Meeting," *New York Times*, Nov. 27, 1988.

noted, “Gorbachev was not seeking to do the West any favors.” If the Soviet leadership viewed Gorbachev as being too conciliatory to the Western powers, his time in office would likely come to an abrupt end.<sup>212</sup>

Bush’s and Gorbachev’s relationship may have begun at a slower rate than members of the public and political spheres might have desired, but once Gorbachev knew where President Bush stood in relation to the Soviet Union, the two men’s relationship did progress. It developed into a working relationship built upon mutual respect. A key component of establishing the Bush administration’s foreign policy was built through public rhetoric. Private conversations between leaders were arguably more likely to produce actual results, but such conversations would not provide reassurance or information to the public. The President needed to proclaim his goals publicly as well. Bush lacked the robust oratorical skills of his predecessor; however, his rhetoric did not lack for strategic planning, organization, and content. Bush wanted to usher in a new era of Soviet-American relations by moving beyond the 1950s doctrine of Containment. Rather than attempt to box the Soviet Union in, as had been the contingent Containment point for decades, the President wanted to foster the changes Gorbachev’s regime had established and pave the way for the new Soviet Union to participate with the international community. To do this, the nation and the world had to understand President Bush’s ideology.

Bush and his team developed a plan for a set of four key addresses in the spring of 1989 in which the President would outline his foreign policy plans. Originally all four

---

<sup>212</sup> Phone Conversation, The President and President Richard von Weizsaecker, Feb. 24, 1989. Accessed Dec. 30, 2011. Available at: [http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/pdfs/memcons\\_telcons/1989-02-24--von%20Weizsaecker.pdf](http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/pdfs/memcons_telcons/1989-02-24--von%20Weizsaecker.pdf)

“Remarks by Bush and Tower at News Conference in Capital,” *New York Times*, Dec. 17, 1988. Christopher Maynard, *Out of the Shadow: George H. W. Bush and the End of the Cold War* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2008), 2.

speeches were to be commencement addresses. However, the administration moved up the first speech due to a historic agreement between the Polish government and Solidarity, the first independent trade union behind the Iron Curtain. Bush's team decided that the President would give a speech on Eastern European policy in Hamtramck, Michigan, which had contained a large population of Polish-Americans. This speech received thorough coverage in Europe and the Soviet Union, but relatively little media attention in the United States since the White House did little advance work with the press. The second speech, examined within this chapter, was the Commencement Address at Texas A&M University, which would "deliver a 'world view' address outlining the broad results of his [the President's] policy review process." The third, the Commencement Address at Boston University nine days later, would focus upon U.S.-Soviet relations. The fourth, the Coast Guard Academy Commencement Address scheduled only two days before the President's European tour and NATO Summit, would highlight America's relationship with its international allies. The President would then return to Washington and deliver an address to the American people from the Oval Office summarizing his trip and successes. Bush's team crafted the Texas A&M Commencement Address (hereafter referred to as the "Beyond Containment" speech) to publicly establish the President's Soviet foreign policy (despite the fact that the speech was not televised) and to open the door to new relations between the Soviet Union and United States. This speech was how Bush and his team decided to confront the challenges and criticisms of the time.<sup>213</sup>

---

<sup>213</sup> Memo, Marlin Fitzwater to Governor Sununu and General Scowcroft, May 1, 1989, folder "Texas A&M 5/12/89 [3]," OA 8489, Office of Speechwriting – Speech File Backup, GBL. Maynard, 18-20. Speech, Release Copy, Apr. 17, 1989, folder "Texas A&M [University], 5/12/89, OA 02775," OA13486-005, White house Office of Speechwriting, Speech File Draft Files – Chronological File, GBL.

## Development

President Bush's appearance at the Texas A&M Commencement was made possible by an invitation sent on February 27, 1989, from President of Texas A&M University, William Mobley. Mobley invited President Bush to speak at any of three commencements which the university would be holding from May 12 to 13. This invitation would not have been completely unexpected since new Presidents are frequently asked to speak at university commencements and Bush, then the Vice-President, had served as the commencement speaker at Texas A&M in 1984. Moreover, Bush had a familiar relationship with Texas A&M, which would ultimately house his Presidential Library. Perhaps the only surprise within the invitation is its proximity to the commencement date. Given a President's schedule, two month's notice does not provide leeway on the calendar. Yet the lateness did not appear to cause a problem for the White House, for Joseph Hagin II, President Bush's assistant for Appointments and Scheduling, confirmed the President's availability, along with the university's responsibility for the costs associated with the physical facility requirements of a presidential appearance, on April 12.<sup>214</sup>

President Bush had some historic connection to Texas A&M due to his previous speaking engagement, but the speechwriting staff still did extensive research in preparation for the President's visit. The archival material makes it clear that the Bush team wanted to incorporate personal touches in the speech. It was not merely a policy speech; it was a presidential speech given as the commencement address at a university steeped in unique tradition. The research files included Texas A&M information pamphlets in addition to staff

---

<sup>214</sup> Letter, William H. Mobley to The Honorable George Bush, Feb. 27, 1989, folder "Texas A&M 5/12/89 [2]," OA 8489, Office of Speechwriting – Speech File Backup, GBL.  
Letter, Joseph W. Hagin II to Dr. Mobley, Apr. 12, 1989, folder "Texas A&M 5/12/89 [2]," OA 8489, Office of Speechwriting – Speech File Backup, GBL.

notes outlining multiple important facts. The team highlighted key locations on campus, like the tree-lined Military Walk and the Memorial Student Center which was originally dedicated to Aggies who had died in World War I and World War II (and later expanded to memorialize Aggies who died in all wars, present, and future). The research explained various university traditions, including burying the university mascot with a “perfect view of the [football] scoreboard,” building the world’s biggest bonfire before the football game versus the University of Texas, firing of a canon when the football team scores signaling the moment for everyone to kiss his or her date, the 12<sup>th</sup> Man tradition of students standing during the entire football game as a “gesture of loyalty and readiness for duty,” and saying “Howdy, Gig ‘em Aggies.” The notes also included notable sports facts (including two Olympic medal-winning alumni), famous professors (including Nobel prize winners), and famous graduates (including a White House correspondent for *Newsweek* and a pilot for Air Force One).

Several of these A&M tropes would be included within the final speech, giving it a distinct “Aggie” touch despite its serious content. These suggestions also provided ample fodder for the development of potential humorous one-liners, including:

The Air Force One pilot who flew us here, Danny Barr, is a Texas A&M graduate. When most pilots are preparing to land, they radio to the tower that they’re on their final approach – but Danny hollers “Howdy, Gig ‘Em Aggies.”

I know you have a tradition of standing throughout entire football games. My speeches seem to have the exact opposite effect on audiences.

It’s a good thing your school has the largest college of veterinary medicine in the country. Someone told me that this time of year there are a lot of party animals who need treatment.

None of the statements included above were incorporated into the final speech.<sup>215</sup>

On a more serious note, a new policy statement concerning the Soviet Union had the potential for sparking a heated debate within the young presidential administration, but the staff files do not indicate that such a debate took place. Given Bush's statements that the administration was thinking over its policy, it is certain that there were interdepartmental discussions on the subject. The speech files show non-volatile give-and-take between the various White House branches, but especially among the National Security Council members who played a pivotal role in developing the Bush administration's entire foreign policy. The NSC was also closely involved in developing a significant portion of the ideas within the speech. The White House speechwriting staff derived several key points from a prepared NSC document titled "Western Europe Speech." However, there was another reason for the NSC's attentive participation in the speech which preceded "Beyond Containment." The President's previous address on Eastern Europe revealed a sharp disagreement between the NSC and the White House Office of Speechwriting. Both entities felt that they should be the ones responsible for writing the President's national security policy speeches. Even though the two sides reached a compromise, it was an uneasy compromise that left the NSC chaffing over the "negative impact on the quality of many of the President's foreign policy speeches."<sup>216</sup>

Even though the Office of Speechwriting remained officially in command, the NSC was still intimately involved in the process. A memo from Robert D. Blackwill, who had

---

<sup>215</sup> Memo, Stephanie Blessey to Mark Davis and Christina Martin, May 3, 1989, folder "Texas A&M 5/12/89 [1]," OA 6263, Office of Speechwriting – Speech File Backup, GBL.

Memo, Doug Gamble to Chris Winston, May 5, 1989, folder "Texas A&M 5/12/89 [1]," OA 6263, Office of Speechwriting – Speech File Backup, GBL.

<sup>216</sup> "Western Europe Speech," Apr. 10, 1989, folder "Texas A&M 5/12/89 [1]," OA 8489, Office of Speechwriting – Speech File Backup, GBL.  
Maynard, 19.

held multiple positions under the Reagan administration and was one of the Special Assistants to the President for National Security Affairs, as well as the Senior Director for European and Soviet Affairs under President Bush, indicates that no less than nine NSC members were involved in approving the speech. These nine included General Brent Scowcroft's Legal Adviser Nick Rostow, Senior Director of Legislative Affairs Virginia "Ginny" Lampley, and Special Assistants Richard Haass, Deane Hoffman, and Arnold Kanter. Given the number of NSC members involved and considering Secretary of State James Baker's claim to not "remember any extended period of time when someone in the National Security cluster wasn't at someone else's throat," most likely there were heated exchanges between NSC members relating to the speech that the archives do not reveal. Regardless, according to the Blackwill memo, comments were to be returned to Philip Zelikow, also a member of the National Security Council, who acted as liaison with the White House Speechwriting Office. Such a thorough review from the NSC is a clear indication of the importance the administration put upon this speech and the future impact it would have upon international relations. So many potential editors would also provide ample opportunity for discussion and debate, but the NSC files open for research show no indication of in-fighting. The reviewers simply did their job – reviewing the speech and providing edits and comments.<sup>217</sup>

Yet the marked up drafts contain only moderate edits. Paragraphs and individual lines were crossed out, suggested language was inserted, and side notes for improvement stand out, but the majority of the speech was left intact, even on the speech's first version

---

<sup>217</sup> Memo, Robert D. Blackwill to Miller, Haas, Jackson, Pacelli, Hoffman, Kanter, Rodman, Rostow, and Lampley, May 8, 1989, folder "Texas A&M Commencement Address, College Station, Texas, 5/12/89," Document Range: 034353SS-134854, SP 557, WHORM Subject File, GBL. Maynard, 5.

from May 5. Between the three marked up copies of that particular draft, only five paragraphs were crossed out in their entirety (this does not include individual lines or words that were crossed out). At this point, the speech was ten pages in length, double-spaced. The five paragraphs made up less than 20% of the speech. Such editorial remarks were minute in comparison with other speeches. As one would logically assume based upon this information, even with the unedited language changing with the natural progression of writing so common with speechwriters, a cursory reading of the speech's first version provides clear parallels to the final speech (version one is on the left; the final version is on the right):

And for those of you who are Democrats, there is no truth to the rumor that [Senator] Phil Gramm and I will later participate in an Elephant Walk.

Wise men . . . Truman and Eisenhower, Vandenberg and Rayburn . . . Acheson, Marshall and Dulles, crafted a strategy of containment. They believed that the Soviet Union, denied the easy course of external expansion, would ultimately have to face up to the contradictions of its inefficient, repressive and inhumane system. And they were right.

And they must take bold steps. I call on the Soviets to:

. . . reduce Soviet forces to smaller and less threatening levels, until they are in proportion to their legitimate security needs.

And for those of you who are Democrats, there is not truth to the rumor that [Senator] Phil Gramm and I are ready to take our elephant walk.

Wise men – Truman and Eisenhower, Vandenberg and Rayburn, Marshall, Acheson, and Kennan – crafted the strategy of containment. They believed that the Soviet Union, denied the easy course of expansion, would turn inward and address the contradictions of its inefficient, repressive, and inhumane system. And they were right – the Soviet Union is now publicly facing this hard reality.

But the fulfillment of this vision requires the Soviet Union to take positive steps, including:

. . . reduce Soviet forces . . . They should cut their forces to less threatening levels, in proportion to their legitimate security needs.

We are entering a new age today because this strategy [containment] works. This is no mere propaganda victory. Our strategy works because our principles, values and institutions work. The superiority of democratic capitalism over stagnant socialism is an idea tested by reality, a truth that can no longer be credibly denied.

The Soviets must take a bold step and adhere to their [sic] obligation that dates from the final days of World War Two to permit self-determination for the nations of East-Central Europe. Moscow must authoritatively renounce the long-standing policy known as “The Brezhnev Doctrine.”

They must take a bold step, and settle regional disputes around the world.

They must take a bold step and institutionalize political pluralism and respect for human rights.

The United States, of course, will continue to seek verifiable arms-control agreements with the Soviet Union and its allies.

A new breeze is blowing.

Paragraphs and ideas were deleted and added as the speech progressed through the nine circulated versions, but the core message and most of the main points remained. Most importantly, the tone remained consistent. Bush did not expound upon the Soviet Union’s failures or the dangers it posed; instead, he focused upon the positive potential for the future.

Containment worked. Containment worked because our democratic principles and institutions and values are sound and always have been. It worked because our alliances were, and are, strong and because the superiority of free societies and free markets over stagnant socialism is undeniable.

Second, adhere to the Soviet obligation, promised in the final days of World War II, to support self-determination for all the nations of Eastern Europe and Central Europe. And this requires specific abandonment of the Brezhnev doctrine.

And third, work with the West in positive, practical – not merely rhetorical – steps toward diplomatic solution to these regional disputes around the world.

And fourth, achieve a lasting political pluralism and respect for human rights.

We seek verifiable, stabilizing arms control and arms reduction agreements with the Soviet Union and its allies.

Make no mistake, a new breeze is blowing across the steppes and the cities of the Soviet Union

At the same time, his call to the Soviet leadership carried a resolute voice, a determination that these changes must occur.<sup>218</sup>

But Bush could not cause these changes to happen within the Soviet system. They had to be desired and created by the Soviet leadership. There was great hope among Western nations for the success of Gorbachev's reforms, and the United States kept a close watch on the Soviet government. This observation began long before Bush gained the presidency, but Bush's team utilized both old and new data in its analysis. Many of Bush's key officials had also worked under President Reagan, which meant that they brought their experience and files with them to the new administration. For example, Philip Zelikow's files included a 1987 report from the Directorate of Intelligence titled, "Gorbachev and the Military: Managing National Security Policy." This report included assessments of everything from information concerning the replacement of government officials to summaries of Soviet policies and activities to assumptions regarding the probable outcome of Gorbachev's various actions. The Speechwriting Office files revealed a translated copy of a key Gorbachev speech concerning government elections and the necessity of listening to the voice of the people. The speechwriters needed to stay up to date on the latest political developments as well to aid the speechwriting process. In examining the "Beyond Containment" speech, one must remember that the speechwriters had no precedent upon

---

<sup>218</sup> Speech Drafts, Version One, May 5, 1989, folder "Texas A&M 5/12/89 [2-3]," OA 8489, Office of Speechwriting – Speech File Backup, GBL.

George Bush, "Remarks at the Texas A&M University Commencement Ceremony in College Station," May 12, 1989. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=17022> [hereafter noted as Bush, "Beyond Containment"].

which to draw. The writers, along with the President, were creating history by establishing a change in diplomatic policy.<sup>219</sup>

## **Analysis**

“Beyond Containment” was by definition a commencement address, but it was also an international policy speech. The Bush team did not want to focus upon one audience to the detriment of the other. Thus, the speech required a blending of the familial and the formal, which was no easy task for the speechwriting staff or the President as the deliverer. The speech possessed sub-sections, but its categorical divisions did not fall in chronological order. If one attempts to analyze the speech only by the text’s chronological order, the speech appears as a series of mini-themes each two to five paragraphs in length. This design allowed the President to fit a great deal of material into a small space, smoothly transitioning from one point to the next in a conversational style, while still giving him time to provide a well-defined argument. In contrast, if one analyzes the speech as a whole, one can see that the President’s message was divided into three timeframes – the past, the present, and the future. Regardless of the methodological approach, when reading the speech, one immediately recognizes President Bush’s balanced tone, his desire to communicate to his audience the importance of the foreign policy he was putting forth, and the impact it would have on each of their lives. To Bush, Containment had served its historical purpose. It was time to take specific steps in the present moment to usher in a new era with new international goals and new dreams for every American’s future.

---

<sup>219</sup> “Gorbachev and the Military: Managing National Security Policy,” Oct. 1987, folder “File 51, Implication of Economic Decline for Soviet Security Policy,” OA/ID CF00320-015, National Security Council – Philip D. Zelikow Subject Files, GBL.  
Gorbachev’s Closing Speech at 24 Apr CPSU Plenum, Apr. 27, 1989, folder “Texas A&M 5/12/89 [1],” OA 6263, Office of Speechwriting – Speech File Backup, GBL.

**The Familial (Part 1):**

As is common in presidential speeches, President Bush opened his “Beyond Containment” speech by greeting and thanking the requisite university officials and political representatives. Unlike many speeches, these opening greetings were not part of the official speech, nor were they composed by the speechwriting staff headed by Mark Davis. The observation leads to the conclusion that President Bush developed the opening lines himself, most likely in an impromptu or semi-impromptu nature. The repetitiveness of the opening lines further supports this assumption of spontaneity. The President said, “Thank you, Governor. Thank you all very much for that welcome. Good luck, good luck to you. Thank you, ladies and gentlemen, thank you all.” The President was clearly thanking the audience for the welcoming applause and wishing the graduates well as they entered the next phase of their life.<sup>220</sup>

Bush included even more greetings that do not exist within the speech drafts. In total, he added four paragraphs of introductory material. This material primarily highlighted and thanked key political officials, including Texas Governor Bill Clements, Texas’ first Republican governor since Reconstruction; Senator Phil Gramm, a Democrat-turned-Republican and long-time member of the Senate Budget Committee; and Congressman Joe Barton, a Republican who ran for, won, and still holds Phil Gramm’s vacated seat in the U.S. House of Representatives and whose district included College Station Texas, the home of Texas A&M. These three men’s presence at a presidential speech makes sense since they were all from the same political party as the President and all represented many of those present at the address. Furthermore, Bush himself had once served as a Congressman from

---

<sup>220</sup> Bush, “Beyond Containment.”

Texas (1967-1971), Senator Gramm had been on the faculty at Texas A&M, and Representative Barton had been a student at Texas A&M.<sup>221</sup>

Recognizing these men's presence was a matter of political etiquette; including friendly and humorous remarks was a sign of camaraderie. Bush's personal remarks highlighted Senator Gramm, a locally popular politician. Given that Gramm represented Texas in the Senate beginning in 1984, he and Bush knew each other on a political level. Granted, it is unlikely, given the constraints upon the Vice-President's time and the fact that the Vice-President rarely presides over the Senate, that he would maintain close ties with all 100 Senators. On the other hand, Gramm's expertise as an economist and his position on the Senate Budget Committee would have greatly increased his prominence on the political radar. Within "Beyond Containment," Bush related a Gramm quote that the Senator had given as an economics lesson to those in Congress. Bush followed this by teasing, "It's hard to be humble" – a line from a famous country song which ushered in a round of laughter from the audience.<sup>222</sup>

Bush extemporaneously highlighted two other individuals who were present for his speech – Fred McClure and Lieutenant Colonel Dan Barr. These gentlemen were not elected officials; they were Aggies with whom the President interacted on a regular basis. Fred McClure was President Bush's Assistant on Legislative Affairs or, as President Bush described him, the President's "day-to-day inside Aggie" who worked with the President "every minute of the day on matters affecting the legislative interests of this country." Where Fred McClure would have a level of public notoriety, Lieutenant Colonel Dan Barr

---

<sup>221</sup> Bush, "Beyond Containment."

Memo, Stephanie Blessey to Mark Davis and Christina Martin, May 3, 1989, folder "Texas A&M 5/12/89," OA 6263, Office of Speechwriting – Speech File Backup, GBL.

<sup>222</sup> Bush, "Beyond Containment."

would have maintained a certain level of anonymity as one of the President's pilots on Air Force One. However, the inclusion of Barr within the speech can be traced to the speech's developmental stages with Doug Gamble's brief list of Aggie-related quotables. Gamble suggested that the President highlight Air Force One pilot Danny Barr and his use of "Howdy, Gig 'em Aggies" when on his final approach. Whether or not Barr actually radioed the famous Texas A&M greeting to the control towers on a regular basis is a point of conjecture, but it would have made for a moment of humorous rhetoric and undoubtedly received a vibrant response from the Texas A&M audience. McClure and Barr were also included within the staff research notes under "Famous Graduates" of Texas A&M. "Danny Barr" is listed as "pilot for Air Force 1" and "Fred McClure" is listed as "1<sup>st</sup> black student body President at Texas A&M." The President was playing to his audience by showing his administration's connections to the university and, given the relaxed nature of the rhetoric, the President wanted this introductory time to be decidedly personal.<sup>223</sup>

President Bush then entered into his prepared text, starting with "But I am delighted to be back among my fellow Texans and friends." Although President Bush possessed a lengthy New England heritage, he made a political and financial name for himself in Texas. Bush then continued with one more line especially for his Texas A&M audience: "And for those of you who are Democrats, there is no truth to the rumor that Phil Gramm and I are ready to take our elephant walk." A puzzling term to those not part of the Texas A&M community, the Elephant Walk was noted within the White House research notes as being explained on "p. 5 [of the] Visitor's Guide." Although the Visitor's Guide was not included

---

<sup>223</sup> Memo, Doug Gamble to Chris Winston, May 5, 1989, folder "Texas A&M 5/12/89 [1]," OA 6263, Office of Speechwriting – Speech File Backup, GBL.  
Memo, Stephanie Blessey to Mark Davis and Christina Martin, May 3, 1989, folder "Texas A&M 5/12/89," OA 6263, Office of Speechwriting – Speech File Backup, GBL.

within the archival files, a quick search on the Texas A&M University website provides an explanation. The Elephant Walk, like many Aggie activities, has a rich history and dates back to the class of 1926, which took a final stroll around the campus with each student holding the shoulder of the student in front of him. An observer noted that the lines of students “looked like elephants, about to die” and thus the name and tradition were born. The Elephant Walk changed with the passing of time and became a tradition “reserved for seniors that takes place each year before the last football game of the season.” It is a time of remembrance, of passing the torch to the upcoming senior class. Thus, by stating that he and Senator Gramm were not ready “to take our elephant walk,” President Bush was saying that he and the Senator had not completed their duty to the country. It was also a fitting term for two GOP politicians. The Texas A&M audience readily understood this metaphor and broke into applause, leaving anyone with no understanding of the tradition confused.<sup>224</sup>

President Bush continued by conveying his congratulations to both the graduates and their parents, saying, “In this ceremony, we celebrate nothing less than the commencement of the rest, and the best, of your life.” Bush wanted the students to look forward to the future, not dread it or fear it, just as he had once done. In fact, the first four speech versions included a paragraph of remembrance, with Bush conjuring memories of his own graduation in 1948, whereupon he drove his red Studebaker across the prairie roads of west Texas with the belief that “whatever I would do, whatever I would become, destiny was in **my** hands.” Ultimately, the paragraph was cut (by whom is unclear) with the handwritten comment, “Too subjective” in the right-hand margin. Despite its removal, the paragraph shows Bush’s

---

<sup>224</sup> Bush, “Beyond Containment.”

Memo, Stephanie Blessey to Mark Davis and Christina Martin, May 3, 1989, folder “Texas A&M 5/12/89,” OA 6263, Office of Speechwriting – Speech File Backup, GBL.

“History: Elephant Walk,” Class Councils Elephant Walk & E-Walk, Texas A&M University, Accessed Jan. 8, 2012. Available at <http://elephantwalk.tamu.edu/node/2>.

mindset. He wanted the graduates of 1989 to feel that they too could control their destiny. He knew the graduates could not escape history, nor could they escape the realities of the world in which they lived. But they could make the world better for the next generation. Bush would help the graduates, and all Americans, in the goal to build a better world and obtain their destiny by easing relations with the Soviet Union via a change in the longstanding international policy of containment.<sup>225</sup>

### **The Purpose**

“Beyond Containment” was very much a policy speech, one which the United States and the world would notice for the changes it proposed in the relations between the United States and the Soviet Union. “Proposed” is a key descriptive. President Bush’s rhetoric was not dogmatic; it was conditional. This is exemplified throughout the speech by phrases such as, “We seek,” “as they [the Soviet Union] meet ... we [the United States] will match,” “We hope,” “a new relationship cannot simply be declared ... it must be earned,” “our sincere desire,” “Western polities must encourage,” “I directed Secretary [of State] Baker to propose,” and “let us again explore that proposal.” The President was setting forth goals and policies with the realization that demanding the Soviets’ acceptance was futile. The United States could not bully the Soviet Union into making political or social changes, accepting arms limitations, altering its emigration laws, or agreeing to the proposals the President set forth. The Soviet Union would need to make those decisions itself. If it did, then the United States would likely be in a position where it could work with the Soviets. Furthermore,

---

<sup>225</sup> Speech Draft, Version Four, May 8, 1989, folder “Texas A&M Commencement Address, College Station, Texas, 5/12/89,” SP 557, WHORM Subject File, GBL.  
Speech Drafts, Versions One to Four, folder “Texas A&M 5/12/89,” OA 8489, Office of Speechwriting – Speech File Backup, GBL.  
Bush, “Beyond Containment.”

President Bush and his team understood that, while they were proposing a new policy, the new policy must be guided by prudence, caution, and realism.<sup>226</sup>

### **The Past**

From a U.S. perspective, the key to entering a new phase of international relations with the Soviet Union was the adoption of a new foreign policy, hence the title of the speech – “Beyond Containment.” Bush expressed that the era of Containment was complete, and it was time to usher in a new decade with a new policy. In examining President Bush’s proposal of a new policy, one would logically ask why his administration planned to end Containment. The speech provides Bush’s answer – the reason America could and should transition to a new policy towards the Soviet Union was because “containment worked.”<sup>227</sup>

This claim clamors for further investigation, which requires a brief review of the history of Containment. Why did the American government adopt Containment as its Soviet foreign policy? Bush highlights seven “wise men” whom he credited with crafting the strategy of containment – Presidents Truman (1884-1972) and Eisenhower (1890-1969), Senator Arthur H. Vandenberg (1884-1951), Speaker of the House Sam Rayburn (1882-1961), Secretary of State Dean Acheson (1893-1971), Secretary of State and Secretary of Defense George Marshall (1880-1959), and Ambassador George F. Kennan (1904-2005), author of the famous “Long Telegram,” which later developed into the seminal article, “The Sources of Soviet Conduct.” One man whose name appeared within the original list but was cut in favor of adding Kennan was Dean Acheson’s successor, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles (1888-1959). There is no reason listed for his removal; his name is simply crossed

---

<sup>226</sup> Bush, “Beyond Containment.” Maynard, 14-15.

<sup>227</sup> Bush, “Beyond Containment.”

out and does not appear after the second version. Despite Dulles' many political contributions, he was cut from the speech.<sup>228</sup>

One could also make a case that another influential participant should have been included, whose name does not appear in any of the drafts – Paul Nitze. There were only two men involved in American foreign policy from the beginning of the Cold War to its end – Paul Nitze and George Kennan. Although the two often saw their names listed side-by-side in books, they could not have been more different. Unlike Kennan, Nitze was a Washington insider, but one who never mastered the art of political diplomacy and thus found himself fired, demoted, or forced to resign multiple times under several Presidents. Kennan was the thinker; Nitze was the doer. Kennan wanted to end the conflict; Nitze wanted to win it. Whereas Kennan viewed Containment as a “political strategy for combating a political threat,” Nitze defined Containment in the way it was implemented, “as a military strategy for combating a military threat.” It was Nitze who chaired the NSC task force charged with developing NSC-68, the 58-page document developed in 1950 that largely shaped America’s foreign policy for the next twenty years. Nitze claimed NSC-68 as the most important political contribution of his life. Regardless, Nitze was never a part of Bush’s speech.<sup>229</sup>

Nitze’s State Department counterpart, however, certainly was mentioned within the speech, despite the questioning within the drafts regarding whether Kennan’s inclusion on the list was appropriate. Indeed, one cannot fault any of the men’s presence on the list; they were some of the most pivotal figures in developing Containment. Truman, who assumed the presidency following the untimely death of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, developed the

---

<sup>228</sup> Bush, “Beyond Containment.”

Speech Draft, Version Two, folder “Texas A&M 5/12/89 [2],” OA 8489, Office of Speechwriting – Speech File Backup, GBL.

<sup>229</sup> Nicholas Thompson, *The Hawk and the Dove: Paul Nitze, George Kennan, and the History of the Cold War* (New York: Picador, 2009), 2-3, 112-113.

Truman Doctrine. First aimed at stemming Communist inroads in Greece and Turkey, the Truman Doctrine dedicated U.S. support to “free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures.” “Outside pressures” referred to the Soviets. By providing such assistance, Truman hoped to prevent weaker nations from succumbing to communist factions and Soviet influence. The Truman Doctrine needed the bi-partisan support of Congress to go into effect, a feat accomplished in large part by the efforts of Senator Vandenberg and Speaker Rayburn. Vandenberg in particular laid aside his pre-war isolationism and adopted the Cold War mindset of continued American involvement in Western Europe. This doctrine formed the root of Containment, which was expanded and implemented with Marshall’s strategy for rebuilding Europe following World War II. Marshall, as Truman’s Secretary of State, was tasked with forming a universal Cold War strategy to answer the problem outlined in Kennan’s “Long Telegram.” Kennan explained that the root of the problem was Soviet ideology – “Characteristics of Soviet policy, like the postulates from which they flow, are basic to the internal nature of Soviet power, and will be with us, whether in the foreground or the background, until the internal nature of Soviet power is changed.” Kennan’s telegram, published anonymously around the nation before his signed, expanded version appeared in the July 1947 edition of *Foreign Affairs*, “provided the official ground for the reversal of U.S. policy toward the USSR from appeasement to containment.” Secretary of State Acheson then picked up the diplomatic mantle that Marshall had given him and continued the steps that would broaden containment’s scope and objectives, which were furthered even more under President Eisenhower in the attempt to rein in Soviet expansion.<sup>230</sup>

---

<sup>230</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2005) 31-32, 95.

However, the list itself tells only part of the story. By calling them “wise,” President Bush was doing more than crediting them as authors or originators. He was bestowing upon them a revered title. Furthermore, one could interpret Bush’s statement regarding the men as connected to the product of their collective efforts. Since the authors were wise, Containment was a wise decision. Both of these points have been debated within academic literature, with some authors believing that Containment was the best choice, others believing that it was the only choice, and others believing it was the wrong choice. One point upon which the majority of historians agree is that President Truman, the President who established Containment, was an above-average President. The C-SPAN 2009 Historians Presidential Leadership Survey views Truman positively, ranking him in fifth place overall with “Top 5” scores for Crisis Leadership (fourth place), International Skills (fourth place), and Pursued Equal Justice for All (third place). C-SPAN ranks Truman lower in Public Persuasion and Relations with Congress (sixteenth place for both). Every person and every event in history has supporters and detractors, a reality particularly true of Containment. But Bush was in College Station to praise Containment, as well as to bury it.<sup>231</sup>

In Bush’s eyes, as outlined within the speech, containment worked “because our democratic principles and institutions and values are sound and always have been. It worked because our alliances were, and are strong, and because the superiority of free societies and free markets over stagnant socialism is undeniable.” This reasoning is very America-centric. In reality, this statement is an explication of American exceptionalism. America had successfully contained the Soviet Union because America was better – morally, politically,

---

Robert W. Tucker and William Watts, eds., *Beyond Containment: U.S. Foreign Policy in Transition* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Associates, 1973), 3, 17-19.

<sup>231</sup> “C-SPAN 2009 Historians Presidential Leadership Survey,” C-SPAN.org. Accessed Mar. 5, 2012. Available at: <http://legacy.c-span.org/PresidentialSurvey/Overall-Ranking.aspx>

socially, economically – than the Soviet Union, not just because of superior, raw military might. Based upon this definition, Containment’s success was not connected to a particular action, event, or person. Instead, intangible attributes, ideals, and friendships made it succeed.<sup>232</sup>

There are many who would agree, at least in part, with President Bush’s assessment of Containment. If one considers President Carter’s and President Reagan’s comments in earlier chapters of this dissertation, one will readily notice the parallels in presidential rhetoric portraying America as a bastion of morality, virtue, and democratic principles. Carter and Reagan did not specifically apply these principles to Containment, even though they did apply them as reasons why the United States would emerge victorious over the Communist Soviets. This parallel will be discussed in greater detail in the Comparative Conclusions chapter within this section.

In contrast, others would disagree with President Bush’s perspective that Containment was successful. Many would describe Containment as controversial, in part because of the many ways in which Containment was defined, redefined, implemented, and debated across administrations. Many detractors emphasize two key arguments – America’s involvement in the Vietnam War and Containment’s propensity to harden rather than resolve the Cold War conflict, thus perpetuating rather than ending the stand-off. Bush’s only explanation of why Containment worked was that it had caused the Soviet Union to address the faults of its system. He provided no further explanation or evidence to support this claim. However, in 1989, the Soviet Union was facing harsh economic realities as well as changes to the relationship between the government and the people. There was a sense of incipient change within the USSR, as well as across the Eastern bloc. But to say that the Soviet Union

---

<sup>232</sup> Bush, “Beyond Containment.”

was actively contemplating major changes in its long-held Marxist ideology would be incorrect. Gorbachev expressly adopted *glasnost* and *perestroika* with the aim of preserving the Soviet Union, not breaking it apart, and preserving Kremlin power, not relinquishing it. Additionally, Bush neither explains why Containment succeeded, nor elaborates upon how it succeeded. These foundational omissions undermine Bush's argument and turn his rhetoric away from reasoned arguments in support of the actions of his predecessors and into an inferred victory statement for the United States.<sup>233</sup>

### **The Present**

Whether one agrees or not with President Bush's statement that Containment worked, many scholars agree with the President's subsequent assertion that the United States needed "to move beyond containment to a new policy for the 1990s – one that recognizes the full scope of change taking place around the world and in the Soviet Union itself." The Soviet Union of the late 1980s was a different society than the Soviet Union of the 1950s. The country was facing severe economic challenges as well as new social and political norms. Gorbachev himself represented a marked change from old leadership. But if Containment was finished, with what policy should the United States proceed? This question had been raised before, but a clear answer was hard to find. According to Aaron Wildavsky, Professor of Political Science and Public Policy at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1983, there were only four possible responses to the Soviet Union if it indeed posed a danger to American security – accommodation, condominium, ending the threat, and various forms of containment. Accommodation would have allowed the Soviet Union and its allies to expand

---

<sup>233</sup> Aaron Wildavsky, ed., *Beyond Containment: Alternative American Policies Toward the Soviet Union* (San Francisco: Institute for Contemporary Studies, 1983), 63-64.

at will, a reality which no American leader could accept. Condominium would essentially divide the world between the West and the Soviet Union. One might argue that the Iron Curtain did divide the world to a certain extent, but such a policy of signing over other nations to the Soviet sphere was also a position that no American leader could accept. It was for that reason that Yalta remained the most controversial of FDR's summits, since it reeked of the *realpolitik* map-dividing which many Americans rejected out-of-hand. Ending the threat was the ultimate goal of many Presidents, including Carter, Reagan, and Bush. However, convincing the Soviets to change their ideology away from military aggression was no easy task. Carter made such an ideological attempt and the Soviets developed new military capabilities and created new international challenges while professing peace. Since none of the first three options were politically or ideologically viable, that left containment . . . which returns the argument to its starting point.<sup>234</sup>

Unlike Wildavsky, Bush's administration had the advantage of six years of diplomatic progress and could see another option – a conditional, reciprocal relationship with the ultimate goal of integrating “the Soviet Union into the community of nations.” The conditions were a list of five steps that the Soviet Union must undertake. The drafts reveal that the list fluctuated between three and seven points due to the inclusion of points not contained within the final speech, as well as the sub-division of points that were ultimately combined together. The points that were not included within the final speech included the following:

They must take a bold step and reduce threats to the security of every nation from the spread of ballistic-missile technology; nuclear, chemical and biological weapons; and terrorism. (This point was recommended for removal in a copy of version four noted as containing General Scowcroft's comments.)

---

<sup>234</sup> Bush, “Beyond Containment.” Wildavsky, 231-233.

They must take a bold step and renounce the principle that class conflict is an inevitable source of international tension. They must take a bold step out from under the shadow of a failed ideology, and into the broad daylight of modern life. (This statement also appears as “Renunciation of the principle that class conflict is an inevitable source of international tension.”)

It is noteworthy that these two statements were eliminated, particularly because they are quite pointed. The elimination of specific weaponry had long been a point of diplomatic discussion, but the fact that the lines were crossed out on General Scowcroft’s copy indicates that the military leader did not believe it was wise to emphasize arms elimination at that particular point in time. The second statement, however, does not address a Soviet policy; it is an attack upon Soviet ideology itself. That Marxist Communism was a key point, if not the key point, of the political tension was widely known and accepted. But to tell the Soviets that their ideology had “failed” and to join “modern life” would certainly ruffle diplomatic feathers around the world and put the Soviet leaders into an embarrassing position. Bush’s speech emphasized the need to move beyond Containment, a policy which had as a main premise that it would cause the Soviets to reach self-recognition that their governmental system had failed. But saying such a statement in a speech designed to encourage *perestroika* would quite possibly have the opposite effect. The Soviets needed to make their own ideological changes; it would have been unwise, given the social and political setting of the time, for Bush to push the issue and antagonize the man with whom he most needed to develop relations – Gorbachev.<sup>235</sup>

---

<sup>235</sup> Speech Drafts, folder “Texas A&M 5/12/89,” OA 8489, Office of Speechwriting – Speech File Backup, GBL.

Speech Drafts, folder “Texas A&M 5/12/89,” OA 6263, Office of Speechwriting – Speech File Backup, GBL.  
 Speech Drafts, folder “Texas A&M Commencement Address, College Station, Texas, 5/12/89,” SP557, WHORM Subject File, GBL.

The finalized five points did not present new ideas; indeed, they were issues that had been vocalized for decades. First, President Bush called on the Soviets to reduce their military forces to be in balance with those of the European NATO members. Arms reduction agreements, most notably SALT I and SALT II, had been a point of diplomatic negotiation over several presidential administrations, requiring both sides to make concessions that neither side was eager to make. Without those concessions, progress, or at least progress on paper, would not have been possible. Few would be naïve enough to believe that either the United States or the Soviet Union followed an international agreement like SALT I to the letter and statements like “to less threatening levels” and “in proportion to their legitimate security needs” are vague generalities at best. How many tanks may a country possess without being viewed as “threatening”? Is military parity sufficient for security or does one side need some manner of tactical advantage to be safe? Regardless of such questions, international agreements would have had some impact militarily, provided valuable diplomatic photo opportunities, and enabled both sides to maintain an aura of strength and superiority.<sup>236</sup>

Second, President Bush urged the Soviet Union to adhere to World War II promises about supporting self-determination for Central and Eastern Europe. Self-determination is the right of a state to make decisions for itself without external pressure or interference. This principle is frequently applied to the right of a people to determine what form of government they will have and by whom they will be ruled. The definition of nationalism can also be expanded to allow a group of people to determine if they will remain under a country’s authority or create their own self-sufficient country. However, one could argue this point two ways. One could agree wholeheartedly with the President that the Soviet Union had

---

<sup>236</sup> Bush, “Beyond Containment.”

willfully violated the post-war agreements and had seized the opportunity to exert its political and military power over the recovering nations. In contrast, one could argue that the Soviet Union violated the post-war agreements in response to the trap that the United States laid for Stalin. This alleged trap, according to the Soviets and the revisionist historians who sympathized with them, was the Marshall Plan. The plan called for rebuilding all of Europe, regardless of which of the four powers controlled an area, with the secondary aim of preventing the rebuilding nations from succumbing to Communist rule out of desperation. George Kennan had predicted that Stalin would respond to the Marshall Plan exactly as he did – by tightening his grip on whatever European nations he could. This reactionary detail is frequently overlooked in favor of focusing upon the fact that the Soviet Union built the Iron Curtain.<sup>237</sup>

Third, President Bush encouraged the Soviet Union to take practical, not rhetorical, steps toward working with the United States and solving regional disputes around the world, namely those in Afghanistan and Angola. To say that the Soviets had received more than they bargained for in their invasion of Afghanistan was a gross understatement. The Soviets found themselves embroiled in a bitter, costly war. Although the Soviets had withdrawn from Afghanistan and declared the military conflict officially over in the months preceding Bush's speech, the horrific aftermath remained. A large number of Afghans were refugees living in other countries, which caused international tensions. The already poor country was now a wreck due to the devastating bombing, Soviet mines, and loss of life. The Soviets left the country embroiled in a bitter civil war that would last well into the 1990s. Also, the Afghan venture released forces long suppressed in Islamic nations which threatened to

---

<sup>237</sup> Bush, "Beyond Containment."  
Gaddis, 31-32.

destabilize the many Soviet republics in which Muslims were a majority. President Bush expressed his belief that the Soviets held a level of responsibility in rebuilding the country and thereby stabilizing the region. In reality, this goal was impractical because the Soviets were facing rebellions within the bloc countries, economic disarray, and food shortages; issues at home typically take precedence over issues abroad.<sup>238</sup>

Fourth, President Bush desired the Soviet Union to take steps towards recognizing and enforcing human rights. This harkens back most noticeably to President Carter's emphasis upon this subject, which had been given resonance in Europe with the 1975 Helsinki Accords. The Soviet Union's firm hand in squelching political dissent was well known around the world. Dissidents such as Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, author of *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* and *The Gulag Archipelago*, raised global awareness of the Soviet gulags. His actions earned him a Nobel Prize in Literature as well as expulsion from the Soviet Union. Another notable Soviet dissident was Andrei Sakharov, a physicist who found himself at odds with Soviet nuclear policies, and thus with his government. His protests earned him a Nobel Peace Prize, which he was not permitted to leave the country to receive. It also earned him internal exile under the close watch of the Soviet police. But there was little that the international community could officially do, aside from applying diplomatic pressure, to aid those sent to the gulags or kept under house arrest, despite regularly sending letters urging the government to action. Human rights remained an obvious weakness of the Soviet system.<sup>239</sup>

---

<sup>238</sup> Bush, "Beyond Containment."

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*

Letters to the President, folder "U.S.-USSR Summit, Moscow, URRS, 7/30-31/91," Document Range 255805-281508SS, FO006-12, WHORM Subject File, GBL.

Fifth, President Bush desired the Soviets to join the United States in fighting global problems, including drug trafficking and environmental issues. Granted, the 1979 nuclear accident at Chernobyl was certainly a disaster that the Soviet Union and Gorbachev handled questionably. But this point was not so much a condemnation of the Soviet Union as it was an encouragement for them to join with the international community. The Soviets and their allies operated in their own circles despite retaining membership within the United Nations. In essence, by joining this global effort, the Soviet Union would indicate its willingness to participate jointly in other endeavors and bring the Cold War tensions to a close once and for all.<sup>240</sup>

President Bush was willing to highlight these five specific areas even though he maintained his administration's healthy skepticism toward the Soviets' response. As the President reminded the public in his speech, the Soviets had broken their promises before. Thus, promises alone were unacceptable; only sustained action would earn the United States' reciprocation and friendship. What exactly would the American reciprocation be? President Bush did not outline every step in detail, but he did provide insight into some of the actions his administration would be willing to take to ensure the stability of the Soviet-American relationship into the future.<sup>241</sup>

## **The Future**

In examining President Bush's statements regarding the future of Soviet-American relations, one should recognize the President's optimism. He was confident that the Cold War was coming to an end thanks in no small part due to the reality that the Soviet Union

---

<sup>240</sup> Bush, "Beyond Containment."

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.*

simply could not match the American military build-up of the Reagan era. Within the speech Bush maintained that promise to “remain strong” to “deter war . . . to defend ourselves and our allies and . . . to convince the Soviet Union that reward lies in the pursuit of peace.” This was the classic peace-through-strength strategy that had been employed so frequently during the previous five decades and had succeeded with mixed results. That military strength, however, would be balanced with nuclear arms and arms reduction talks between the two nations. Bush had little desire to start a nuclear war. He expressed his desire for *perestroika* to continue and for it to expand throughout the USSR. He stated that he longed for the day of the free exchange of people and ideas between the East and West rather than the aura of political suspicion, oppression of publications, and limitations on immigration that currently existed behind the Iron Curtain.<sup>242</sup>

In emphasizing the necessity of remaining strong and the broad concept of free movement, President Bush was willing to outline specific incentives for the Soviet Union to pursue peace. The first was an old idea – “Open Skies.” President Eisenhower had first proposed this agreement in which the Soviet Union would permit the United States to fly reconnaissance missions in Soviet airspace and visa versa in 1955; but Khrushchev resoundingly opposed the idea, complaining that it would be like the Soviet permitting the Americans to see into their bedrooms. “Open Skies” would have made aerial “spying” legal because it would no longer be spying; it would simply be observation. Such wording was strictly a difference between legality and semantics; the effects would have been the same – each country could see what the other was doing without facing the possibility of political protest or military retribution. In reality, such a policy would favor the more technologically-advanced United States, a point evidenced by the United States’ actions when the Soviets

---

<sup>242</sup> Bush, “Beyond Containment.”

turned down Eisenhower's offer. Since the Soviets could shoot down regular military aircraft with their own jets or anti-aircraft missiles, the United States put a new observation plan to use starting in 1956 – the U-2. The U-2 flew at a much higher altitude than standard military aircraft or anti-aircraft missiles could reach, thus enabling it to snap high resolution photographs safely. The U.S. flew such missions on a regular basis. Since the Soviets were embarrassed to admit this weakness, there was comparatively little international knowledge of the flights. Furthermore, the U.S. was not about to admit violating international law. This continued throughout the Eisenhower administration until, on May 1, 1960, the Soviets successfully downed what may have been the final U-2 flight Eisenhower had authorized. The Soviet success in shooting down the U-2 and capturing its pilot, Francis Gary Powers, created a small crisis, but it did not end the U.S. observation. In 1960, the U-2 was already becoming obsolete, with the U.S. turning to satellite reconnaissance instead.<sup>243</sup>

Bush wished to revisit Eisenhower's "Open Skies" plan, but on a more technologically updated basis. This new proposal would include not only unarmed surveillance flights, but complementing satellites. The sky now included space. Bush's purpose behind his proposal was similar to Eisenhower's – to monitor the other nation's military activities and to keep that nation accountable in accordance with international agreements. However, Bush had a secondary purpose that would not have existed during Eisenhower's administration. Eisenhower was at the front end of the Cold War, a time when negotiating the Soviets into a more open stance and having them join the international community was incomprehensible. In contrast, Bush was in power at the end of the Cold War and expressed that a Soviet implementation of "Open Skies" would be a prime example

---

<sup>243</sup> Bush, "Beyond Containment."  
Gaddis, 72-74.

of the Soviets' willingness to "show the world the true meaning of the concept of openness." However, given the technological developments of the time, one would have to agree with National Security Adviser Scowcroft's comment that this point was mostly symbolic in nature.<sup>244</sup>

Bush's second proposal was the modification of existing American laws that would allow more Soviets, particularly Jews and other religious minorities, to emigrate. This topic was a double-edged sword. The Soviets were reluctant to allow its citizens to leave, partially out of fear that the policy would reflect badly upon the socialist system. They had established a series of restrictions, including financial penalties, for citizens requesting emigration papers. In the case of Soviet Jews, many of whom wished to emigrate to Israel, the Soviets were loathe to anger their Arab allies by injecting a new Jewish demographic into the Middle East. In the United States, Senator Henry Jackson (D-WA) and Representative Charles Vanik (D-OH) proposed a 1974 amendment to the routine Trade Reform Act that denied "most-favored nation" status to any "non-market economy that restricted or taxed the right to emigrate," namely the Soviet bloc. To Jackson and Vanik, the Soviet Union, and similar countries, should be punished economically to force changes to internal behavior. By offering the Soviets this olive branch of a temporary waiver to the Jackson-Vanik amendment, Bush had to proceed with caution in reassuring the American audience that he was not trying to financially assist America's old adversary. At the same time, Bush could not be viewed as encouraging further Soviet "brain drain" via immigration. Yet the President made no such assurances within the speech. He merely stated the reality of his offer before

---

<sup>244</sup> Bush, "Beyond Containment."

Maureen Dowd, "Bush Voices Hope on Soviet Change, but with Caution," May 13, 1989, *New York Times*.

inserting a point of humor for his commencement audience. He joked, “It had to happen. Your last day in college had to end with yet another political science lecture.”<sup>245</sup>

### **The Familial (Part 2)**

Following the joke, President Bush returned to his familial rhetoric and the speech’s conclusion where he made the application of why his speech was relevant to his audience.

As the President explained,

In all seriousness, the policy I have just described has everything to do with you. Today you graduate. You’re going to start careers and families, and you will become the leaders of America in the next century. And what kind of world will you know?

President Bush was trying to communicate how international decisions would have an impact upon everyone involved, not just the politicians creating the policies. In what direction would the world evolve? Would the Soviet Union reverse its trajectory and return to its past policies? It was theoretically possible, but improbable. Or, would the Soviet Union continue its progressive course, gradually open its arms, and welcome the international community? That was Bush’s hope, that “perhaps the world order of the future will truly be a family of nations.” This is an idealistic statement; it made for a good line to allow the President to then focus upon the common bond shared by all humanity and the necessity of caring for all mankind, particularly in times of distress.<sup>246</sup>

Recognizing the reality that a national foe is also a human foe changes the nature of the debate from the political to the physical. History is filled with examples of former enemies who successfully became friends. In Bush’s eyes, the key to such a relationship

---

<sup>245</sup> Bush, “Beyond Containment.”  
Gaddis, 182-183.

<sup>246</sup> Bush, “Beyond Containment.”

change was the human spirit and the willingness to extend a hand of friendship. To prove this point, Bush gave another home-crowd example – Albert Kotzebue, a 1945 Texas A&M graduate who “was the first American soldier to shake hands with the Soviets at the bank of the Elbe River” when the American fighting on the Western Front met the Soviets fighting on the Eastern Front towards the end of World War II. While in that instance the Soviets were still considered America’s allies, the imagery was Bush’s goal – Americans reaching their hands out over the water in friendship to the Soviets. It was time for the Soviets to accept that open hand and for peace to return between the two nations.

As touching and audience-appropriate as the Kotzebue illustration was, it was not the speechwriters’ first choice. The first four versions of the speech have President Bush referring to Winston Churchill’s quote – “[the Soviet Union is] a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma.” The President was then to explain that *glasnost* and *perestroika* were unraveling that riddle, that it was of utmost importance to help the Soviet Union, and that it was in its national interest to “reconcile their system to the international community.” Although certainly an apt point to make, it did not play to the crowd like the Kotzebue illustration.<sup>247</sup>

### **Immediate Reaction**

Since the President’s commencement address was not televised, it is understandable why the archival files contained relatively few letters from the public, although major newspapers like the *New York Times* did publish a transcript of the speech on May 13. There

---

<sup>247</sup> Speech Drafts, folder “Texas A&M 5/12/89,” OA 8489, Office of Speechwriting – Speech File Backup, GBL.

Speech Drafts, folder “Texas A&M 5/12/89,” OA 6263, Office of Speechwriting – Speech File Backup, GBL.  
Speech Drafts, folder “Texas A&M Commencement Address, College Station, Texas, 5/12/89,” SP557, WHORM Subject File, GBL.

was, however, one particular letter of note. Abraham Foxman and Burton Levinson (the National Director and National Chairman, respectively, of the Anti-Defamation League) complimented the President for his vision, as well as his caution, before offering the Anti-Defamation League's "support and cooperation in addressing the issue of economic relations with the Soviets and its linkage to human rights observances." They also expressed their agreement with the President's proposal of temporarily waiving the Jackson-Vanik provision. This support is logical given the Anti-Defamation League's mission statement:

The immediate object of the League is to stop, by appeals to reason and conscience and, if necessary, by appeals to law, the defamation of the Jewish people. Its ultimate purpose is to secure justice and fair treatment to all citizens alike and to put an end forever to unjust and unfair discrimination against and ridicule of any sect or body of citizens.

Russian Jews were one of the major ethnic and religious groups facing great obstacles in emigrating from the Soviet Union. This makes the President's speech very relevant to groups like the Anti-Defamation League, whose mission took up the cause of Jewish people around the world. Such activist groups found Bush's speech quite appealing.<sup>248</sup>

The President also received compliments from an international ally – Chancellor Helmut Kohl of West Germany. The Chancellor spoke to the President by phone on May 16 and began the conversation by complimenting the President's recent speech and noting that he had commented positively about the speech to the West German press (who "had not received the speech as well as might have been wished"). Kohl also urged the President to "pursue his policy toward the Soviet Union along the lines described in the speech" and not

---

<sup>248</sup> Letter, Abraham H. Foxman and Burton S. Levinson to the President, folder "Texas A&M Commencement Address, College Station, Texas, 5/12/89," Document Range 034353SS-039467, SP557, WHORM Subject File, GBL.

"Transcript of Bush's Remarks on Transforming Soviet-American Relations," May 13, 1989, *New York Times*. "About the Anti-Defamation League," *The Anti-Defamation League*. Accessed Jan. 15, 2011. Available at: <http://www.adl.org/about.asp?s=topmenu>.

Maureen Dowd, "Bush Voices Hope on Soviet Change, but with Caution," May 13, 1989, *New York Times*.

to pay too much attention to the press because they “expect miracles every day.” The President responded that he was not overly concerned with the press and noted that “generally there was now a growing wave of understanding for the speech’s forward-looking character.” The phone conversation then moved on to other topics, but Chancellor Kohl made a remark that it was “important for friends to stand together and do a good job,” which is why he called. One can certainly appreciate this sentiment, especially when it came from the leader of a country in the Soviet Union’s backyard.<sup>249</sup>

The most striking observation in researching the immediate response to “Beyond Containment” was the lack of response from the media. The *New York Times* database shows that the paper ran only a couple articles relating to the Texas A&M commencement address within a week of its delivery, and one of those articles was a transcript of what the President said with no commentary included. The speech maintained a news cycle of only three days; the *New York Times* ran only one article relating to the speech per issue. The first two of these articles both made references to the anticipation with which the country had been waiting for the President to develop his Soviet foreign policy. The May 13 article provides mostly a commentary, noting the President’s caution in approaching the subject, along with the previously noted support from Jewish organizations. However, the article points out that the President made few original statements since he held closely to Reagan’s stance. This was only a partially accurate statement. President Reagan mentioned the Jackson-Vanik Amendment only once within his public addresses – a June 2, 1982 message to Congress regarding trade with Romania, Hungary, and the People’s Republic of China in which Reagan emphasized his support of the Amendment as a means of political leverage.

---

<sup>249</sup> Phone Conversation, The President and Chancellor Helmut Kohl, May 16, 1989, Accessed Dec. 30, 2011. Available at [http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/pdfs/memcons\\_telcons/1989-05-16--Kohl.pdf](http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/pdfs/memcons_telcons/1989-05-16--Kohl.pdf).

The President remarked that he wanted to move beyond Containment and integrate the Soviets into world society, but his caution prohibited him from outlining specific policies, a point columnist and Nixon speechwriter William Safire complimented in his May 15 article. Safire was clearly tired of and frustrated with what he called Gorbachev's "blustering arrogance" and complimented the President on his "no-nonsense strategy" before openly stating, "I'm for Mr. Bush's 'new path.'" The President also received compliments in a May 14 *New York Times* article which stated, "It makes sense for Mr. Bush to squeeze the Soviets on such matters" (referring to the President's call for Soviet military reductions). The May 14 article also supported the President's proposal on the Jackson-Vanik provision and called his assertion that containment had worked "most encouraging."<sup>250</sup>

However, not everyone was complimentary of the speech. Even some of the previously referenced articles which contained positive elements also held some reservations or criticisms. The May 14 *New York Times* article called on the administration to back up its words with deeds and "put flesh on this policy" to prove Washington's seriousness to the American people and the world. This was a soft rebuke towards the administration's record to that point. Perhaps the biggest criticism of the President's foreign policy came after Bush delivered the last of his four foreign policy speeches. A May 25 *New York Times* column opened with the following line: "President Bush yesterday delivered his fourth, final, flat and flimsy speech on East-West relations." That critical tone remained throughout the rest of the piece, which went on to criticize the President's supposedly "dynamic and adaptable

---

<sup>250</sup> "Transcript of Bush's Remarks on Transforming Soviet-American Relations," May 13, 1989, *New York Times*.

"Soviet Deeds, American Words," May 14, 1989, *New York Times*.

"Message to the Congress on Trade with Romania, Hungary, and the People's Republic of China," Jun. 2, 1982. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*.

<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=42595>.

William Safire, "Bush's 'New Path,'" May 15, 1989, *New York Times*.

Maureen Dowd, "Bush Voices Hope on Soviet Change, but with Caution," May 13, 1989, *New York Times*.

strategy” that would require building new mobile missile systems, his lack of a plausible policy in favor of “sensible platitudes,” his inability to put forth a foreign policy despite having one of the best-prepared National Security teams, and his administration’s insecurity at handling the situation poorly. Arguably harsh, the accusations have some validity. President Bush was not the speechmaker that Reagan was, and Bush was famous for deviating from his prepared text. He also had been very cautious in establishing his foreign policy and therefore his policy speeches lacked specifics. Yet, despite his shortage of rhetorical charisma, Bush’s team developed well-thought out speeches for him to deliver and, given the sensitive political situation of the time, Bush was justified in taking his time in order to establish the correct policy rather than rushing and implementing an ill-advised policy.<sup>251</sup>

Examining Gallup polling data to determine the impact “Beyond Containment” had upon the American public provides semi-conclusive results. President Bush opened his term of office with a 51% approval rating from January 25-28. However, 43% of those polled responded that they had no opinion, fairly predictable given the entrance of a new administration. As stated earlier in this dissertation, the people were waiting to see what the new President would do, which is why the no opinion numbers fell sharply in the following months. The President’s ratings surrounding the time of his four foreign policy speeches were as follows:

4/10-16/89	58% Approval	16% Disapproval	26% No Opinion
5/4-7/89	56% Approval	22% Disapproval	22% No Opinion
5/5-8/89	58% Approval	18% Disapproval	25% No Opinion
5/15-18/89	63% Approval	18% Disapproval	20% No Opinion
6/8-11/89	70% Approval	14% Disapproval	16% No Opinion

---

<sup>251</sup> “Soviet Deeds, American Words,” May 14, 1989, *New York Times*.  
 “What East-West Policy?,” May 25, 1989, *New York Times*.

The President delivered his first foreign policy speech in Michigan on April 17. His ratings the week prior to the speech were very respectable, but the Gallup data in the next polling cycles is mixed. The dates of the two polls overlapped, and while the data does not match perfectly it would still likely fall within the acceptable range of error. As seen above, there is a 2% differential in approval, 4% differential in disapproval, and 3% differential in no opinion. Given the data, one could surmise that the President's foreign policy speech had little impact upon those who already viewed him favorably, but caused some who previously viewed the President neutrally to view him unfavorably. However, that trend does not hold true through the commencement season and the other three policy speeches. The President's approval ratings increased to a healthy 70%, with his disapproval and no opinion numbers holding steady before dropping slightly. By mid-June, President Bush won over some of the neutral and negative individuals, as the percentage change from both of those categories accounts for the increase in the positive column. Most important, however, the President did not appear to lose his previously established support base and his approval ratings did not drop below 64% until July 1990.<sup>252</sup>

Finally, the speech had a rather unique impact upon the local audience. Speaking at a university commencement does not ensure one's popularity at the university, but the archival evidence suggests that President Bush was popular at Texas A&M. There is one key piece of evidence to support this argument – the Texas A&M student body organized a petition for the Bush Presidential Library to be located at the university before the President delivered the 1989 commencement address. As the student newspaper, *The Battalion*, reported, by mid-April, the petition had already garnered between 5,000 and 6,000 signatures. The news staff

---

<sup>252</sup> “Job Performance Ratings for President Bush (G.H.W.), 01/25/1989-01/08/1993, Accessed Jan. 5, 2012. Available at [http://webapps.ropercenter.uconn.edu/CFIDE/roper/presidential/webroot/presidential\\_rating.cfm#.TzL93IEbFlc](http://webapps.ropercenter.uconn.edu/CFIDE/roper/presidential/webroot/presidential_rating.cfm#.TzL93IEbFlc)

presented the petition to the President during his visit to campus in mid-May. According to the article, Texas A&M was up against Yale (Bush's alma mater), Rice, and the University of Houston; organizers hoped that the petition would give Texas A&M an edge over the other Texas institutions. Ultimately, the Texas A&M community was successful because the university is now the home of the George Bush Presidential Library and Museum, located adjacent to the political science department building and within sight of the hallowed football stadium.<sup>253</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Even though "Beyond Containment" may not have outlined a foreign policy as specifically as some would have liked or as soon as they would have liked, it did provide a framework and guiding principles for a new relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union. Based upon historical evidence, one could say that Bush's policy was successful on multiple fronts. First, it enabled the President to further his working relationship with Gorbachev to one that could be described as congenial. This fact can be observed in two Question-and-Answer sessions with the press the following year. In 1990, Gorbachev traveled to the President's retreat at Camp David for a series of private meetings with President Bush where they discussed important topics like arms reduction, the future of a unified Germany, independence moves within the Baltic States, and others. These important and potentially volatile subjects needed to be handled with care, and both Bush and Gorbachev believed that their rapport with one another greatly aided the discussion. For example, on June 2, in answering a question regarding what topics the two leaders had made

---

<sup>253</sup> Stephen Masters, "Students begin petition to get Bush library," Apr. 26, 1989, *The Battalion*, folder "Texas A&M 5/12/89 [1]," OA 6263, Office of Speechwriting – Speech File Backup, GBL.

progress on that day, Bush took the lead in responding in general terms, but highlighted the ability to find common ground and understanding. He also emphasized the importance of having these talks in a relaxed environment with “no neckties.” However, Bush was willing to admit one point of failure in his relationship with Gorbachev during this visit. Gorbachev beat him at horseshoes. As Bush related to the press, “I pride myself as a horseshoe player, and President Gorbachev picked up a horseshoe, never having played the game, to my knowledge, and literally – literally – all of you horseshoe players out there – threw a ringer the first time. Really.” Gorbachev’s response to this anecdote was a fitting, “Well, I couldn’t give in, after all.”<sup>254</sup>

Gorbachev’s jest offers a reflection of the times. The two men had a good relationship and preferred to work in an informal setting, a point Gorbachev emphasized during the following day’s press conference, saying:

During my contacts with him [then Vice-President Bush] I felt, and it was during my first visit here in 1987, that this is the kind of person to do business with, to build our relations with . . . I must say that everything began with discovering the fact that President Bush and myself have a desire to do business informally, which is very, very important.

Simply because he and President Bush maintained an amicable working relationship did not mean that the Soviet President was willing to give in to any and all international demands. It was very much a developing relationship focused, as Bush stated, upon “strengthening mutual understanding and trust.” Given the tumultuous history between the Soviet Union and the United States, mutual understanding and trust were not easy to foster. Yet, if the

---

<sup>254</sup> Remarks by the President and President Gorbachev in Question and Answer Session with the Press, Jun. 2, 1990, folder “Presidential Press Conferences, 1990 [2],” OA 13207-012, White House Press Office – Administrative Files, GBL.

world was to see the Cold War come to an end, they were qualities the two superpowers and their political leaders most definitely needed.<sup>255</sup>

Second, and most important, President Bush's policy can be directly connected to the Cold War's end. This is not to say that the President's policies were without criticism. Criticism abounded, especially after the President's ill-fated 1991 "Chicken Kiev" speech, in which he urged Ukrainians – who were moving fast toward independence – against "suicidal nationalism." *New York Times* columnist and former presidential speechwriter William Safire gave that speech its derisive title, which caught on at once among those who had long championed the cause of captive nations within the Soviet sphere. One must acknowledge the rhetorical context of the statement (the President was urging the Ukrainians not to replace Soviet tyranny with a tyrannical Ukrainian government), but it is easy to understand how the media would, and did, interpret such language. Also, the United States was one of the last countries to support the Baltic States' path to independence, despite having been the main diplomatic proponent for not recognizing the 1940 forced incorporation of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania into the USSR. Regardless of these indiscretions, the Soviet Union did crumble during Bush's administration, with all the Soviet republics declaring their independence within eighteen months of each other. Events moved very fast, and some White House reactions, including the "Chicken Kiev" speech, may have been ill-advised or hasty. But the "Beyond Containment" speech shows what Bush's outlook was before the chaos began. He was thinking and speaking in terms that would break up the Cold War logjam and look to a future which, as events proved, meant the end of the Soviet system. Bush's words may not have been the most clear and decisive, and his oratory skills may have

---

<sup>255</sup> Press Conference by the President and President Mikhail Gorbachev, Jun. 3, 1990, folder "Presidential Press Conferences, 1990 [2]," OA 13207-012, White House Press Office – Administrative Files, GBL.

been lacking, but his administration encouraged Soviet reforms which ultimately helped bring the Cold War to a close.

## Concluding Comparisons

As revealed in this section, Carter's, Reagan's, and Bush's rhetorical treatment of Soviet Communism was as much, if not more, about the strengths and virtues of American national character as it was about the weaknesses and perils of the Soviet system. While each President expressed a desire to see the Cold War come to an end, each man had to face the realities of his own moment in time. From 1977 to 1985, three Soviet leaders died and were succeeded by men embodying different personality traits, definitions of Communist ideology, and levels of willingness to interact with the West. The United States also experienced a changing of the guard, by free election. Bush, Reagan, and Carter were each unique and each approached Communism in his own way in keeping with his administration's policies. When considered as historical moments on a timeline, the three speeches within this section provide a different perspective on the history of American foreign policy towards the Soviet Union from 1977 to 1992. The speeches show aspects of continuity regarding the necessity to work with and maintain peaceful relations with the Soviet Union. They possess uniqueness within their respective moments of time.

American foreign policy towards the Soviet Union changed with time, events, and administrations. Prior to Carter assuming the presidency, the Vietnam War and Watergate had done a great deal to erode the anti-Communist consensus in the United States by degrading public trust in the American political establishment. With his goal of helping to heal America and moving past the Cold War, Carter did not attempt to arouse those once-solid anti-Communist sentiments. Carter even placed stringent limitations on domestic intelligence gathering. This observation aligns with his rhetoric; Carter was not out for a fight with the Soviets in word, in policy, or in deed, a reality furthered by Carter's adamant

support of SALT II despite known Soviet violations. In contrast, Reagan had no qualms about accusing Carter of being overly friendly with the Soviets; Reagan regularly expressed his strong dislike of the Communist system. Reagan also was not afraid to act on his dislike, as evidenced by his foreign policy of peace through strength, the dream of the Strategic Defense Initiative, or “Star Wars,” and withdrawal from SALT II. In contrast with his predecessors, President Bush had the distinct advantage of thawing relations between the United States and the Soviet Union, but that did not mean that his job was easy – rhetorically or diplomatically. Indeed, Bush worked very hard to establish a personal relationship with Gorbachev that would allow the two leaders to agree on key arms negotiations. Bush, as previously mentioned, was also more cautious than his predecessors in establishing his policies. Given the world-changing events that occurred in the first year of his administration, this was not unwise. Each President had to work within his given time. If Carter had attempted Reagan’s bravado and strategies with Détente-loving Leonid Brezhnev, one can only imagine how much greater the military build-up could have been – on both sides! Or, given that Brezhnev’s lavish military spending helped create the financial problems which hastened the Soviet Union’s demise, perhaps an earlier build-up would have had its advantages? One can only speculate.<sup>256</sup>

Considering the political and rhetorical differences expressed within the three speeches examined in this section, one might be surprised that there was any level of continuity. However, all three Presidents expressed the need and desire to work with and maintain peaceful relations with the Soviet Union. Carter made reference to America’s two commitments: meeting any Soviet military challenge and developing methods of resolving

---

<sup>256</sup> Peter H. Buckingham, *America Sees Red: Anti-Communism in America 1870s to 1980s* (Claremont, CA: Regina Books, 1988), 149, 157-160.

disputes with the Soviet Union peacefully. Reagan used similar wording, explaining that he intended “to do everything I can to persuade them [the Soviets] of our peaceful intent” and emphasizing the importance of viable negotiations. Bush likewise verbalized his desire to work with the Soviets to further *perestroika*, begin integrating the Soviet Union into the international community, and seek a genuine friendship between the two countries. These correlating expressions of peaceful relations should not come as a surprise. Avoiding war between the Soviet Union and the United States was a primary aim during the Cold War. The two sides struggled to gain a strategic military advantage over each other. At times, they came dangerously close to actual military conflict, but preserving the peace was a firm point of rhetorical discourse. Carter, Reagan, and Bush also had an advantage because their presidencies came at the end of the Cold War conflict. American involvement in Korea and Vietnam was complete and the Cuban crisis was over. Granted, there was still concern over Soviet involvement in the Middle East and Eastern Europe, but the United States was not taking an active, “boots on the ground” military role in those conflicts. As the small cracks began to show within the Soviet Union’s façade, the United States and its Presidents began furthering their hopeful expressions of a peaceful, if still wary, relationship with the Soviets.<sup>257</sup>

As the Soviet Union collapsed, America’s foreign policies and rhetoric would change yet again. There were new countries to recognize, new governments with which to form relations, and a new Russia under the leadership of Boris Yeltsin. Carter, Reagan, and Bush developed new rhetorical styles and terminology to explain the developing policies that their

---

<sup>257</sup> Carter, “State of the Union.”  
Reagan, “Evil Empire Speech.”  
Bush, “Beyond Containment.”

administrations designed to meet the challenges of a changing world. Each President had to develop the present to shape the future in word and in deed.

## Section III: Views of the Berlin Wall

### Introduction

No Cold War landscape is as iconic as the Berlin Wall. The Wall was more than cement blocks, mortar, guard towers, and barbed wire; it developed an identity of its own. To the Warsaw Pact and the German Democratic Republic, the Wall was the “Anti-Fascist Protective Barrier.” It embodied an entire continent’s divided circumstances: Germany’s and Europe’s hopes, dreams, and fears . . . their past and their future. The Wall symbolized that Germans were not a people united; they were divided geographically, politically, and emotionally. Given Germany’s late unification under Chancellor Otto von Bismarck, it was not clear to all that a divided Germany was unusual in historical terms. In 1983, 43% of West German students under the age of twenty-one described their East German counterparts as foreigners. The Wall created an “us” versus “them” environment. In this city, which symbolized so much that was proud and problematic about German history, an East Berliner could see the lights and hear the sounds of West Berlin and readily recognize the freedoms which did not exist in the East. The Soviet and East German leadership created the Berlin Wall, in large part, as the solution to the mass exodus of people from East Germany to West Germany and West Berlin. West Berlin was situated in the heart of East Germany and controlled by the British, French, and Americans in keeping with the Quadripartite Agreement following World War II. It stood in stark contrast to the Communist regime in East Berlin and provided a comparatively easy escape route for citizens unhappy with life in East Germany. This draining of physical, mental, and financial resources created a crisis that the East German and Soviet governments addressed by building a barrier to help secure the border. In and around Berlin, that physical boundary was the Berlin Wall. The Wall stood as

a silent reminder of East German, and thereby Soviet, failures in regards to human rights and liberties. Yet even more than that, to the West, the Wall represented Communism's failures and, in a provocative way, the West's failure to prevent the Wall's erection and bring its downfall. During the years after the 1977 Helsinki Accords on Human Rights, the Wall represented a rebuke to the notion that such rights were granted on the eastern side, despite what the document promised.<sup>258</sup>

Given the Berlin Wall's controversial prominence and the American military presence in West Berlin as part of the World War II-era Quadripartite Agreement, the Wall's presence in American presidential speeches is unsurprising. It remained a last remnant of the alliance which won the war; it symbolized the crack-up of the Allies and the rearrangement of victors and vanquished. What is surprising, however, is the different manner with which each President treated the Wall in his public addresses. As will be shown, President Carter rarely mentioned the Wall. This is an oddity considering his administration's emphasis on human rights. Carter never gave a formal speech in Berlin despite visiting the city in 1978. His visit justifies my inclusion of the Wall as a topic within this dissertation. To visit Berlin and not to address the Wall with a formal speech was a most unusual presidential decision, which bears as much analysis as Carter's words on the subject. Unlike Carter, President Reagan delivered two different speeches centered upon the Berlin Wall during visits to the city, frequently emphasized his disgust at the Wall's existence in public addresses, and publicly urged the Soviets to remove the Wall long before his iconic "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall" speech in 1987. Like Reagan, Bush mentioned the Wall with regularity. However, unlike Reagan, Bush had the luxury of holding office when the Wall fell. In fact,

---

<sup>258</sup> Michael Meyer, *The Year that Changed the World: The Untold Story Behind the Fall of the Berlin Wall* (New York: Scribner, 2009), 15, 25.

his response to the collapse of the Cold War European order became a political issue itself. He was in the White House when the masses of East and West Germans literally tore down the Wall, partied in the streets, and made it obvious that, no matter what leaders said, they were taking history into their own hands. The international community sought President Bush's opinion of and response to the unfolding events. The Wall's demise thus provided ample opportunity for victorious and patriotic rhetoric. Despite ample opportunity, Bush's repeated statements of not wanting to dance on the Berlin Wall gives the impression that he lacked the desire to purposefully steal the Germans' moment of glory. These statements also provide one reason why Bush never uttered an entire speech dedicated to the Berlin Wall (aside from a four paragraph statement on August 12, 1989, on the 28<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Wall's creation) and why he did not visit Berlin after the Wall came down, although the Berlin Wall was a frequent topic referenced within his other speeches.\* Despite the different approaches each President took to this Cold War icon, their presidential addresses do maintain a sense of continuity in terms of subject and ideology, and all were well-received by the American public.<sup>259</sup>

---

<sup>259</sup> George H. W. Bush, "Statement on the Anniversary of the Berlin Wall," Aug. 12, 1989. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=17423>.

\*President Bush never visited Berlin during his presidency, before or after the Berlin Wall fell.

## **Chapter 1: Jimmy Carter on the Berlin Wall**

### **“Berlin Town Hall Meeting”**

#### **July 15, 1978**

### **Introduction**

Despite the Berlin Wall’s prominence in contemporary society and the Carter administration’s heavy emphasis upon human rights, President Carter’s relationship with the Wall was complicated. Strained relations with the Soviet Union were gradually beginning to ease following the Cuban Missile Crisis, and the United States was reluctant to enter another military conflict in the aftermath of the Vietnam War. Given its position at the heart of the East-West conflict in Europe, Carter could not avoid the Wall completely within his foreign policies and rhetoric, but he did take steps which minimized his direct association with the Wall throughout his administration. Carter uttered the words “Berlin Wall” during a public address a mere five times in four years. In comparison, Reagan directly referenced the Wall approximately forty times and Bush said “Berlin Wall” nearly seventy times during their respective administrations. The first time Carter directly addressed the Wall was during his town hall meeting in Berlin in 1978, a diplomatic visit where it would have been impossible to avoid the issue completely. The other four occasions were all in 1980 – a fundraising dinner, a Democratic Committee voter registration rally, and two different question-and-answer sessions at town hall meetings.

One could argue that Carter’s disassociation from the Wall was merely circumstantial due to the attention he gave the American hostage crisis and other global crises during his term. The hostage crisis used a large portion of the administration’s energy, and rightly so, but this argument does not provide a well-developed explanation. For example, while Carter might have wanted to de-emphasize the Cold War, the Soviet incursion into Afghanistan in

December 1977, among other episodes, showed its stubborn relevance. The notion that the Wall was the epicenter of the Cold War had already been established, but that does not mean that each President chose to handle the Berlin Wall in the same manner. Presidents Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon visited the Berlin Wall and made frequent mention of the city of Berlin within their public addresses. President Gerald Ford was the only President preceding Carter not to visit the Berlin Wall, but he likewise raised the issues within Berlin on multiple public occasions. In contrast to these similarities, of the three aforementioned Presidents, only Kennedy delivered a lauded public speech at the Wall. However, there is no readily apparent evidence that the Carter administration was embroiled in a conspiracy or even a specific tactic to turn a blind eye to Berlin or the Berlin Wall. President Carter hosted West German Chancellor Schmidt at the White House in July 1977; the President answered press interview questions relating to both West and East Germany; and the White House Press Office released various statements concerning the city of Berlin. Furthermore, in an interview with *Der Spiegel* Magazine, President Carter responded quite positively concerning the relationship between the United States and the Federal Republic of Germany:

Question: Mr. President, critics on both sides of the Atlantic assert that relations between the United States and its strongest ally in Europe, the Federal Republic, have reached a low point.

The President: I believe that German-American relations are in fact both very good and extraordinarily close. Our two governments consult as intensely and frequently as at any other time in the history of the Western Alliance ...

Question: So there is no bad rapport between you and Chancellor Schmidt?

The President: My personal relationship with Chancellor Schmidt is excellent. I have met with him four times since coming into office, and we consult regularly by telephone . . .

From the statements above, one can see that Germany was not absent from the White House's list of strategic concerns. However, President Carter did personally remove a reference to Berlin from the second draft of his 1980 State of the Union Address, so the relationship between the Carter White House and Berlin was one of complexity.<sup>260</sup>

Carter's responses within the interview were rather optimistic in comparison with reality, but one cannot fault Carter for expressing a positive perspective. In contrast to this perspective were the media and the leadership in Western Europe who were all wary of Carter's perceived flip-flopping on issues like international security. For example, Carter repeatedly claimed that he wanted to strengthen Western defense capability, but at the same time he cut production of the B-1 bomber, a move that the European governments viewed as contradictory to the President's stated objective. Carter also accused America's European allies, particularly Chancellor Schmidt of West Germany, of not living up to their defense obligations and relying too heavily upon the United States for military support. Such political pressure caused periodic strained relations between the President and European leaders.<sup>261</sup>

At first glance, Carter's 1978 Berlin visit appears to be a continuation of what can be interpreted as his rhetorical reluctance to address the Berlin Wall. Carter spent only a few minutes viewing the Wall and gave no prepared speech at or relating to the Wall, opting to hold a town hall meeting where he fielded one question regarding the Wall and gave a brief,

---

<sup>260</sup> Press Release, Exchange of Toasts between the President and His Excellency Helmut Schmidt the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, Jul. 13, 1977, folder "Berlin West Germany – Economic Summit Meeting, 7/13/78-7/17/78," box 104, White House Press Office, Rex Granum, JCL. Interview, President Carter with Heinz Lohfeldt of *Der Spiegel Magazine*, Jul. 13, 1978, JCL. Speech Draft, "State of the Union," folder "1/23/80 [Material for State of the Union Address] [2]," box 166, Office of the Staff Secretary, JCL.

<sup>261</sup> Joe Renouard and D. Nathan Vigil, "The Quest for Leadership in a Time of Peace: Jimmy Carter and Western Europe, 1977-1981" from Matthias Schulz and Thomas A. Schwatz' *The Strained Alliance: U.S.-European Relations from Nixon to Carter* (New York: Cambridge University Press), 311, 313.

three-sentence response. Some would describe such actions as curious or cowardly, but an analysis of archival material related to Carter's Berlin trip suggests that the aforementioned decisions are an example of Carter's political savvy and ideological commitment. Carter's decisions to only view the Berlin Wall and hold a town hall meeting were not moments of cowardice, but evidence of his recognition of his own strengths and weaknesses.

### **Development**

In comparison with other presidential trips to Berlin, President Carter's 1978 visit was rhetorically unremarkable. His prepared statements were standard fare and he did not deliver a major speech. Like other Presidents, Carter's stop in Berlin was scheduled in coordination with an international meeting, in this case, a two-day economic summit in Bonn. The Carters' visit was the result of a direct invitation from Federal Republic of Germany Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, who expressed that Carter's visit to the FRG would be most welcome to both Schmidt and the West German people. The tone of Schmidt's memo is professional, yet warm and friendly. Schmidt's words and phrasing, particularly his addressing the President as "Jimmy," support Carter's claims of an amicable relationship as discussed earlier within this chapter.<sup>262</sup>

While in Germany, Carter, like other Presidents, visited with the leading West German political figures – the West German Chancellor Schmidt and the Governing Mayor Dietrich Stobbe of Berlin – and stopped to view the Berlin Wall. However, unlike other Presidents, Carter viewed the Wall from a diplomatic platform in the Potsdamer Platz for a brief ten minutes. The archives reveal that the advance team relayed that there were three or

---

<sup>262</sup> Memo, David Aaron to President Carter, Subject: Message from Helmut Schmidt, National Security Affairs – Brzezinski Material, Correspondence with Foreign Leaders File, JCL.

four places to stop to visit the Wall, but Potsdamer Platz was the recommended venue since it was a busy intersection with different options for motorcade routes. This was an important detail since the administration wanted to use the fastest route possible. The selected location was also described as “very stark – see barbed wires and dogs – white sand to be lit at night” and was within the American sector of the city. The other options that were ruled out included the Brandenburg Gate, since it was a prime tourist stop, and the Checkpoint Charlie Tollbooth, since it had no compelling backdrop. The Press Advance Office desired an ideal location for the President to view the Wall – one that was easily accessible from the motorcade route, would not present too many security issues, and that was aesthetically desirable for the press photographers. In advance of the President’s arrival, the press would be positioned on two separate platforms so they could document the President’s visit to the Wall. Following this short visit, the President returned to his motorcade and proceeded to Kongresshalle for the town hall meeting.<sup>263</sup>

Carter’s decision to not speak at the Wall but to instead hold a town hall meeting before a semi-controlled audience of approximately 1,000 invited Germans\* is significant for two key reasons. First, by holding a town hall meeting rather than giving a traditional speech, Carter automatically removed any possibility of his rhetoric in Berlin being compared to President Kennedy’s iconic speech. Carter was not a golden-tongued orator like President Kennedy. Carter would have lost the battle of the speeches and the Carter administration knew it. However, comparing a speech with a question-and-answer town hall

---

<sup>263</sup> Notes, folder “Trip – West Berlin, 7/78,” box 22, Press Advance – Edwards, JCL.

\*Around 600 of the Berliners in attendance had participated in an American-German Friendship Force program between the cities of Minneapolis and West Berlin. Another 300 had registered earlier in the year for a similar meeting with Chancellor Schmidt. Another sixty came from twelve different organizations, including political parties, churches, the Jewish community, labor unions, etc. Berlin’s John F. Kennedy School, a German-American high school, sent a teacher and four students. There were also twenty elderly East Germans in attendance who had obtained passes to West Berlin for family visits.

meeting is difficult since the two are fundamentally different in form. By utilizing the town hall format, Carter spared himself any rhetorical comparisons with prior Presidents.<sup>264</sup>

Second, Carter himself desired the town hall format rather than a speech, a fact publicized in the West German press. On July 10, *Der Abend* reported that “It was Carter’s own idea to hold a town meeting in the Congress Hall after the American pattern and to face spontaneous questions from the citizenry.” The question which should then be asked is, “Why did President Carter want to hold a town hall meeting?” Again, the West German press provided the answer. The *Berliner Morgenpost* relayed the following on July 12:

He [Carter] insisted on an open discussion with the Berliners. Why? The town meeting is the medium in which he feels the most at home. It is a concept developed for him, tailored for the personality and character of Jimmy Carter. Already in the election campaign, this politician’s profile was always best when he confronted the people face-to-face . . . The town meetings have a freshness and immediacy which is totally missing in the President’s more frequent news conferences with professional interrogators from the press. What the press tries time and again, no one from among the people has ever tried, i.e. to trap the President.

This summary provides multiple logical arguments. Carter was not widely considered to be a great speech-maker. A wise man knows his weaknesses and takes the necessary steps to minimize them. The inverse is true of a man’s strengths; he should seek ways to maximize and use them. The campaign trail had shown that Carter’s Southern charm worked well in smaller, less formal atmospheres. He had already established a willingness to alter traditional formats that would continue during his term in office.\* A town hall meeting with an audience of 1,000 fit his personality better than a speech in front of 10,000. However, the

---

<sup>264</sup> Ellen Lentz, “Carter Forum Surprises Germans,” *New York Times*, Jul. 15, 1978.

\*An example of Carter’s willingness to adopt non-traditional formats in engaging the public is Carter’s non-traditional use of a White House phone-in during which he answered calls from the public.

press relayed that West German governmental officials were nervous over the possibility of Carter committing a *faux pas* in giving an unprepared answer.<sup>265</sup>

Despite Carter's experience with the town hall format and the belief that private citizens would be a less critical audience, the West German officials were understandably concerned. U.S. newspapers reported that West German and Berlin officials were "a little bit nervous" and "worried." The reasons for this uneasiness were simple. The Germans were culturally accustomed to organized political events in which the audience did not participate in a role other than spectator. Second, in a prepared speech, everyone knows exactly what is going to be said. The speech is approved by not only the speechwriting staff, but also the State Department, the President's legal advisers, key personnel in the administration, the President himself, and sometimes foreign officials as well. Every detail is scrutinized to avoid any unnecessary negative repercussions. This safety net of readers is not available in a live event like a town hall meeting. The answers are filtered by one person – the person answering the questions.<sup>266</sup>

On average, the speech development process takes days to weeks, giving the President ample time to prepare. Whereas at a live event, even though the President studies in advance, answers must be given immediately. This was the one point which worried West German officials the most. Would Carter have enough time "to think about the impact of his words?" The wrong statement or imprecise wording could have an enormous international impact on East-West relations. The *Berliner Morgenpost* worried: "What if the President's tongue slips? What if that causes new political conflicts for the already complicated judicial

---

<sup>265</sup> "Berlin As a Concern: Carter's Visit," *Der Abend*, Jul. 10, 1978.

"In the Town Meeting Jimmy Carter Seeks to Talk with the 'Man on the Street,'" *Berliner Morgenpost*, Jul. 12, 1978.

<sup>266</sup> Michael Getler, "Carter's Visit to W. Berlin Makes Bonn 'Bit Nervous.'" *The Washington Post*, Jul. 10, 1978. A 14.

situation of the Four Power City?” Carter knew that his words would be scrutinized, but he also wanted the interaction to be genuine. No pre-selected or screened questions were permitted. The audience was to ask the questions live and Carter, as the *Berliner Morgenpost* highlighted, had a record of making factual errors concerning Berlin and West Germany. Such mistakes would not aid the diplomatic process and East-West relations.<sup>267</sup>

Given this negativity and apprehension by both German and American officials, President Carter did something that would be expected. He practiced! Indeed, the entire preparation process for the Berlin town hall meeting can be summarized with that one word – practice. The Carter administration planned the entire visit, but especially the town hall meeting, with the utmost care and consideration, a reality revealed through scrutinizing the President’s Briefing Book for the Berlin trip. The Department of State put a high value upon the information within the Briefing Book, printing “Classified” in all capital letters five times in a line from the bottom to top along the left binding of the book. Aside from the chosen few, no one was to know this book existed or the policy information it contained.<sup>268</sup>

The Briefing Book began with some brief “Do’s and Don’t for Berlin,” covering one and a half pages. These instructions included historical information relating to the Allies’ “rights and responsibilities in Berlin” in accordance with the agreement following World War II, the Allies’ insistence on “dealing only with the USSR (not the GDR) on matters concerning Berlin,” and a listing of the proper political terminology to be used. This terminology instruction included the following:

---

<sup>267</sup> Michael Getler, “Carter’s Visit to W. Berlin Makes Bonn ‘Bit Nervous.’” *The Washington Post*, Jul. 10, 1978. A 14.

“In the Town Meeting Jimmy Carter Seeks to Talk with the ‘Man on the Street,’” *Berliner Morgenpost*, Jul. 12, 1978.

<sup>268</sup> *Department of State Briefing Book*, folder “President, Germany, 7/13-17/78: Berlin Town Meeting Questions and Answers,” box 4, National Security Affairs – Brzezinski Material: Trip File, JCL.

The Four Power status of Berlin (not West Berlin)  
 The U.S. Embassy to the GDR (not in the GDR)  
 East Berlin or the Eastern Sector (without the implication that we accept East Berlin  
 as the capital of the GDR)  
 The Western Allies (U.S., UK and France)  
 The Western Allies and the Federal Republic (not the Four Powers, which refers to  
 the four wartime allies – U.S., U.K., France and USSR)  
 Sector Boundary or Sector Line (not border or border of West Berlin)\*

These statements were all part of a political game aimed at maintaining the political status-  
 quo in Europe, emphasizing Berlin's unique status in the world, and avoiding the awarding of  
 any underserved recognition to the East German and Soviet authorities. These were exactly  
 the types of misstatements that the German official feared Carter would make, so Carter's  
 team made sure the President was well-versed in the correct terminology prior to the trip.<sup>269</sup>

The briefing book's other ninety plus pages are "Contingency Questions and  
 Answers" for the Town Hall Meeting. Each page contained one or more questions that the  
 President would quite possibly face along with as a carefully-constructed, administration-  
 approved response. These questions covered a wide variety of topics and logically included  
 questions relating directly to Berlin, including security, public access, economic investment,  
 political tensions (both within the city itself and the city's unique position between East and  
 West Germany), and criminal activity. However, the State Department also prepared Carter  
 for questions relating to three other entities. The first of these entities, and the one containing  
 the second highest number of prepared questions (second only to Berlin itself), was the  
 Federal Republic of Germany (i.e. West Germany). The prepared questions and answers  
 focused upon the issue of German reunification, international nuclear development, the  
 depreciation of the U.S. dollar, and U.S.-FRG relations. The second entity was the German

---

\* Underlined text is underlined for emphasis within the original document.

<sup>269</sup> *Department of State Briefing Book*, folder "President, Germany, 7/13-17/78: Berlin Town Meeting Questions and Answers," box 4, National Security Affairs – Brzezinski Material: Trip File, JCL.

Democratic Republic (i.e. East Germany). The administration expected Carter to field questions relating to German nationality, human rights, and U.S.-GDR relations. The third entity, logically, was the Soviet Union, with the expected questions ranging from U.S.-Soviet relations, to SALT, to the neutron bomb, to human rights.<sup>270</sup>

The presence of these four categories – Berlin, West Germany, East Germany, and the Soviet Union – was expected given the geographic and historical setting of Carter’s town hall meeting. In contrast, the manner in which the administration prepared and answered the questions is quite striking. As previously stated, the Briefing Book covered a wide variety of topics, but some of these topics received more attention than others because they have more questions dedicated to them and/or have more extensive answers provided. The majority of the questions related to the city of Berlin itself, yet only one question was dedicated to the existence of the Berlin Wall. (The development of this question will be discussed in further detail in the Analysis section of this chapter.) It was logical for the State Department to assume that the majority of questions from a Berliner audience would relate to the city, but the State Department also knew that Berliners were interested in and impacted by international topics as well. Likewise, the State Department sensibly assumed that certain questions would require longer answers than others. Considering that the prepared answers averaged three sentences in length, one could guess that the State Department desired President Carter to keep his answers brief and to the point. This assumption is supported by the fact that Carter was to use his shortest answer, a simple “No,” if he received a question relating to whether the United States “increased the number of flag tours it sends to East Berlin since the Soviets increased their flag tours in West Berlin in July 1977.” But brevity

---

<sup>270</sup> *Department of State Briefing Book*, folder “President, Germany, 7/13-17/78: Berlin Town Meeting Questions and Answers,” box 4, National Security Affairs – Brzezinski Material: Trip File, JCL.

was not always deemed the best option since three questions relating to investment and economic welfare in Berlin, one question relating to the development of nuclear energy, and one question relating to U.S. foreign policy towards the Soviet Union received the longest prepared responses at eight to ten sentences in length. The State Department also encouraged the President to avoid certain controversial and/or confidential issues. If asked, “Does the United States perform electronic or postal interception in Berlin?” the President was to answer, “I prefer not to comment on that.” The declining to answer could lead one to believe that the United States did, in fact, monitor postal communications within the city. Given the international presence in Berlin, particularly the Soviet sector, this assumption would not be surprising, but one can understand why it would be disquieting for Berliners because it was an invasion of their personal privacy.<sup>271</sup>

The archival evidence demonstrates the Carter administration’s preparation for the Berlin town hall meeting and confidence in its ability to succeed in its communicative aims and diplomatic good will. Indeed, at the July 7 White House press briefing, the administration official in charge began by highlighting the President’s upcoming trip, specifically the town hall meeting, saying,

I will draw your attention to the town meeting in Berlin, which is a somewhat unusual occasion where the President will have an opportunity to meet and talk to roughly 1,000 Berliners who will have been invited from all walks of life, representing different interests, generations, and so forth. It will be a give-and-take of direct exchange.

After his opening informative remarks, the official then opened the floor for questions and received the following question on the Berlin Wall: “Is Carter the first President since Kennedy to visit the Wall?” After some discussion back and forth, as noted earlier within

---

<sup>271</sup> *Department of State Briefing Book*, folder “President, Germany, 7/13-17/78: Berlin Town Meeting Questions and Answers,” box 4, National Security Affairs – Brzezinski Material: Trip File, JCL.

this chapter, it was determined that President Kennedy visited, President Nixon visited, and President Ford did not. Vice Presidents Lyndon Johnson and Walter Mondale also visited the Berlin Wall. The official confirmed that Carter planned to visit the Wall, but he did not confirm whether or not the President would make a statement at the Wall. As previously noted, ultimately, Carter did not; but there is much to be gained by examining what Carter said during the town hall meeting, particularly in relation to the Berlin Wall.<sup>272</sup>

## Analysis

President Carter opened the forum with prepared remarks lasting eight minutes. This opening statement, just like a traditional speech, was carefully crafted before the President departed Washington. In keeping with his desire for open discourse, Carter emphasized friendship, both personal and national. He was on a mission of goodwill and wanted to further the American-German relationship through thoughtful conversation directly with the German people.<sup>273</sup>

---

<sup>272</sup> Background Briefing, Jul. 7, 1978, folder "West Germany – Pre-Departure Material, 7/13/78-7/17/89," box 104, White House Press Office – Granum Trip Files, JCL.

<sup>273</sup> The Carters arrived at Kongresshalle at 3:15 pm and were escorted to the assigned holding room. Mrs. Carter was escorted to her seat in the hall at 3:55 and the President proceeded to the platform at 4:00 where Mayor Stobbe greeted and introduced the President to the 1,000 member audience. Amy Carter, only ten years old at the time, was not in attendance at the townhall meeting. As her father revealed in answer to a question from the audience, Amy Carter spent the day at the Berlin Zoo instead.

Notes, folder "Trip – West Berlin, 7/78," box 22, Press Advance – Edwards, JCL.

Press Release, Exchange of Toasts between the President and His Excellency Helmut Schmidt the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, Jul. 13, 1977, folder "Berlin West Germany – Economic Summit Meeting, 7/13/78-7/17/78," box 104, White House Press Office, Rex Granum, JCL.

Opening Remarks Draft, folder "Trip – West Berlin, 7/78," box 22, Press Advance – Edwards, JCL.

Opening Remarks Drafts, folder, "7/15/78 – Berlin Town Meeting GS," box 29, Speechwriter's Office – Chronological File, JCL.

## Friendship and Resilience

In exhibiting and discussing gestures of friendship, Carter first highlighted that this was his second visit to Berlin. Carter's first visit was five years earlier when he was Governor of Georgia. Carter made a single trip to Europe and, during his time in West Germany, desired to meet with West German governmental officials to strengthen trade ties in the manufacturing, technology, and investment sectors. During that visit, Carter was informed that it was impossible for a mere governor to meet with the Chancellor, but he would be able to meet with the Finance Minister, who then set up what Carter viewed as a profitable appointment with the Volkswagen Board of Directors. The direct outcome of that meeting is hard to ascertain. Volkswagen has had a growing presence in the United States since 1956. Although the company does not have offices or a production plant in Georgia, its newest assembly plant in Chattanooga, Tennessee, is only a few miles north of the Georgia border, close enough to attract workers from the state. As Governor, Carter was certainly interested in positioning Georgia to host international business. The other, unspoken, outcome of that trip lay with Carter's established plan to utilize the final two years of his governorship as a stepping stone to the presidency. He and his advisors strategized on how to highlight his appeal to a national audience and make his record as governor as outstanding as possible.<sup>274</sup>

---

<sup>274</sup> Jimmy Carter, "Berlin, Federal Republic of Germany Question-and-Answer Session at a Town Meeting," Jul. 15, 1978. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=31087>. (Hereafter noted as Carter, "Town Meeting.") Press Release, Exchange of Toasts between the President and His Excellency Helmut Schmidt the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, Jul. 13, 1977, folder "Berlin West Germany – Economic Summit Meeting, 7/13/78-7/17/78," box 104, White House Press Office, Rex Granum, JCL. "Community," Volkswagen Group of America, Accessed Dec. 22, 2011, <http://www.volkswagengroupamerica.com/community/index.htm>. Godbold, 254.

Carter continued his focus upon friendship by listing two historic Berlin sites that he and his family had visited during their brief time in the city in 1973 – the Wall and the Memorial Church. Carter said simply that they “saw the Wall,” a statement which stands in stark contrast to the fact that they “worshipped at the Memorial Church.” The first draft on July 8 repeated the verb “saw” in reference to the church. “Saw” has a very different, more passive meaning than “prayed” (an option marked on a July 10 version) which is also different from “worshipped” as used in the final draft. One can see a building simply by driving past the exterior. To see is not to engage both bodily and spiritually, which is the case with prayer and worship. The drafts also made a point of clarification regarding the church itself. The original statement of “the church” would leave Berliners confused regarding which particular church Carter referred to as he continued speaking. By changing the reference to the Memorial Church, there would be no doubt in the audience’s mind that Carter had visited the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche (Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church), a notable landmark located in the Breitscheidplatz, in the heart of what was West Berlin. The church sustained damage during the Allied bombing of Berlin, and the original shattered tower still stands today as a reminder of that dark hour of Germany history. Carter highlighted the church serving as a reminder of the tragic past, but also a “hopeful promise of your [the Berliners’] future.” This message parallels Carter’s own expressed goals of helping the German people move forward despite the political uncertainties of the day.<sup>275</sup>

At this point, the final draft of the speech omitted a key phrase that was present throughout the drafts. That phrase was in German: “*Ich habe einen Koffer in Berlin*” or “I

---

<sup>275</sup> Carter, “Town Meeting.”

Opening Remarks Draft, folder “Trip – West Berlin, 7/78,” box 22, Press Advance – Edwards, JCL.  
 Opening Remarks Drafts, folder, “7/15/78 – Berlin Town Meeting GS,” box 29, Speechwriter’s Office – Chronological File, JCL.

still have a suitcase in Berlin.” If this phrase seems familiar, it is because Ronald Reagan included it as part of his Brandenburg Gate speech, which will be discussed later. The drafts do not indicate a precise reason for the phrase’s removal other than “Cut. Too much” with the sentence crossed out on the July 10 draft.<sup>276</sup>

Carter was happy that the friendly environment he had encountered five years earlier had not waned with time. He expressed, “I’m pleased to enjoy the warmth and friendship of this hall.” This statement is an affirmation of congenial relations and a point of comparison to what Carter had seen at the Potsdamer Platz. Carter pointedly said that the Wall was “a spectacle that so accurately reflects a wasteland of the human spirit responsible for the existence of the Wall. This demonstrates beyond the power of words the difference between those who believe in individual human rights, and those who do not.” This statement was an indirect condemnation of the Wall. To have a wasteland of spirit, one must be cold, with no compassion for humanity. If one has no compassion, then one will not believe in innate human rights, including life and liberty. In Carter’s eyes, that emptiness of spirit was what drove the Communists to build the Wall. As one would expect with a pointed and rather controversial political statement, this two-sentence paragraph underwent a significant transformation during the draft process. The first draft contains language more reminiscent of Reagan than of Carter, including:

There are those in this world who believe that there is no such thing as a free individual.

The Wall is the ugliest manifestation on earth of that ugly philosophy.

The Wall is also – as we all know – a flagrant violation of your city’s lawful status. Berlin is a four-power city; even a child knows that.

---

<sup>276</sup> Carter, “Town Meeting.” Opening Remarks Draft, folder “Trip – West Berlin, 7/78,” box 22, Press Advance – Edwards, JCL.

The rhetoric is sharp and cutting, contrasting the friendly ambiance surrounding Carter's trip. The reference to the Wall as a violation of Berlin's lawful status was the first statement edited out of Carter's address. The paragraph containing that sentence was circled and crossed out with one large X. The third draft, on July 10, also removed the material surrounding the first two statements and left wording very similar to what Carter uttered on July 15. The drafts do not indicate who changed this section's tone, but the handwriting does not appear to be Carter's.\* Regardless of who made the changes, the reality that the edits existed is significant and aligns with other Carter administration practices in maintaining a softer stance towards the Berlin Wall.<sup>277</sup>

It is at this point that Carter transitioned from his focus on friendship to his focus on resilience, a concept which did not exist at all in the first draft. Carter expresses his thankfulness for the domestic improvements and international agreements, specifically Détente, which provided a better standard of living for Berliners. Carter also stated that he hoped "the Détente which made them possible will be permitted to continue and to progress," a statement aimed at the Soviet leadership, namely Leonid Brezhnev who held office at the time. Carter also used this opportunity to make reference to Berlin's and the Allies' resilience in response to the Soviet blockade of Berlin, which had resulted in the Berlin Airlift. Just as America's commitment to freedom had not wavered then, so it would not falter during Carter's administration. The French and the British likewise affirmed their pledge to the people of Berlin. On this note, Carter closed his remarks, saying, "And now I

---

<sup>277</sup> Carter, "Town Meeting."

Opening Remarks Draft, folder "Trip – West Berlin, 7/78," box 22, Press Advance – Edwards, JCL.  
Opening Remarks Drafts, folder, "7/15/78 – Berlin Town Meeting GS," box 29, Speechwriter's Office – Chronological File, JCL.

\*The handwritten comments do not match verified presidential handwriting comments from other speech drafts.

would like for us to speak very freely with each other . . . I will answer your questions to the best of my ability.” To facilitate this free discussion, there were four microphones around the hall with translators on hand to provide simultaneous translation from German to English and back to German.<sup>278</sup>

### **Question-and-Answer**

It is revealing to examine the questions Carter fielded in comparison with the ones for which he was prepared. As the development section of this chapter explains, the Briefing Book’s questions were very much policy-oriented. But the Berlin audience was not filled with the political class; they were ordinary people of different ages and backgrounds, and their questions reflected the audience’s identity. Carter did answer some questions for which the Briefing Book prepared him, including ones related to the election of Berlin parliamentarians into the European Parliament, the Quadripartite Agreement, German reunification, U.S.-Soviet relations, terrorism, Berlin’s relation with the FRG, U.S.-GDR relations, the release of political prisoners within the GDR, and the Berlin Wall.

However, Carter also faced questions for which he had no formal preparation. These included two questions from students relating to his daughter, Amy. The first student asked, “Does your daughter Amy learn German in school, Mr. President?” Carter, ever the diplomat, replied that Amy did not study German yet, but that she had learned a lot of German words while on their trip and he felt sure that, after Amy mastered English and

---

<sup>278</sup> Carter, “Town Meeting.”

Opening Remarks Draft, folder “Trip – West Berlin, 7/78,” box 22, Press Advance – Edwards, JCL.

Opening Remarks Drafts, folder, “7/15/78 – Berlin Town Meeting GS,” box 29, Speechwriter’s Office – Chronological File, JCL.

Notes, folder “Trip – West Berlin, 7/78,” box 22, Press Advance – Edwards, JCL.

Memo, Pat Bauer to Anne Edwards, folder “Trip – West Berlin, 7/78,” box 22, Press Advance – Edwards, JCL.

Spanish, German would be the next language she learned. Mastering two foreign languages is unusual for American children, but certainly not unknown. It was also within this answer that the President revealed that Amy was spending the day at the Berlin Zoo, a historical and much-beloved civic institution. The second question relating to Amy Carter came from a twelve-year-old student named Uwe Horstmeyer who asked, “Mr. President, how much pocket money per week does your daughter Amy get?” The question brought a wave of laughter from the audience and the first word of the President’s answer continued the jovial tone. Carter answered, “Zero.” He then continued by explaining that Amy receives the public benefit of traveling with her parents on Air Force One and staying with her parents at the American Ambassador’s home in Bonn. Carter clarified that “she [Amy] gets no allowance, no money, from the Federal Treasury,” but did not fully answer the question. Again, the room filled with laughter.<sup>279</sup>

In comparing Carter’s responses with the prepared statements within the Briefing Book, one immediately notices that Carter’s rhetoric was less formal and he did not give “canned” answers. There are two plausible explanations for this. First, Carter was answering a live audience of individuals who were not interested in the polished political lingo of Washington D.C. They wanted honest answers and Carter was willing to oblige them. Second, the questions Carter fielded were not identical to the ones which the State Department prepared. For example, the State Department prepared Carter regarding the reunification of Germany with the following question: “What is the U.S. position on the eventual reunification of Germany?” The question was straight-forward and to the point. The question Carter received in Berlin relating to the reunification of Germany was: “What

---

<sup>279</sup> Carter, “Town Meeting.”

*Department of State Briefing Book*, folder “President, Germany, 7/13-17/78: Berlin Town Meeting Questions and Answers,” box 4, National Security Affairs – Brzezinski Material: Trip File, JCL.

did you mean or intend, Mr. President, when you said that the German nation had a claim and right for reunification, and how can your administration really afford to be interested in German reunification?" The two questions maintain some common ground, namely the United States' position on the issue, but they approach the topic from different directions and thus require different answers. Carter's answer to this question shows his ability to take an official answer and transform it into a personable answer. The State Department wanted Carter to answer firmly that "the United States has always favored eventual reunification of the German people based on the principle of self-determination." Carter answered the question as follows:

The constant commitment of the Western Allies ever since the NATO organization was formed, ever since the Second World War was over, is for the reunification of Germany, based upon the self-determination of the German people yourselves. And this is a commitment that I believe ought to be maintained and an ultimate hope that should be carefully preserved.

This portion of Carter's response bears a striking resemblance to the answer within the Briefing Book. However, Carter then expands his answer by saying:

We are not trying to impose our will upon the German people. But when the German people approach the time of making a decision for yourselves that Germany should be reunited and Berlin again be the capital of a unified Germany, we would certainly welcome that time, and we look forward to it with our prayers and constant hope.

The most striking phrase within Carter's response is his purposeful noting that the American people were not trying to impose their will upon another country. This was a charge frequently leveled against the United States during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The western European nations were wary of Carter's conflicting responses to world events and his constant pressuring of America's allies to do their part in global and regional efforts.<sup>280</sup>

---

<sup>280</sup> Carter, "Town Meeting."

In keeping with this chapter's subject objectives, one must also examine Carter's response to the question on the Berlin Wall. This was the only question within the archived Briefing Book that contained edits. Just as with Carter's opening remarks, the original version of his answer contained much stronger language than the words Carter actually spoke – "We are all discouraged and depressed by any Wall designed not to keep the enemy out, but to keep the people in." Again, this is a very Reagan-like statement and one that was thoroughly marked for removal in both drafts. Another statement, "It would be irresponsible for me to suggest a forceable [sic] removal of the wall in view of the terrible consequences that could provoke" was also cut, but bears a strong connection to the political consideration of the Soviet response to American actions. Ultimately, Carter gave a generalized answer and avoided the philosophical issues attached to the Wall. His prepared statement included references to the human right to travel and freedom of movement from one country to another. It was the perfect opportunity for Carter to repeat his administration's emphasis upon human rights, but Carter shaped his response differently. He simply replied that he did not know how long Berliners would have to live with the wall, that he hoped it would be removed in the future, but he had "no idea when it might be," and apologized for not being able to give a better answer. This answer can be viewed two ways. The first is one of frustration, that Carter was afforded the opportunity to put forth a firm answer centered upon human rights and the oppression of the German people, and he did not. The second is one of diplomacy, that Carter answered truthfully and politely and did not wish to create an antagonistic environment by speculating or forcing the issue. Regardless of which

---

*Department of State Briefing Book*, folder "President, Germany, 7/13-17/78: Berlin Town Meeting Questions and Answers," box 4, National Security Affairs – Brzezinski Material: Trip File, JCL.  
Joe Renouard and D. Nathan Vigil, "The Quest for Leadership in a Time of Peace: Jimmy Carter and Western Europe, 1977-1981" from Matthias Schulz and Thomas A. Schwatz' *The Strained Alliance: U.S.-European Relations from Nixon to Carter* (New York: Cambridge University Press), 310.

perspective a reader adopts, Carter's Berlin visit failed to create a substantive piece of rhetoric focused upon one of the city's most infamous landmarks – the Berlin Wall.<sup>281</sup>

### **Immediate Response**

The widespread immediate response to Carter's town hall meeting was positive, but its impact remains hard to assess. It is clear from the extent of the media coverage that the administration placed a high priority on the President's visit and the media also afforded the meeting due respect in the amount of network news coverage it received. However, there were no press interviews following the town hall meeting. There were newspaper articles written following the President's visit. On July 16, the *New York Times* ran a column titled, "Carter, Received Politely, Touched No Emotional Chords" with a picture of the President gazing over the Berlin Wall. The article comments that, although the West German people welcomed the Carter family quite warmly, gathering in throngs to watch his motorcade pass, the emotionally charged moments of past presidential visits were conspicuously absent from Carter's visit. The crowd responses were polite and obviously curious, but there were no moments full of heart-felt cheers from the audience. This might not necessarily have been a setback for the Carter administration, which wanted to depressurize the Cold War in keeping with Détente. Previous conflicts in Berlin served in part to heighten Cold War tensions. A different *New York Times* article presents a somewhat more positive report of the President's visit, describing the town hall audience as "delighted by the candor of the President's answers, and the crowd broke into enthusiastic applause when he pledged in German: . . . whatever may be, Berlin stays free." The remainder of the article relays news of East

---

<sup>281</sup> Carter, "Town Meeting."

*Department of State Briefing Book*, folder "President, Germany, 7/13-17/78: Berlin Town Meeting Questions and Answers," box 4, National Security Affairs – Brzezinski Material: Trip File, JCL.

Germany's protests over the presence of West German officials in the city, the East German's whitewashing graffiti off the Berlin Wall near where the President would stand, and some minor tiffs over protocol between the West Germans and Americans. Nothing is mentioned regarding the visit's legacy or its ability to have an impact upon world events.<sup>282</sup>

These two news articles provide evidence that the President's visit was considered newsworthy. However, the *New York Times* carried no additional articles regarding the President's visit to West Germany after July 16, the day after the town meeting. Carter's words and actions simply did not gain the attention of the American people or the international community, which is one probable reason why there was a lack of public response in the archive files. Had Carter addressed the Wall in a more forthright manner by including something like the lines removed from his prepared statements, perhaps the visit would have aroused more interest.

## **Conclusion**

The reality that President Carter never gave a formal speech where the Berlin Wall was the primary subject is surprising. However, as this chapter reveals, Carter's decision to use a town meeting format was not made in haste. He had specific, thought-out reasons for the choice he made. First, Carter successfully avoided comparison with President Kennedy by holding a town meeting rather than delivering a traditional speech. Second, the forum itself fit into the informal, democratic approach Carter repeatedly made his own, as when he carried his own luggage or walked during his Inauguration Parade. Using the town meeting

---

<sup>282</sup> John Vinocur, "Carter, Received Politely, Touches No Emotional Chords," *New York Times*, Jul. 16, 1978. Terence Smith, "Carter Addresses a 'Town Meeting' of West Berliners. East Germans Slow Traffic. Disruption of Access to the City is Seen as Protest against the Presence of Schmidt," *New York Times*, Jul. 16, 1978.

format was by no means easier than giving a traditional speech. In many ways, the preparation for the town meeting was more difficult.

Some could view Carter's stance in Berlin as timid, but one must recognize that Carter's actions were an attempt at heightening his political strengths and minimizing his political weaknesses. However, in adopting the town hall format, he also missed a valuable opportunity. In playing to his strengths of talking with a smaller, more friendly audience and avoiding his weakness as a dynamic speaker, he opened the door for a less charitable interpretation: his lack of fortitude. As the evidence shows, Carter's choice of a town meeting was probably not what other politicians of the time would have preferred. What is unknown is how the external forces impacted what Carter said. Did knowing that various American and West German leaders were nervous about his answers cause Carter to respond more conservatively than he might have otherwise? The European community had long criticized Carter for changing his stance on key international issues and for expecting the world to meet him on his moral platform. Carter's opening remarks and responses at the town hall meeting align with this view. Carter may have criticized the Berlin Wall in private, but he refused to create a rhetorical controversy in public. He passionately emphasized human rights around the world, but he did not raise the issue while in Berlin. In examining Carter's actions and statements in Berlin, it should come as no surprise that the American people largely overlooked this moment of presidential rhetoric.

**Chapter 2: Ronald Reagan on the Berlin Wall**  
**“Remarks on East-West Relations at the Brandenburg Gate in West Berlin”**  
**June 12, 1987**

**Introduction**

Ronald Reagan’s “Remarks on East-West Relations at the Brandenburg Gate in West Berlin” [hereafter referred to as the Brandenburg Gate Speech] should have come as no surprise to anyone – American politicians, Department of State officials, East or West Germans, or even the Soviets. In the years leading up to the Brandenburg Gate speech, President Reagan publically commented on the Berlin Wall over a dozen times in speeches, interviews, and public statements. The comments were never positive and always blunt. In 1981-1982 alone Reagan called the Berlin Wall “a dramatic example of the desperate and cruel extremes to which totalitarian regimes will go to deny their subjects contact with other Europeans,” “a border of brutality that assaults the human spirit and the civilized mind,” “that dreadful gray gash across the city [of Berlin],” and “a grim, gray monument to repression.”<sup>283</sup>

The Brandenburg Gate speech reflects Reagan’s personal convictions on the Berlin Wall. Yet to emphasize only one small line in the middle of the speech is to ignore the speech’s rhetorical setting. The speech was not just about the Berlin Wall. Indeed, only a small portion of the speech dealt with that topic. Furthermore, focusing on the one famous

---

<sup>283</sup> Ronald Reagan, “Statement on the Twentieth Anniversary of the Berlin Wall” Aug. 31, 1981. John T. Woolley and Gerhard Peters, The American Presidency Project [online]. Santa Barbara, CA. Available from the World Wide Web: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=44162>.  
 Ronald Reagan, “Remarks at the Welcoming Ceremony for Chancellor Helmut Schmidt of the Federal Republic of Germany” May 21, 1981. *Ibid.*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=43848>.  
 Ronald Reagan, “Address to Members of the British Parliament” Jun. 8, 1982. *Ibid.*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=42614>.  
 Ronald Reagan, “Remarks in New York City Before the United Nations General Assembly Special Session Devoted to Disarmament.” Jun. 17, 1982. *Ibid.*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=42644>.  
 Ronald Reagan, Berlin Wall Statement, Aug. 10, 1981, folder “Berlin Wall Statement, August 10, 1981,” box 4, Anthony Dolan Files, Ronald Reagan Library.

line ignores the speech's cultural setting. President Reagan was in Berlin not to antagonize the Soviets, but to celebrate the city's 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary and to make an attempt at improving East-West relations. To fully understand the significance of "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall," one must first understand the rhetorical and cultural significance of the speech in general.

### **Development**

As previously stated, Reagan's speechwriters tried to compose speeches as Reagan himself would have written them, including matching his tone, style, and message. Reagan possessed the gift of words, an effective manner of communicating on a personal level and a firm belief in right and wrong. Publication of the 2001 book, *Reagan, in His Own Hand*, which assembled hundreds of pages of Reagan's pre-White House writings, debunked the last lingering doubts that he was simply an actor who parroted other writers' lines. His approach to speech-making was methodical, his experience deep. The hallmark of Reagan's "trumpet-like" sound was his insistence on telling the truth as he saw it in his speeches. This truthfulness was not always appreciated by those in Washington D.C.'s diplomatic circles, who were more accustomed to reducing tension through strategic and tactical politeness or vagueness. This bothered Reagan, who was not shy about using terms such as "Evil Empire," which shocked the more sedate establishment. This was a frequent cause of friction between the White House and the State Department. The Brandenburg Gate speech is a prime example of this friction and its developmental process can be summarized with one word – controversy.<sup>284</sup>

---

<sup>284</sup> Peter Robinson, *How Ronald Reagan Changed My Life* (New York: HarperCollins, 2003), 88, 104.

Plans for President Reagan's visit to Berlin began in December 1986. A series of declassified White House, embassy, and State Department memos, including the following from Secretary of State George P. Shultz to the White House Situation Room, indicate widespread political support for the visit:

We recommend that you [President Reagan] consider stopping in Berlin on the way to the [Economic] Summit [in Venice, Italy] to commemorate the city's 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary . . . Your visit would underline the importance of the American role in Berlin and our commitment to freedom in Europe. You can deliver a major speech, in the shadow of the Berlin Wall, calling for a more open Berlin and a Europe more open between East and West.

Shultz's memo could not have been more prophetic. Reagan's speech did exactly what Shultz suggested – it underlined the importance of America's role in Berlin; it renewed America's commitment to European freedom; it was a major speech both then and now; it was held at the Berlin Wall; and it did call for more openness between the East and West.<sup>285</sup>

The aforementioned accomplishments sound simple enough, but, in reality, the speech's development was far from simple. Given the social climate of the time, a complicated developmental process was expected because the United States government, in keeping with the U.S.-Soviet Declaration of 1972 and its message of mutual restraint, did not want the President's Berlin visit and speech to intentionally antagonize the Soviets. Indeed, those individuals involved in drafting the speech went to great lengths in planning Reagan's visit to Berlin to avoid offending the Soviets. This included carefully selecting the sites Reagan visited as well as the words he spoke while at each of those sites.<sup>286</sup>

---

<sup>285</sup> Recommendation for Presidential Travel in Conjunction with the 1987 Venice Economic Summit, George P. Shultz to White House Situation Room, Dec. 12, 1986, folder "Bonn and Berlin, Germany (Binder) [1987 Summit]," box CF1158-1, James L. Hooley Files, RRL.

<sup>286</sup> Memo, Secretary of State Washington DC to American Embassy Bonn, Mar 81, folder "NATO Countries – FRG, June 1980-April 1981," box 90100, Sven Kraemer Files, RRL.  
Memo, American Embassy Bonn to Secretary of State Washington DC, Feb 87, folder "Bonn and Berlin, Germany (Binder) [1987 Summit]," box CF1158-1, James L. Hooley Files, RRL.

The White House followed standard procedure in sending an advance team to Berlin. This team, which included the Brandenburg Gate speech's author Peter Robinson, obtained information which would be put to use during the President's entire visit to Berlin. This survey team developed the key focal events which comprised Reagan's four hour, whirlwind trip to the city. First, President Reagan would meet with West German President Richard von Weizsäcker and West Berlin Mayor Eberhard Diepgen. This would be followed by a brief visit to the Reichstag to view the Marshall Plan exhibit. The President would then proceed to the Brandenburg Gate to deliver a "major speech ... [which would] look toward the future and emphasize the lowering of East-West tensions and barriers" before departing for Tempelhof Airport where the President would visit American troops and celebrate Berlin's 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary.<sup>287</sup>

It was also on this trip where Peter Robinson obtained many ideas for the speech. Robinson had received notification that the President's visit would include a speech at the Berlin Wall to an audience of several thousand and, given the setting, the President "probably ought to talk about foreign policy" – a vague description at best. In Berlin, Robinson took the opportunity to speak with local citizens for their opinions of the Wall at the home of Dieter Elz. What prior connections Robinson held with the Elz family, if any, is unclear. What the archives do make clear is that Peter Robinson included Dieter Elz' home address (approximately eleven kilometers southwest of the Brandenburg Gate) and phone number in his personal research notes from the Berlin advance trip. As will be discussed within the

---

<sup>287</sup> Memo, Peter R. Sommer to Frank C. Carlucci, Feb 2, 1987, folder "Berlin Visit 1987 (1)," box 92202, Peter R. Sommer Files, RRL.

speech analysis, this personal visit proved most valuable, providing the foundation of key moments within the speech.<sup>288</sup>

The entire time between Robinson's visit and Reagan's delivery of the Brandenburg Gate speech was filled with edits, feedback, re-writes, and political strife. Given the speech's broad theme and the political hazards placed in his path, it is not surprising that Peter Robinson's initial drafts read very differently from what Ronald Reagan spoke on June 12, 1987. The speech morphed from a rather depressing recounting of Berlin's history, filled with explanations of the difficulties Berliners faced on a daily basis, to one looking forward to future opportunities. Instead of a speech known for its optimistic perspective and future possibilities, the Brandenburg Gate Speech would have been remembered for such resoundingly depressing lines as:

When Berliners emerged from the air-raid shelters and basements in this month of May 1945, they were greeted by a wasteland – rubble, burnt-out tanks and artillery. Eighty thousand lay dead.

So it was that Berlin had drunk to the full the better [sic] dregs of Fascism, the first scourge of our century.

. . . the Nazis had visited upon this magnificent city [of Berlin] ruin and destruction.

Nazism had been destroyed. But a second totalitarian model sprang up in its wake, forcing Berlin to drink from this second bitter cup.

In addition to what equates to more than a three page history of Berlin and its suffering in many forms, the first draft also includes very strong expressions of mistrust towards the

---

<sup>288</sup> Robinson, 95.

Note, Peter Robinson, folder "Berlin – Brandenburg Address 06/12/1987)," box 335A, White House Office of Speechwriting: Speech Drafts, RRL.

Soviets and, at various points, an almost “folksy” or casual conversation rhetorical style.

Needless to say, such a speech would have been memorable, but for all the wrong reasons.<sup>289</sup>

Robinson did make significant and necessary changes, but the speech’s final version did contain some exact replicas of lines from the first draft. These identical twins include less notable lines such as, “But there remain armed guards and checkpoints all the same . . .” along with some popular applause lines like, “The German question is open as long as the Brandenburg Gate is closed,” “Today I say: As long as this gate is closed, as long as this scar of a wall is permitted to stand, it is not the German question alone that remains open, but the question of freedom for all mankind,” and the lyrics “*Ich hab noch einen koffer in Berlin.*”<sup>290</sup>

As exemplified below, the final draft contained even more paraphrases from the first draft. (The left-hand column provides the text from the “Peter1” draft; the right-hand column provides the text from the delivered speech.)

These remarks are being broadcast throughout Western Europe and North America. It is my understanding that they are being broadcast as well in the East . . .

Our gathering today is being broadcast throughout Western Europe and North America. I understand that it is being seen and heard as well in the East. To those” listening throughout Eastern Europe . . .

Let us remember as well that the wall not only encircles Berlin but divides the entire continent of Europe.

Behind me stands a wall that encircles the free sectors of this city, part of a vast system of barriers that divides the entire continent of Europe.

---

<sup>289</sup> Speech Draft, “Brandenburg Gate Speech,” folder “Brandenburg Gate West Berlin, June 12, 1987 (3),” box 9, Peter Robinson Files, RRL.

<sup>290</sup> Speech Draft, “Brandenburg Gate Speech,” folder “Brandenburg Gate West Berlin, June 12, 1987 (3),” box 9, Peter Robinson Files, RRL.

Ronald Reagan, “Remarks on East-West Relations at the Brandenburg Gate in West Berlin” (Jun 12, 1987). Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*.

<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=34390>. (Hereafter noted as Reagan, “Brandenburg Gate Speech.”)

. . . in looking at the history of this city, I find and can share with you a message of hope; in the shadow of this wall, even a message of triumph.

Many took seriously Khrushchev's threat to the United States . . . "We will bury you."

In announcing the Marshall Plan precisely 40 years ago this week, the American Secretary of State George Marshall stated: "Our policy is directed not against any country or doctrine, but against hunger, poverty, desperation, and chaos."

If you truly believe in *glasnost*, Herr Gorbachev, bring down this wall.

For I find in Berlin a message of hope, even in the shadow of this wall, a message of triumph.

In the 1950s, Khrushchev predicted: "We will bury you."

And in 1947 Secretary of State—as you've been told—George Marshall announced the creation of what would become known as the Marshall Plan. Speaking precisely 40 years ago this month, he said: "Our policy is directed not against any country or doctrine, but against hunger, poverty, desperation, and chaos."

General Secretary Gorbachev, if you seek peace, if you seek prosperity for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, if you seek liberalization: Come here to this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!

The similarity is readily obvious. The examples above are only a handful of the most obvious paraphrases. The first draft and final draft include many other rhetorical parallels, which is to be expected. If there was no similarity between the Peter 1 draft and the delivered speech, it should be cause for minor alarm. The Reagan speechwriting office did not operate by committee – a single speechwriter was responsible for each speech. Although other writers, including superiors, gave input and made edits to the drafts, each speech bore the personal stamp of the writer. Thus, it would not make sense for the Peter1 draft to bear no resemblance to the final draft since Robinson was the one assigned to do all the writing.<sup>291</sup>

Although most of the Brandenburg Gate speech's edits were rhetorical in nature, there were many officials who protested the speech's various components and concepts, and

---

<sup>291</sup>Speech Draft, "Brandenburg Gate Speech," folder "Brandenburg Gate West Berlin, June 12, 1987 (3)," box 9, Peter Robinson Files, RRL.  
Reagan, "Brandenburg Gate Speech."

even its overall tone. On May 27, William Henkel of the Presidential Advance Office stated that both he and Jim Hooley believed the current draft did not meet the rhetorical or political standards that their office desired.\* On this same date, Grant Green from the National Security Council Legal Advisor's Office bemoaned, "In reviewing the revised draft it is clear that serious differences still remain ... we [the NSC] do not concur with the speech being forwarded to the President in its current form." The NSC comments complimented the speech's themes of freedom and defense, but found the tone and substance lacking and feared the United States presenting itself as irrelevant to the larger European audience. This scathing criticism arrived after the speech had already proceeded through at least eight drafts and is a clear indication of why the speech progressed through at least another eight additional drafts. Despite the edits, the NSC's and State Department's displeasure did not ease with the speech's refinement. Colin Powell, the soon-to-be National Security Advisor, on June 1, 1987, sent a scathing memo saying, "We (and the State Department) continue to have serious problems with this speech." Peter Rodman, an assistant at the NSC, followed up on June 2 with a memo stating, "The Brandenburg Gate speech is better than before, but the staff is still unanimous that it's a mediocre speech and a missed opportunity." These negative views of a "mediocre" speech are ironic in view of the speech's prominence in today's society as one of the most quoted presidential speeches of all time.<sup>292</sup>

---

\* William Henkel's memo includes a direct quote from a February 6, 1987 memo on President Reagan's trip to Europe which states, "... a trip to Europe which holds great potential for a substantive and thematic 'signature.' ... the trip contains events that may match some of the great moments of previous foreign trips by successfully merging the themes, tones and emotions of the President's verbal messages with those evoked by the structure and setting of the events." It is this standard to which he refers and does not believe the current speech draft meets.

<sup>292</sup> Memo, William Henkel to Thomas C. Griscom, folder "Berlin Visit 1987 (3), box 92202, Peter A. Sommer Files, RRL.  
Speech Drafts, "Brandenburg Gate Speech," folder "Remarks: Brandenburg Gate West Berlin, June 12, 1987," box 9, Peter Robinson Files, RRL.

Despite the criticism, Reagan liked the speech and complimented the speechwriting staff on the drafts he had received. Hence, the speech stayed as Reagan desired, including its most controversial line – “Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall.” However, Reagan’s decision to include the line was not made lightly. In fact, Reagan debated its inclusion all the way up to his trip to Europe before ultimately telling his deputy chief of staff Kenneth Duberstein on two occasions, “Let’s leave it in ... The boys at State are going to kill me, but it’s the right thing to do.” Reagan maintained his conviction even though he knew the response would be potentially negative. As will be discussed later, it is possible that this concern was unfounded, for the public’s response was far from negative. The Brandenburg Gate speech far exceeded expectations and that is a credit to both the speechwriting staff and President Reagan.<sup>293</sup>

## **Analysis**

The Brandenburg Gate speech is multidimensional. It is a collection of messages supporting the theme of improving East-West relations by opening the doors of opportunity and freedom. Each message has its own section within the speech and thus the speech can be subdivided into six parts – relation to the past, the question of freedom, a season of hope, the winds of change, a call to action, and a potentially bright future. Despite having what could seem like a complicated interweaving of random topics, the Brandenburg Gate speech is appropriately reserved, at times pointed, ever optimistic, and unmistakably “Reagan.”

---

Speech Drafts, “Brandenburg Gate Speech,” ID #492773, 492774-501963, 502621, SP-1150, WHORM: Subject File, RRL.

Memo, Colin L. Powell to Tom Griscom, ID# 501964 [1 of 9], SP-1150, WHORM: Subject File, RRL.

Memo, Peter W. Rodman to Colin L. Powell, ID# 501964 [3 of 9], SP-1150, WHORM: Subject File, RRL.

<sup>293</sup> Robinson, 103.

## Relation to the Past

In relating to the past, Reagan first refers to the fact that he was not the first American President to visit and speak at the Berlin Wall. The then Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson was the first, arriving exactly seven days after the East Germans sealed the border in 1961. Despite Kennedy's popularity, many world leaders and German citizens blamed his administration for the Berlin Wall's very existence and accused the administration of inaction in preventing or stopping the East Germans when they began building the Wall on August 13, 1961. There were protesting voices arguing that Kennedy should have ordered the Wall demolished, just as some in 1947-1948 felt that Harry S. Truman should have sent military forces into Berlin instead of mounting the famous Airlift to resupply the city after the Soviets cut it off. President Kennedy then visited in 1963. Reagan himself said that the United States should have and could have intervened in the Wall's construction in a peaceful manner. What that might have looked like is anyone's guess, but the disagreement was registered. Regardless of any feeling of blame or guilt, visiting the Berlin Wall became almost a rite of passage for American Presidents in the act of reaffirming America's commitment to West Germany and to international democratic values.<sup>294</sup>

In his relation to the past, Reagan references President Kennedy's 1963 speech. This is quite ironic since White House officials were concerned that Kennedy's earlier visit would overshadow anything Reagan did while in Berlin. James Hooley, Reagan's Director of Presidential Advance, expressed concern that the Reagan team was already at a disadvantage because modern security prevented a crowd like Kennedy had had from gathering to hear

---

<sup>294</sup> Deane Heller and David Heller, *The Berlin Wall* (New York: Walker and Company, 1962), 56. Kiron K. Skinner, Annelise Anderson and Martin Anderson, eds., *Reagan: A Life in Letters* (New York: The Free Press, 2003), 536. Reagan, "Brandenburg Gate Speech."

Reagan. Furthermore, Hooley openly stated that no matter how good Reagan's speech was, it was unlikely to top Kennedy's, saying "Unless we've got the Gettysburg Address of the Reagan presidency, it's not going to look as good [as Kennedy's]." <sup>295</sup>

The debate surrounding the question of whether or not the speech should reference Kennedy's earlier speech is evident in the early speech drafts. The following examples show how Kennedy appeared and disappeared within the various speech drafts. An undated, but early draft noted only as "Peter1" quotes Kennedy at the end, but makes no reference to his Berlin visit. The "Peter3" draft removes the direct quote, but includes a paragraph very similar to the one in the final speech referencing Kennedy's visit. The May 14 draft deletes the aforementioned paragraph and reference, but it reappears in the May 20, 2:30 p.m. draft and there remains through the continuing drafts. Despite the comparison with Kennedy, the Brandenburg Gate speech has weathered the passing of time well. <sup>296</sup>

Debates aside, there are several important points of comparison between Kennedy and Reagan's respective speeches. Logically, both open with thanking the respective mayors of Berlin and chancellors of West Germany. Both also emphasize the intrinsic differences between Communism and the free world, stating that the most effective means of learning and observing the difference that was to come to Berlin. The Berlin Wall did more than merely divide a city; it separated two completely different ways of existence. West Berlin was filled with movement, color, modern architecture, and cars whereas East Berlin had few automobiles (and those that did exist were subpar by Western standards) and buildings still

---

<sup>295</sup> Memo, James L. Hooley to William Henkel, folder "Berlin Visit 1987 (1)," box 92202, Peter R. Sommer Files, RRL.

<sup>296</sup> Speech Draft, "Brandenburg Gate Speech," folder "Brandenburg Gate West Berlin, June 12, 1987 (3)," box 9, Peter Robinson Files, RRL.

Speech Draft, "Brandenburg Gate Speech," folder "Berlin – Brandenburg Address 06/12/1987 (12)," box 335, White House Office of Speechwriting: Drafts, RRL.

Speech Draft, "Brandenburg Gate Speech," folder "Brandenburg Gate/Berlin, 6/12/87, Peter/Teresa" box 325, White House Office of Speechwriting: Research, RRL.

damaged from the war. Even today, one can tell a difference in the architecture of the former East Berlin compared to West Berlin. West Berlin buildings are typically more modern with more color and variety in architectural style whereas East Berlin is very gray in architectural color.<sup>297</sup>

A third parallel is that both speeches refer to the Berlin Wall as infringing upon basic human rights and freedoms. These freedoms included the basic privileges of contacting relatives and uninhibited travel. Since the East Germans built the Wall so hastily, entire neighborhoods and individual families were split. Many faced mandatory resettlement when their apartments were destroyed to build the infamous “no man’s land” on the eastern side of the Berlin Wall. Numerous others, both East and West Berliners, went years without seeing loved ones. As Deane and David Heller describe, “Overnight, East Berlin had literally been transformed into an armed camp ... all mail, telephone, and teleprint communications between the two halves of the shattered city were interrupted.” Those who attempted to cross the Wall from East to West Berlin without proper permission were frequently shot and killed.<sup>298</sup>

Most importantly, Reagan’s speech, like Kennedy’s, related a belief that, in a way, all Americans are inextricably tied to Berlin due to the United States’ role in liberating Germany from the Nazi regime during World War II, occupying West Berlin during the post-war reconstruction, and rebuilding Germany through the Marshall Plan. To emphasize this point Reagan utilized a 1951 song with the line “Ich hab noch einen Koffer in Berlin” or “I still have a suitcase in Berlin,” thus indicating a partial residence within the city and the belief that Americans are Berliners at heart. Although this statement is a sympathetic way of

---

<sup>297</sup> Robinson, 96.

<sup>298</sup> Heller and Heller, 36, 42.

expressing America's continued post-war investment in West Germany and West Berlin, it is debatable how many American citizens shared Kennedy and Reagan's commitment to Berlin (or that of the respective speech writers).<sup>299</sup>

However, the two speeches do maintain a distinct difference. This difference is not rhetorical or stylistic, but developmental. Kennedy arrived in Berlin with an established, government-approved speech – one that he found stifled by bureaucracy. So, he re-wrote the speech in his head and delivered a different, less politically correct, version that the Berliners loved and the American politicians lamented went too far. Reagan knew going into his speech that American government officials were unhappy with its tone and message, particularly the line about tearing down the wall. However, supporting my thesis that presidential speeches across eras can and do signify continuities as well as disconnects, in comparing these two presidential speeches, in fundamental terms, both Presidents came to the Wall, spoke there about it, and defined its meaning in terms favorable to the democratic West and critical of the Communist East.<sup>300</sup>

### **The Question of Freedom**

Reagan's speech parallels Kennedy's in several ways, but it delves significantly deeper into the fray between the Soviet Union and the United States. Early in the speech, Reagan quotes Richard von Weizsäcker, then President of West Germany and the future first head of state of reunified Germany, who said, "The German question is open as long as the Brandenburg Gate is closed." Reagan then added his own view that, "As long as this gate is closed, as long as this scar of a wall is permitted to stand, it is not the German question alone

---

<sup>299</sup> Reagan, "Brandenburg Gate Speech."

<sup>300</sup> W.R. Smyser, *Kennedy and the Berlin Wall: "A Hell of a Lot Better than a War"* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publisher, Inc., 2009), 2-5.

that remains open, but the question of freedom for all mankind.” Quoting Weizsäcker was number thirty-two on the list of points and comments suggested at the Elz home. The line appears in every speech draft, although it moved from its original position in the opening paragraph immediately after the political greetings to the bottom of the second page. More importantly, however, the quote was one of few areas of the speech receiving no editorial remarks from the numerous individuals and agencies who reviewed the speech.<sup>301</sup>

Both of the aforementioned statements put Berlin at the center of the international Communist versus anti-Communist conflict. This was not a new position for the historic city. Even Lenin is credited as once saying, “Whoever holds Berlin, holds Germany. Whoever holds Germany, holds Europe.” In antiquity the saying went that “All roads lead to Rome”; in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, particularly in the first half of the century, one might say that all roads lead to Berlin. Throughout its rich and varied history, Berlin has acted as a cultural, economic and political helm within Europe and the world.<sup>302</sup>

Another key word in both of the aforementioned statements is “gate.” A gate itself is very symbolic. A gate can be an actual, physical passageway, but it can also be a social or geographical entity or an individual. It can swing both in and out or it can have no actual doorway at all. The Brandenburg Gate is an example of the first type – a physical point of entry or exit. Gate closure automatically implies someone or something as unwelcome or dangerous to those within the gate, even if the avoided entity is unknown. The Brandenburg Gate is of significant importance in German and world history. It is the only gate remaining from a series of gates by which one formerly entered Berlin. It stands at the intersection of Unter den Linden (running East-West through the heart of Berlin’s historic district) and

---

<sup>301</sup> Reagan, “Brandenburg Gate Speech.”

Notes, folder “Subject File: Notes on Berlin from Pre-Advance,” box 9, Peter Robinson Files, RRL.

<sup>302</sup> John Mander, *Berlin: Hostage for the West* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1962), 124.

Ebertstraße at the Pariser Platz and is visible from the Reichstag one block to the north. Represented in numerous paintings and pictures since its completion in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and having successfully survived the Napoleonic Wars and both World Wars, the Brandenburg Gate with its Doric columns and statue of Victoria (the Roman goddess of victory) is one of the most famous architectural images in the world.

In 1961, the Brandenburg Gate became physically, though not visually, inaccessible to the general populace due to the Berlin Wall. The Brandenburg Gate and the Berlin Wall were inextricably linked at this time. Hence, the gate not only separated, but also isolated. It was a point of juxtaposition – the Wall of torment and the Gate of triumph; the Wall of oppression and the Gate to freedom. Given its historical significance as well as its social prominence, holding the speech at the Brandenburg Gate caused lengthy debates in Washington and West Germany. James Mann in his book, *The Rebellion of Ronald Reagan*, confirms that German officials debated whether or not Reagan should speak at the Brandenburg Gate because it was too “provocative and laden with emotion.” That summary, however, is understated. Even American officials were worried. James Hooley urged caution very early in the development process, saying, “I believe that we ought to weigh carefully what is proposed for the President to do in Berlin . . . while a visit to the wall or a speech there seems an obvious event, we ought to think carefully about the possible ramifications.” Officials worried of potential disruptions via loudspeakers or banners and antagonizing inter-German relations by using the Brandenburg Gate. Another concern was the Brandenburg Gate’s proximity to a Soviet World War II Memorial. These concerns were not unfounded. During President Kennedy’s address, East Berlin officials hung a swath of red banners to obstruct the view towards East Berlin. Even the American Ambassador to

East German, Francis Meehan, unflatteringly referred to the East Germans as a “banners-and-slogans prone bunch.” West German and West Berlin officials likewise expressed concern and requested that the administration rethink the speech’s location. Mayor Diepgen strongly encouraged the United States to mention the venue to the Soviets in advance to avoid unnecessary surprises. Ultimately, however, Chancellor Kohl decided not to make the speech’s location an issue and declared that there would be no further complaints or recriminations from the West German side.<sup>303</sup>

### **A Season of Hope**

Despite the emotion and the continuing conflict, Reagan does not focus upon the negative aspects of Berlin and the world in general, saying “Yet I do not come here to lament. For I find in Berlin a message of hope, even in the shadow of this wall, a message of triumph.” Reagan was well known for maintaining his cheerful disposition, despite the daunting tasks in front of him, not matter how tense the moment. Some felt that he clinched his presidential elections in the debates against Carter and Mondale, when he chuckled to the former, “There you go again,” and joked with the latter that he would not “exploit for political purposes my opponent’s youth and inexperience.” This showed how Reagan could keep his upbeat composure even in a highly tense environment. During the Cold War, the

---

<sup>303</sup> James Mann, *The Rebellion of Ronald Reagan: A History of the End of the Cold War* (New York: Viking Penguin, 2009), 184.

Memo, James L. Hooley to William Henkel, Jan. 20, 1987, folder “Berlin Visit 1987 (1),” box 92202, Peter R. Sommer Files, RRL.

Memo, American Embassy Bonn to US Mission Berlin, Feb 87, folder “Bonn and Berlin, Germany (Binder) [1987 Summit] (1), box CF1158-1, James L. Hooley Files, RRL.

Memo, American Embassy Bonn to Secretary of State Washington DC, Feb 87, *Ibid.*

Memo, American Embassy Bonn to US Mission Berlin, Feb 87, folder “Berlin Visit 1987 (2),” box 92202, Peter R. Sommer Files, RRL.

Memo, American Embassy Bonn to Secretary of State Washington DC, Feb 87, folder “Berlin Visit 1987 (1),” box 92202, Peter R. Sommer Files, RRL.

Berlin Wall symbolized all the tensions of the bipolar world, as well as the bloody decades which preceded it. Reagan called German history since the end of World War II a “season of spring.” The Germans had successfully emerged from their dark winter of fear and oppression under the Nazi regime. They could now look forward to the rebirth of their families, cities and nation.<sup>304</sup>

This hopeful tone was paramount to the speech’s success. Given Berlin’s tumultuous history in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and its divided status in 1987, it would have been imprudent for Reagan to remind the Germans of what they experienced on a daily basis. The American embassy alerted the White House that the Berlin audience would not want a gloomy, depressing speech that focused upon the tragedy of a divided Berlin. Rather, the speech should look forward with hope – realistic optimism, but optimism nonetheless.<sup>305</sup>

With the assistance of the Marshall Plan and their own determined grit, the West German people had rebuilt a new and stronger country. This was exactly what happened in Western Germany in the four decades between the war’s end and Reagan’s visit in 1987. What once had been rubble was now office buildings and factories. What had been in shambles had been reorganized with the reopening of universities, theaters and museums. Where there had once been poverty and want there was now food, marketplaces and automobiles. The Marshall Plan with its Western ideals and, at a more base level, *Berliner schnauzer*, had prevailed over the tyranny of past generations.

---

<sup>304</sup> Reagan, “Brandenburg Gate Speech.”

Margaret Thatcher, “Eulogy to the Great Liberator,” Available at <http://www.eulogyspeech.net/famous-eulogies/Margaret-Thatcher-Eulogy-to-Ronald-Reagan.shtml> (Accessed 3 Dec 2009).

Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Packaging the Presidency: A History and Criticism of Presidential Campaign Advertising*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 408, 456.

<sup>305</sup> Memo, American Embassy Bonn to Secretary of State Washington DC, Feb 87, folder “Berlin Visit 1987 (1),” box 92202, Peter R. Sommer Files, RRL.

The inclusion of *Berliner schnauzer* was a contested topic during the developmental process. This was another concept raised during Peter Robinson's meeting at the Elz home. *Berliner schnauze* is an intangible element of Berlin culture. It is a mixture of wit, humor, bravado, and gumption interwoven within Berlin vernacular expression and passed on generation to generation. Peter Robinson defined *Berliner schnauze* as, "a favorite slang term meaning courage mixed with toughness." It is a term and concept readily understood by fellow Berliners, but that may also catch outsiders off guard. For unspecified reasons, various members of the National Security Council disliked the line and marked it as "Bad" on the 9:00 a.m., May 29 version with a further complaint of "We still don't like this. Too crude." with instruction to "Take out" on various copies of the 6:00 p.m., June 1 draft. Despite the protests, the line remained and proved popular with the audience as evidenced by their laughter and applause.<sup>306</sup>

### **The Winds of Change**

Like the rest of Europe, the Soviet Union was also now experiencing change. The hard-line Khrushchev, with his designs on modernizing the Soviet system, and Leonid Brezhnev, who epitomized the hard-line and old style, were gone. Now, in their place, was the younger, the perceivably more open-minded, Mikhail Gorbachev. Reagan agreed that rumors of reform and openness within the Soviet Union existed. This was true. Gorbachev was a man of action. Some compare his coming to power with that of a giant meteor hitting the earth. He changed the world as the Soviets knew it by introducing *glasnost* and

---

<sup>306</sup> Speech Drafts, "Brandenburg Gate Speech," ID #501964 [2 & 3], SP-1150, WHORM: Subject File, RRL. Archival Video, "Brandenburg Gate Speech," RRL. Available at: [http://www.reaganfoundation.org/bw\\_detail.aspx?p=LMB4YGHF2&h1=0&h2=0&sw=&lm=berlinwall&args\\_a=cms&args\\_b=74&argsb=N&tx=1764](http://www.reaganfoundation.org/bw_detail.aspx?p=LMB4YGHF2&h1=0&h2=0&sw=&lm=berlinwall&args_a=cms&args_b=74&argsb=N&tx=1764).

*perestroika* within weeks of taking office. *Glasnost* and *perestroika* aimed at creating openness within the Soviet system through a series of economic and political reforms. This would serve to create a stronger Soviet system that could preserve the USSR's status as a world power well into the future. These changes were not merely superficial; they included "changes in underlying assumptions, in institutional structure and personnel, and in the substance of policy itself." It was this "change and openness" that Reagan referenced in his speech. Although the Soviet system changed in a dramatically short time, it remained to be seen just how transformational *glasnost* and *perestroika* would be, particularly in relation to the Iron Curtain separating western Europe from the Communist Soviet bloc in eastern Europe. In 1988, skepticism still existed regarding Gorbachev's personal ability to change the entirety of the Soviet system or to what extent *glasnost* and *perestroika* would be applied. Although Gorbachev was very influential, he was only one part of the Soviet machine.<sup>307</sup>

This section of change was Reagan's moment of glory: "General Secretary Gorbachev, if you seek peace, if you seek prosperity for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, if you seek liberalization, come here to this gate. Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate. Mr. Gorbachev, Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall." The word "seek" is an interesting word choice. It implies looking for something which one does not currently possess. If Gorbachev and the Soviet Union were seeking peace, prosperity, and liberalization, it meant that they did not have those social characteristics at present. Reagan was implicating Gorbachev as much in the present as he was encouraging him towards the future. Seeking is also associated with trying to find one's way; the path to the goal is uncertain. The Soviet

---

<sup>307</sup> Meyer, 11-12.

Reagan, "Brandenburg Gate Speech."

Peter Juviler and Hiroshi Kimura, eds., *The Gorbachev Regime: Consolidation to Reform* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1988), xi.

Union had never attempted such reforms as Gorbachev proposed. They did not know the end results of implementing *glasnost* and *perestroika*.<sup>308</sup>

One of Reagan's earlier speeches raises an interesting point of comparison. In 1984 Reagan stated that peace would only come if the Soviet Union wanted peace. The responsibility was theirs and the result would be of their own devising. This was a controversial formulation, since some viewed the Cold War as a circumstance born of mutual responsibility. That approach was symbolized in academia by the revisionist University of Wisconsin historian William Appleman Williams, who blamed both sides – perhaps laying even more onus on the United States. But Reagan returned to a pre-revisionist formula in which the Soviets bore sole responsibility for the schism. Blurred or nuanced views of what seemed to him clear moral issues were not to Reagan's liking; restoration of what he saw as the verities of the past were. It is also interesting to note the sequencing of Reagan's words in the Brandenburg Gate Speech. Peace, prosperity, and liberalization are all linked together, indicating that one cannot truly exist without the other. It is almost a mathematical equation: liberalized society = peace + prosperity. Reagan's solution to Gorbachev and the Soviet Union's search is the Brandenburg Gate at the Berlin Wall. Reagan implores Gorbachev to come and open the gate of victory, not just physically but symbolically. The path to the future traveled through that Gate and Wall – to Western society and ideals. Reagan urged not only the reunification of Berlin, but also the reunification and liberation of Europe.<sup>309</sup>

---

<sup>308</sup> Reagan, "Brandenburg Gate Speech."

<sup>309</sup> *Ibid.*

Richard A. Melanson, "The Social and Political Thought of William Appleman Williams," *The Western Political Quarterly* (Vol. 31, No. 3, Sept, 1978), 392.

Davis W. Houck and Amos Kiewe, eds., *Actor, Ideologue, Politician: The Public Speeches of Ronald Reagan* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1993), 246.

In examining the speech's development, there are remarkably few comments directly relating to "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall," which is ironic given the Reagan administration's expressed belief that the State Department was displeased with its inclusion. It is entirely possible that these concerns were relayed verbally, and thus not included in archival notes. It is also possible that these concerns were relayed by those receiving speech drafts indirectly and not those specifically marked as recipients and editors. A more probable explanation is the reality that the State Department and National Security Council maintained an overall objection to the speech's content, and the Reagan camp worried that the "tear down this wall" line would be a moment that pushed one too many political buttons. After all, the State Department and National Security Council had urged the administration to not use the Berlin trip to antagonize or confront the Soviet Union. If strong opposition to this portion of the speech existed, there was ample opportunity for those concerns to be vocalized, for Peter Robinson's very rough first draft along with each and every subsequent draft included a line similar to "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall."<sup>310</sup>

There is evidence of the National Security Council giving approval to this key moment in the Brandenburg Gate Speech. First, on May 21, 1987, the NSC sent a list of edits as well as a rough outline of points for inclusion in the speech. In the listed points for pages 6-10 of the speech, under "Berlin Initiative," the first point listed is, "It's time for the Wall to come down." If the NSC did not want Reagan saying "tear down this wall," they never would have included it in their own recommended outline. Second, an edited version

---

<sup>310</sup> Comments on Draft 5/27 1:30 p.m., "Brandenburg Gate Speech," ID #501964 [3], SP-1150, WHORM: Subject File, RRL.

Speech Drafts, "Brandenburg Gate Speech," folder "Remarks: Brandenburg Gate West Berlin, June 12, 1987," box 9, Peter Robinson Files, RRL.

Speech Drafts, "Brandenburg Gate Speech," ID #492773, 492774-501963, 502621, SP-1150, WHORM: Subject File, RRL.

of Robinson's May 29 draft includes a noteworthy comment after "Come here, to this gate." Tom Griscom, Reagan's Director of Communications, penned an addition – "Come here, to this gate, not to a plush conference hall down the road." Griscom's seriousness is questionable, but it exemplifies his mindset and lends approval to that portion of text. A third example of approval comes from silence. The NSC's May 27 list of comments on the latest draft does not include any remarks regarding the line in question.<sup>311</sup>

In reality, the NSC raised only two relatively minor concerns in relation to this pivotal moment. The first related to Peter Robinson's desire for the President to say "Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate" in German, but "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall" in English. The NSC logically questioned, "Why this [open this gate] in German, and not this [tear down this wall]?" This is a question of rhetoric, not content. Plus, the NSC was right; the German-English combination was clumsy and was changed so that both phrases were delivered in English. The second concern voiced by the NSC related to the fact that Gorbachev had recently visited West Berlin on May 28-29, and the NSC raised the question if the challenge should be reworded to urge Gorbachev to "come back" to Berlin rather than to "come." The archival material shows that even the NSC found its own proposed edit "silly," so it is unsurprising that the alteration did not come to pass.<sup>312</sup>

### **A Call to Action**

The NATO alliance, with the United States at the helm, had successfully held fast against Soviet military aggression, attempts to split its members by manipulation of domestic

---

<sup>311</sup> "NSC Comments on Berlin Speech," ID #501964 [3], SP-1150, WHORM: Subject File, RRL. Comments on Draft 5/27 1:30 p.m., "Brandenburg Gate Speech," ID #501964 [3], SP-1150, WHORM: Subject File, RRL.

Speech Drafts, "Brandenburg Gate Speech," ID #501964 [3], SP-1150, WHORM: Subject File, RRL.

<sup>312</sup> Speech Drafts, "Brandenburg Gate Speech," ID #501964 [3], SP-1150, WHORM: Subject File, RRL.

anti-war elements, and refusal to negotiate. However, this stalemate was met with mixed reactions. The day before Reagan's speech a swarm of 24,000 protesters marched their way through Berlin in opposition to allied counter-deployment against the Soviet missile system. Reagan had been forewarned of protests and Peter Robinson, during his time at the Elz home, had been urged to include a line to deal with demonstrators. Reagan did not berate these protesters. Rather, he invited them to remember two important facts. First, "because we [the allies] have remained strong, the Soviets have come back to the [negotiating] table." Second, "because we remained strong, today we have within reach the possibility not merely of limiting the growth of arms but of eliminating for the first time an entire class of nuclear weapons from the face of the earth." The reminder that the allies had remained strong and steadfast indicates a wavering on the part of the Soviets. Had both sides been equally resolved, the Soviets would not have relinquished their hard stance and returned to negotiate. Thus, the allies must possess more faith in their system of operation than the Soviets.<sup>313</sup>

Furthermore, Reagan did not foresee the removal of all nuclear weapons. He speculated on the possible removal of one type – the SS-20 nuclear missile which had a range capable of striking anywhere in Europe. Interestingly, just as general distrust of the Soviets and the Communist system is a consistent theme throughout the Brandenburg Gate Speech's development, so too is the subject of nuclear missiles. On page eleven of the second speech draft, Robinson noted that the "NSC may want to add a line or two here about nuclear weapons" before going on specifically to mention the SS-20 missile's threat to European security. This was not the first occasion where Reagan had warned of the SS-20's dangers. In a speech on January 16, 1984, Reagan discussed "a subject of great importance to the

---

<sup>313</sup> Reagan, "Brandenburg Gate Speech."

Notes, folder "Subject File: Notes on Berlin from Pre-Advance," box 9, Peter Robinson Files, RRL.

cause of peace-relations between the United States and the Soviet Union.” That subject was America’s strength in resisting the Soviet Union’s military production. Reagan admitted that the United States had nothing comparable to the SS-20 which made it a very great threat indeed. However, the United States possessed a greater intrinsic inner strength and strength of allies that the Soviet Union underestimated. Ultimately, Reagan and the other allied countries succeeded and a 1987 treaty eliminated land-based intermediate-range and shorter-range nuclear missiles in Europe.<sup>314</sup>

Reagan readily understood why the weapons existed. In the Brandenburg Gate Speech he explained, “East and West do not mistrust each other because we’re armed. We’re armed because we mistrust each other. And our differences are not about weapons but our liberty.” Here was a direct riposte to a viewpoint which had real power in anti-war western circles: the notion that disarmament was the only road to peace, and that the United States and its President were the roadblocks. Organizations such as the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, or CND, held mass protests against Reagan, NATO, and the response to the SS-20s. Their position was that Reagan’s side endangered peace by responding in kind to the Soviet missiles. Reagan took this argument on directly. This was not the first time that Reagan had expressed his mistrust of the Soviets in general and Gorbachev specifically. At the Geneva Summit several years earlier Reagan looked across the table at Gorbachev and began his statements with, “Let me tell you why it is we distrust you.” Reagan left no doubt as to where he and the nation stood. The Soviets had gone back on their word before, resulting in the Berlin Blockade and subsequent airlift and the building of the Berlin Wall. Thus, they were not to be blindly trusted. Reagan realized that the United States and the

---

<sup>314</sup> Speech Draft, “Brandenburg Gate Speech,” folder “Berlin – Brandenburg Address 06/12/1987 (12),” box 335, White House Office of Speechwriting: Drafts, RRL. Houck and Kiewe, 240.

Soviet Union would continue their differences, but that reality provided only further reason to find new means of bringing stability to the world. That stabilization would not come of its own accord. It would require great effort on the part of both nations, an effort that spurred Reagan and Gorbachev's continued working relationship long after both men left their respective offices.<sup>315</sup>

### **A Potentially Bright Future**

Finally, in closing the "Speech at the Brandenburg Gate," Reagan looks to the potentially bright future by furthering ties between Germany and the United States, expanding opportunities within Germany to the world, and enlightening the minds of youth. Easily the most controversial area from this section arrived when Reagan asked the citizens of Berlin, "What keeps you here?" His answer is that the people remain out of love – "love both profound and abiding." The context of Reagan's question is the reality that free West Berlin was geographically surrounded by a "totalitarian presence that refuses to release human energies or aspirations." This statement, and other similar ones from the same section, was a direct affront to East Germans and the Soviets, which was a point of great concern to the State Department and the National Security Council. Indeed, an unknown official crossed out the entire page from the June 1 draft, 6:00 p.m. draft and wrote, "This must come out. West Germans do not want to see East Germans insulted." This demand was in direct contrast with other feedback which stated, "The Germans do not object to criticism of the East." Clearly, this was a point of political debate. Robinson refined the

---

<sup>315</sup> Reagan, "Brandenburg Gate Speech." Thatcher.  
Houck and Kiewe, 311.  
Skinner, Anderson and Anderson, 736.

page's rhetoric, but the unknown official's demands were ignored and the audience could not miss Reagan echoing the word "totalitarian" in reference to East Germany's governmental system three times within two paragraphs.<sup>316</sup>

In this section, once again, Reagan calls on Gorbachev to lower the separation between the two sectors of the city, this time so that all Berliners could fully enjoy living in a city with such a rich cultural heritage. Reagan also expressed a belief that expanding the ties with the rest of Europe and the world would be made possible through increased flight access, summer youth exchanges, cultural events, key international meetings, and possibly an Olympic games in the city. Hope for a better future for one's children is a consistent thread throughout history. Hope is resilient. It may fade or waver in times of duress, but it is rare for an entire nation to give up every ounce of hope. As an individual spray-painted on the Berlin Wall (as quoted by Reagan in his speech): "This wall will fall. Beliefs become reality." Whoever that individual was, he had hope in the future. That hope was not in vain for, a little over two years later, the Wall did come down and proved that the Germans', Reagan's, and the world's hopes were not in vain. It is a textbook example of Reagan's propensity to strike a positive note in what some assumed would be a belligerent and upsetting speech.<sup>317</sup>

### **Immediate Response**

The public response to the Brandenburg Gate speech was resoundingly positive. Pictures of the Reagans flooded the front pages of West German newspapers and letters of

---

<sup>316</sup> Speech Draft, "Brandenburg Gate Speech," ID# 501964 [2 of 9], SP-1150, WHORM: Subject File, RRL. Comments on Draft 5/27 1:30 p.m., "Brandenburg Gate Speech," ID #501964 [3], SP-1150, WHORM: Subject File, RRL.

Reagan, "Brandenburg Gate Speech."

<sup>317</sup> Reagan, "Brandenburg Gate Speech."

public support streamed into the White House. Each news headline had its own angle on the story. Some focused on Reagan's visit to Tempelhof Airport where he cut the ceremonial 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary birthday cake, others focused on his call for an Olympic games in Berlin, and even more wrote concerning his speech. Some, like the *Berliner Zeitung*, included a German translation of the speech in its entirety.<sup>318</sup>

In addition to the press attention, diplomats, ordinary citizens, and civic organizations deluged the White House with phone calls and letters. Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher of the United Kingdom was likely one of the first to speak to President Reagan following the speech as the two leaders spoke on the phone from 3:44-3:47 p.m. the very day Reagan delivered his speech. The Prime Minister asked regarding Reagan's trip to Berlin and remarked on hearing the Berlin crowd's roar of approval during the speech. Chancellor Kohl also toasted the President's visit and praised the speech during his meeting with the President at the Bonn Airport. Although these political conversations can be interpreted as polite, diplomatic acknowledgements, receiving a complimentary verbal recognition of any sort is better than silence.<sup>319</sup>

The letters included within the files available for research indicate the American people's widespread support for Reagan's speech. These letters include a missive from Joseph Garger, a New Jersey borough manager, who wrote that he was delighted to see the social reaction during Reagan's speech and urged the President to "constantly refer to the Berlin Wall." A wide variety of civic organization officers also sent their support to

---

<sup>318</sup> *Berliner Zeitung*, Jun 13, 1987, folder "Remarks: Brandenburg Gate West Berlin, Germany, 06/12/1987," box 9, Peter Robinson Files, RRL.

<sup>319</sup> Telephone Conversation Transcript, Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, Jun 12, 1987, folder "Chron – 06/12/1987-06/22/1987," box 92202, Peter R. Sommer Files, RRL.  
Memo of Conversation, FRG Chancellor Kohl and President Reagan, folder "Chron – 06/12/1987-06/22/1987," box 92202, Peter R. Sommer Files, RRL.

President Reagan. One of these individuals was Dr. Ivan Docheff, Honorary President of the Bulgarian National Front, a staunchly anti-communist organization. In his letter he praised Reagan for his courage and for taking a strong stand for freedom. Elsbeth Seewald, President of the German-American National Congress, wrote to congratulate the President for his decision “to focus world attention on the injustice of the Berlin Wall.” Perhaps one of the most notable letters came from Mstislav Rostropovich, a Soviet cellist and conductor living in exile in the United States due to his perpetual criticism of the Soviet system. In 1987, Rostropovich was the conductor of the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington, D.C. He wrote to Reagan on June 23 saying, “I am so delighted that today, one of the happiest days of my life, I will have the opportunity to thank you personally for the Berlin speech, which excited Galina [his wife] and me to the depths of our souls.” Such praise is particularly noteworthy and clearly shows the depth of gratitude extended to President Reagan. Reagan’s gift for nugatory moral insight served him well at the Wall, which was not the place for moral confusion.<sup>320</sup>

The Gallup polling data provides limited insight into the public’s response to Reagan’s speech at the Brandenburg Gate since data is only available from one mid-June and one mid-July poll. The two polls’ results are within four points of each other in all three categories; there was no sharp increase or decrease in the polls to indicate a strong public response to the speech. Reagan averaged a 51% approval rating, a 41.5% disapproval rating, and an 8% no opinion rating during that time period.<sup>321</sup>

---

<sup>320</sup> Letter, Ivan Docheff to Ronald Reagan, Jun 12, 1987, ID #494338, SP-1150, WHORM: Subject File, RRL. Letter, Elsbeth Seewald to Ronald Reagan, Jun 16, 1987, ID #494491, SP-1150, WHORM: Subject File, RRL. Letter, Mstislav Rostropovich to Ronald and Nancy Reagan, Jun 23, 1987, folder “Remarks: Brandenburg Gate West Berlin, Germany, 06/12/1987,” box 9, Peter Robinson Files, RRL.

<sup>321</sup> “Job Performance Ratings for President Reagan, 01/20/1989-01/20/1989, Accessed Jan. 5, 2012. Available at [http://webapps.ropercenter.uconn.edu/CFIDE/roper/presidential/webroot/presidential\\_rating.cfm#.TzL93IEbFlc](http://webapps.ropercenter.uconn.edu/CFIDE/roper/presidential/webroot/presidential_rating.cfm#.TzL93IEbFlc)

Contrary to what one might expect, newspapers like the *New York Times* were not filled with articles covering the President's Berlin speech. On June 12, the *New York Times* reported on the 24,000 member demonstration against Reagan's visit, the same protest Reagan addressed within his speech. However, this article predicted that President Reagan would call on Mikhail Gorbachev "to live up to his own calls for 'glasnost' and tear down the Berlin Wall." It is unknown from what source the author received his information since the speech was embargoed for release until the time of delivery, but his prediction was correct nonetheless. In actuality, in the days immediately following the speech, the *New York Times* ran only one article dedicated to analyzing and commenting upon the President's speech. Only June 13, Gerald Boyd's "Special to the *New York Times*" column centered almost exclusively upon Reagan's call to remove the Berlin Wall. But Boyd did not openly politicize the speech; he provided a balanced perspective by quoting both Tass, the Soviet press agency which called the speech an "openly provocative, war-mongering speech," and President Reagan. Boyd also acknowledged the Bush administration's internal debate on the subject, saying, "Some Reagan advisers wanted an address with less polemics but lost to those who favored the opportunity to raise East-West differences and questions about Mr. Gorbachev's commitment to ending the nuclear arms race and his internal liberalization policies."<sup>322</sup>

## **Conclusion**

This chapter reveals that the Brandenburg Gate Speech is far more complex and controversial than is typically acknowledged. It was neither simple nor simple-minded, even

---

<sup>322</sup> Serge Schmemmann, "24,000 Demonstrate in Berlin against Reagan's Visit Today." Jun. 12, 1989. *New York Times*.

Gerald M. Boyd, "Raze Berlin Wall, Reagan Urges Soviet." Jun. 13, 1989. *New York Times*.

though its core message was clear. The amount of material covered in a short period of time is astounding. Nevertheless, the average American today remembers nothing more about the speech than its takeaway line: “Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall.” Little is known of how controversial that line was within Reagan’s own administration. The evidence shows that Reagan took a big risk in giving this speech. Considering these facts, would today’s public remember the speech if Reagan had cut the line in question? One could make a strong case for answering that question in the negative.

President Reagan and the Brandenburg Gate Speech cannot take credit for the Berlin Wall’s demise even though they drew the world’s attention to the complexity that was Berlin in 1987. During a private conversation with Chancellor Kohl, President Reagan reaffirmed that, if Gorbachev really sought change, one of the smartest things he could do was what Reagan had suggested in his speech: open the Brandenburg Gate and tear down the Berlin Wall. Chancellor Kohl correctly responded that “this may be possible some day, but if Gorbachev did it in response to the President’s speech, that would be the end of Gorbachev’s regime.” The responsibility was placed firmly on Moscow to decide how to adapt to changing times, but on their own time. The Berlin paradox existed another two-and-a-half years before the Berlin Wall was torn down.<sup>323</sup>

---

<sup>323</sup> Memo of Conversation, FRG Chancellor Kohl and President Reagan, folder “Chron – 06/12/1987-06/22/1987,” box 92202, Peter R. Sommer Files, RRL.

### Chapter 3: George H. W. Bush on the Berlin Wall

“Remarks at the Biannual Convention of the American Federation of Labor  
and Congress of Industrial Organizations”

November 15, 1989

#### Introduction

President Bush had the enviable, or perhaps not so enviable, position of holding the office of President of the United States on the day the Berlin Wall came down. While the world watched the events in Berlin with bated breath, the media also turned to see the President’s reaction. The President had never visited Berlin, despite a brief diplomatic visit to West Germany and a personal invitation to visit Berlin from Governing Mayor Walter Momper. Yet Berlin had lost none of its symbolic importance during the Bush administration. This importance only increased as pressure on the GDR mounted until the wall – and the GDR – came down. Divided Berlin had long been the epicenter of East-West tensions in Europe as well as the focal point of many pieces of presidential rhetoric given in the city itself and in the United States. As the question of German reunification hung in the balance, the question that loomed in the minds of journalists on White House detail was, “What will Bush say in response to these events?” On November 9, 1989, when GDR border guards failed to fire on citizens who crossed the barrier and began tearing down the Wall, that question became even more pressing.<sup>324</sup>

President Bush did respond, but not in the way that many expected or desired. The President uttered no grand speech; nor did he make any magnanimous gestures. As will be discussed further in the Development section of this chapter, the President held a brief question-and-answer session from behind his desk in the Oval Office and then appeared to go

---

<sup>324</sup> Phone Conversation, The President and Governing Mayor Walter Momper, Apr. 19, 1989. Accessed Jan. 5, 2012. Available at: [http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/pdfs/memcons\\_telcons/1989-04-19--Momper.pdf](http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/pdfs/memcons_telcons/1989-04-19--Momper.pdf). William J. Buckley, Jr. *The Fall of the Berlin Wall* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2004), 145.

on with business as usual. This meant attending the planned State Dinner for Corazon Aquino, President of the Philippines, that very evening. To his supporters, Bush was following through on his established schedule and responsibilities as President, showing continuity in the face of major change. To his detractors, Bush was not giving a life-changing international event his full attention.<sup>325</sup>

Despite the President's perceived lack of energy in his rhetorical response to the Berlin Wall's demise (which some interpreted as disinterest), the President was very much attuned to and interested in what was going on. His staff kept him informed and the President watched the live television coverage on CNN from his study next to the Oval Office. When the President held his question-and-answer session on the afternoon of November 9, his desk was strewn with briefing books. The President continued his information gathering in the following days. The President's Daily Files reveal that the next morning, November 10, the President's first meetings were an intelligence briefing followed by a national security briefing with National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft and White House Chief of Staff John Sununu. At 3:29 that afternoon, the President also placed a phone call to Chancellor Helmut Kohl. Ironically, Berlin was not the first topic discussed – Polish reforms were. Perhaps this was a sign that events in Germany and neighboring countries were not disconnected. Kohl gave Bush a run-down of opinions as well as recent contacts with British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and French President Francois Mitterand before asking Bush if he had any question on Poland. The President responded that he did not, but would be interested to hear back from Kohl the following week. President Bush then

---

<sup>325</sup> State Dinner Attendees, Nov. 9, 1989, folder "Thursday, November 9, 1989," OA 90526-003, Office of the President – Daily Files, GBL.

changed the course of the conversation by saying, “I’m very interested in the GDR.” He asked no specific questions; he simply allowed Kohl to talk.<sup>326</sup>

Kohl had just returned from Berlin, which he described as “like witnessing an enormous fair. It has the atmosphere of a festival.” Kohl’s words show a clear level of excitement as well as caution. He relayed to the President that, at the time, it appeared that the fall of the Berlin Wall had not led “to a dramatic increase in the movement of refugees,” but that people might just go back and forth since the border was open. He also hypothesized that the people were waiting and watching to see if the East German government would enact reforms. The Chancellor could not overemphasize the reality that November 9, 1989, was “a dramatic thing; a historic hour. Let me repeat.” Furthermore, the Chancellor relayed that when he addressed a gathering of 120,000-200,000 people on Berlin’s Kurfurstendamm (or Ku’damm – one of the most famous avenues in Berlin), the audience broke out into applause when Kohl “thanked the Americans for their role in all this ... [that] without the U.S. this day would not have been possible.” Kohl urged Bush to relay that message to the American people. In response, the President graciously turned the attention away from the United States and back to the West Germans and how they had handled the events. Bush simply requested Kohl’s permission to tell the American press that the two leaders had talked, that Kohl had thoroughly briefed the President, that Kohl had publicly acknowledged the United States’ role, and that the two leaders would speak again the following week. The President

---

<sup>326</sup> Maynard, 42-43.

Schedule of the President, Nov. 10, 1989, folder “Friday, November 10, 1989,” OA 90526-004, Office of the President – Daily Files, GBL.

Telephone Memorandum, Nov. 10, 1989, folder “Friday, November 10, 1989,” OA 90526-004, Office of the President – Daily Files, GBL.

Phone Conversation, The President and Chancellor Helmut Kohl, Nov. 10, 1989. Accessed Jan. 5, 2012.

Available at: [http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/pdfs/memcons\\_telcons/1989-11-10--Kohl.pdf](http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/pdfs/memcons_telcons/1989-11-10--Kohl.pdf).

did not verbally gloat in the glow of Kohl's praise to the American people, although he could have.<sup>327</sup>

Despite this high level of connection to Kohl and events in East Germany, Bush's public rhetorical response was limited. The only public statements the President made on November 9 were part of the question-and-answer time. The President never gave an entire speech dedicated to the Wall, or even a speech where the Wall occupied a significant portion of the text. However, over the next week, the President planned to make four addresses at various functions, including a gathering of the National Association of Realtors in Dallas, Texas, on November 10, and the dedication for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, also in Dallas, on November 11. The President was also scheduled to give a speech before the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. Although none of these addresses originally included the Berlin Wall, following the events of November 9<sup>th</sup>, the Office of Speechwriting integrated references to the Wall within the President's prepared text. The exact reasoning behind this decision is not directly stated, but including the Wall within these public appearances showed the President's connection to current international events and emphasized its importance to his administration. This chapter focuses upon the President's speech before the AFL-CIO and the alterations it experienced as a result of the events of November 9, 1989. It will also take the President's other comments made following the fall of the Berlin Wall into account for context and comparison.

---

<sup>327</sup> Maynard, 42-43.

Schedule of the President, Nov. 10, 1989, folder "Friday, November 10, 1989," OA 90526-004, Office of the President – Daily Files, GBL.

Telephone Memorandum, Nov. 10, 1989, folder "Friday, November 10, 1989," OA 90526-004, Office of the President – Daily Files, GBL.

Phone Conversation, The President and Chancellor Helmut Kohl, Nov. 10, 1989. Accessed Jan. 5, 2012. Available at: [http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/pdfs/memcons\\_telcons/1989-11-10--Kohl.pdf](http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/pdfs/memcons_telcons/1989-11-10--Kohl.pdf).

In studying the Bush administration's documents and key secondary sources, it became readily evident that a segment of the American public was not pleased with the President's minimal rhetorical response. But what many members of the American public failed to recognize was that the President's relatively unemotional response was due to two factors. First, the President was very concerned regarding the Soviet response. Would Gorbachev send in the Soviet military stationed within East Germany to crush the uprising and turn the celebration into a bloodbath? The Cold War, in Bush's mind, was not yet over. The Iron Curtain had begun crumbling earlier in the year with Hungary opening its borders to the West, but the Soviets still held a firm grip on Eastern Europe. Moreover, the Soviets' maintained a close relationship with East Germany, given facts of the Second World War and that the GDR served as the "showpiece" nation in the Warsaw Pact. Second, as he stated to Press Secretary Marlin Fitzwater, President Bush had no desire, "to dance on the Berlin Wall." The President did not want to steal the show from the Germans, nor did he want to brag of an accomplishment that was not rightfully his to claim. American Presidents had verbally called for the Berlin Wall's removal for years. In spite of that, Berliners were the ones climbing the Wall; Berliners were the ones who flooded the checkpoints; Berliners were the ones taking sledgehammers to the concrete barricade. As vital as Berlin was as a Cold War symbol for Americans, it was more centrally a German one. Also – and this was perhaps an indication of Bush's capacity to see past Cold War patterns – Kohl was moving towards the position that Germany's future in 1989 was primarily a German matter, unlike the situation in 1945. Given this mindset, President Bush's rhetorical choices are understandable and demonstrate a dimension of character frequently lacking in public

officials – the willingness to sacrifice his personal image for the sake of the greater strategic good.<sup>328</sup>

### **Development**

To more fully understand the development of Bush's rhetoric surrounding the Berlin Wall's fall, it helps to approach the issue on two fronts: (1) the content of the President's rhetoric while on his diplomatic visit to Germany and (2) the formulation of the President's rhetoric following November 9, 1989. The rationale for this dual-pronged approach is simple. First, as previously stated, Bush never visited Berlin. It is impossible to provide a direct parallel of rhetoric based upon geographic location. Second, since Carter and Reagan both addressed a German audience, it is worthwhile to consider what President Bush said while in Germany, even if the Berlin Wall was not a point of rhetorical substance. Third, considering that the Berlin Wall fell during his administration, and that it was the structure upon which American Presidents had long centered their anti-Communist rhetoric, one may logically assume that any President would present a significant piece of rhetoric in response. Bush did not choose the dramatic occasion to give a major address, so it is prudent to consider why that was the case and how the President came to say what he did.

President Bush had received a personal invitation from Berlin's Governing Mayor Walter Momper on April 19, 1989, to visit the city. The Mayor related via telephone that the government, even members of the opposition parties, and people of Berlin would like the President to come to "demonstrate America's commitment to Berlin." Momper relayed that both he and the people of Berlin had "liked the President's speech in Detroit" (referring to Bush's first foreign policy speech) and found it very encouraging since Berliners had a

---

<sup>328</sup> Maynard, 43-45.

special interest in East-West issues and “to the improvement of the situation in and around Berlin.” Momper then made a most striking observation. The translated transcript of the phone conversation reads,

Momper observed that Berliners are accustomed to the Wall. They feel its presence, but young people do not want Berlin’s government to tell the GDR to take down the Wall. Rather, Berliners want more open contacts so there will be more sharing of their cultural heritage. They do not like the Wall but have learned to live with it.

Such a description stands in stark contrast to those who claim that West Berliners were anxious for the Wall’s removal, including the Elz family, with whom Peter Robinson visited during his advance trip to Berlin in preparation for President Reagan’s visit in 1987. When considered, Momper’s statement makes sense. After nearly thirty years, a large portion of the Berlin population had never known life without the Wall and had grown accustomed to the status quo of living in the Wall’s shadow. The Wall was a known element in a community and removing the Wall would completely change Berliners’ way of life, which might be quite worrisome given the poor economic and political situation in East Germany as well as persistent sensitivities about Germany’s future within France, the United Kingdom, and the Soviet block. In a way, the Wall provided a sense of stability despite the insecurity it created, a reality highlighted in a November 13 *U.S. News & World Report* article titled “The Dark Side of Democracy.” This article related the social challenges Hungary faced when it suddenly overthrew its Communist government. One must also consider the scenes of joyous celebration when the Wall did fall. A segment of society was excited about the Wall’s removal, so Momper’s statement offers a balance in perspective. But there was also the fact

that, for Germans, the Wall's removal brought up the matter of reunification, which had a different meaning in Europe than in America.<sup>329</sup>

Second, President Carter visited West Germany in conjunction with a meeting of NATO leaders, but he did not center his attention upon the Berlin Wall. The President's papers indicate that President Bush gave a toast at a diplomatic dinner in Bonn, held a question-and-answer session with reporters (in which the Berlin Wall did not arise as a question), and gave a speech focused upon NATO in Chancellor Kohl's hometown of Mainz, which did contain a passing reference calling for the removal of the Berlin Wall. This "passing reference" was a seven-sentence paragraph within a 39-paragraph speech in which the President did not even use the phrase "the Berlin Wall." Bush called for Berlin to be the next area to allow the Iron Curtain barriers to fall and claimed that Berlin was the area where the differences between East and West could be seen most clearly. Bush then referred to the Berlin Wall as "this brutal wall [that] cuts neighbor from neighbor, brother from brother ... [that] stands as a monument to the failure of communism" before closing with a Reaganesque, "It must come down."<sup>330</sup>

Bush inserted this paragraph as part of a set of four proposals to "heal Europe's tragic division." The other three proposals were: (1) to strengthen the "Helsinki process to promote free elections and political pluralism in Eastern Europe,; (2) to "bring *glasnost* to East Berlin;

---

<sup>329</sup> Phone Conversation, The President and Governing Mayor Walter Momper, Apr. 19, 1989. Accessed Jan. 5, 2012. Available at: [http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/pdfs/memcons\\_telcons/1989-04-19--Momper.pdf](http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/pdfs/memcons_telcons/1989-04-19--Momper.pdf). Marianne Szegedy-Maszak, "The Dark Side of Democracy," *U.S. News & World Report*, Nov. 13, 1989, folder "AFL-CIO Convention 11/13/89 [5]," OA 6344, Office of Speechwriting – Speech File Backup, GBL.

<sup>330</sup> George Bush, "Toast at a Dinner Hosted by Chancellor Helmut Kohl in Bonn, Federal Republic of Germany," May 30, 1989. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=17080>.

George Bush, "Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session with Reporters Following Discussion with Chancellor Helmut Kohl in Bonn, Federal Republic of Germany," May 30, 1989. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=17079>.

George Bush, "Remarks to the Citizens in Mainz, Federal Republic of Germany," May 31, 1989. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=17085>.

(3) to work with America's allies in Western Europe to tackle environmental problems; and (4) to take the necessary steps to achieve a "less militarized Europe." These steps were in keeping with the overall theme of the speech and Bush's purpose for visiting Europe – NATO and its role in the mutual defense of Europe. Given that reality, it is logical that the President would maintain his rhetorical emphasis upon those issues and include the Berlin Wall as a sidebar. Although it was a minor component of the speech, Bush's call was picked up by the press and referred to months afterwards.\* Bush's remark at Mainz was small, despite it receiving press coverage beyond the articles referenced below. However, it is the closest President Bush came to giving a speech on the Berlin Wall while standing on German soil. Even though he did not make the point dramatically, his statement was significant.<sup>331</sup>

Finally, in considering President Bush's rhetoric on November 9, 1989, and in subsequent days, unlike the other rhetorical events emphasizing the Berlin Wall examined within this dissertation, President Bush did not have the luxury of two months or even two weeks of preparation in advance of the Wall coming down. President Bush was speaking off-the-cuff or with only a couple days notice. However, other Presidents, like Reagan, had the public speaking skills to provide eloquent addresses with comparatively little preparation. Bush did not, which is a reason why his remarks on November 9 were not polished. The speechwriting staff and the President had to work on short notice to alter prepared text, but

---

\*A September 5, 1989, column in the *Los Angeles Times*, titled "Berlin Wall to Come Down, Bush Predicts," summarized a recent interview that British journalist David Frost held with President Bush and began, "President Bush, who three months ago called for tearing down all physical barriers that divide Europe . . ." The President's May 31 address would be almost exactly three months before the *Los Angeles Times* article's publication and an examination of the presidential papers for May-June 1989 shows no other speech, toast, question-and-answer, or other piece of rhetoric where the President made such a statement.

<sup>331</sup>George Bush, "Remarks to the Citizens in Mainz, Federal Republic of Germany," May 31, 1989. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=17085>. Jack Nelson, "Berlin Wall to Come Down, Bush Predicts," Sep. 5, 1989, *The Los Angeles Times*, Lexis Nexis Article Transcript, folder "AFL-CIO Convention 11/13/89 [1]," OA 6344, Office of Speechwriting – Speech File Backup, GBL.

that is also an expected challenge of the presidency. Regardless of the timing or preparation, much like President Carter's visit to Berlin, President Bush did not fully utilize his opportunity in West Germany to draw attention to a key international issue – the Berlin Wall.

Throughout 1989, there had been social and political movements of a massive scale in protest of the East German regime. The protests across East Europe materialized in the GDR, despite the rigid refusal of East German leadership, led by President Erich Honecker, to react or adapt to the new conditions. Given Gorbachev's December 1988, promise to revoke the Brezhnev Doctrine and "abjure the use of force in pursuing external objects," the East German government was on its own. Honecker could not expect Gorbachev to rescue his regime, which was a profound change from earlier years. Hundreds of thousands of East Germans flocked to Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and other Eastern bloc countries that had a West German embassy where they could seek asylum. This repeated many of the emigration issues that had caused, in part, the Wall's construction almost thirty years prior. In August 1989, the West German embassy in Budapest was forced to close due to the overwhelming number of East German refugees swarming its facilities. The flood of refugees leaving the country was only one of the complaints the East German Politburo members leveled against Erich Honecker, which ultimately resulted in his removal from office. Another key complaint was the reality that the GDR was bankrupt. For years, East Germany managed to keep itself afloat, in part by pointing out to the Soviets the need for maintaining their perceived status as the most advanced of the satellite nations. Ousting Honecker removed the foremost symbol of the Communist regime, but it did not solve the GDR's problems. The East German Politburo began to show signs of disorganization and spasmodic change. In early November, a large portion of the government, along with the entire Politburo,

resigned and was replaced by younger, presumably more reformist-minded officials. This governmental change and the hints dropped by East Germany's new leader, Egon Krenz, suggesting that *perestroika* be extended to East Germany were covered in the American press within a week of the Berlin Wall's fall. These new officials felt that they had to develop a new policy to address the mass exodus quickly. In the West, at least, it seemed that the GDR might reform itself and emerge as a more open, but still separate, German state.<sup>332</sup>

A group of four officials from the Interior Ministry were given the daunting task of drafting a resolution "for the alteration of the situation regarding permanent exit of GDR citizens via the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic." Ultimately, the committee felt that they could not bar permanent visas while granting visiting ones. Thus, the final draft "stipulated that, so long as East German citizens were in possession of a passport and visa, no restrictions should be placed on either permanent emigration or private visits." People could leave the GDR by any border crossing, including West Berlin. The newly elected Politburo, unfamiliar with past precedent and assured of Soviet support for the measure, passed the resolution which was announced during the daily press conference where the new travel rules were the final point included on the agenda. The media spokesperson, Gunter Schabowski, read the new rules in "mechanical fashion" and appeared surprised that such a mundane recitation of regulations piqued the media's interest. Even though the new regulations were not to go into effect until the following day, Schabowski incorrectly answered, "immediate, without delay."<sup>333</sup>

---

<sup>332</sup> Frederick Taylor, *The Berlin Wall: A World Divided, 1961-1989* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2006), 404, 411-413, 415, 419, 421.

Norman A. Graebner, Richard Dean Burns, and Joseph M. Siracusa, *Reagan, Bush, Gorbachev: Revisiting the End of the Cold War* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2008), 119.

David Remnick, "Krenz Hints at East German Perestroika," Nov. 2, 1989, *The Washington Post*, folder "AFL-CIO Convention 11/13/89 [7]," OA 6344, Office of Speechwriting – Speech File Backup, GBL.

<sup>333</sup> Taylor, 421-424.

The media took a little time to absorb the implications of this news. Contrary to some reports, it was not an immediate sensation. Indeed, the first reports from Reuters simply said that “any GDR citizen would be entitled, from now on, to leave the country via the appropriate border crossing points.” A few minutes later, the Associated Press changed the entire media tone by stating, “According to information supplied by SED Politburo member Gunter Schabowski, the GDR is opening its borders.” The two statements, in essence, say the same thing, but both omit the reference to the new rules that required passports and visas. The phrase, “opening its borders,” spread like wildfire and sparked the excitement of a people and the world. In reality, events happened so fast that even the East German leadership and the border guards were caught off guard. Both entities quickly realized that they could not hold back the swarm of people aside from sending in tanks, so the government allowed events to run their course, and thus began one of the biggest public celebrations the world had ever seen. There remains some question as to how and why border guards did not fire on the populace, but the main fact is that events at that point were far beyond the ability of the GDR – or perhaps any government – to control. Moreover, this was entirely within the national interest of the Federal Republic, which Kohl understood.<sup>334</sup>

U.S. government officials would later conclude that “the hapless East German government opened the Berlin Wall by mistake.” In the rush of the moment, the Bush administration did not have the benefit of hindsight nor the advantage of advanced notice when gleeful citizens began climbing over the Wall, dancing on top of it, and hitting it with sledgehammers. As the news stories unfolded, Fitzwater urged the President to make a statement because it was “an incredibly historic day.” The Press Secretary believed that the people would want to know what the events meant and would need reassurance from the

---

<sup>334</sup> Taylor, 425-426, 428.

President that the world situation was stable, despite the surprise. This led to the following scene between Fitzwater and Bush (as described by Fitzwater):

The president just looked at me. He understood the historic point, of course, but his vision was taking him into a future of German reunification, diminished communism, and a new world order to be established. "Listen, Marlin," he [Bush] said, "I'm not going to dance on the Berlin Wall. The last thing I want to do is brag about winning the cold war, or bringing the thing down. It won't help us in Europe to be bragging about this." "I understand that, sir," I said, "but we have to show that we understand the historical significance of this. You don't have to brag."

Both the President and Fitzwater had valid points. The President did not want to steal any of the limelight nor take any undue credit for the events. He was looking at long-term foreign policy. In contrast, Fitzwater was concerned with the immediate situation. The American people wanted to hear from the President at this crucial moment. Ultimately, Fitzwater won and the press pool was ushered into the Oval Office for a question-and-answer session with the President. Bush was still not thrilled with the arrangement as evidenced by his sliding down in his chair, bowing his head, folding his hands across his chest, and slipping into a monotone voice during the interview. However, his lack of interest in the interview should not be misconstrued as a disinterest in the unfolding events. Indeed, the President's mind was racing over possible scenarios for November 10 and thereafter. Additionally, an examination of the White House Press Office's news summary from November 10 reveals little criticism of the President's demeanor during the Q&A. Only one article within the summary even mentioned the President's "subdued" manner and that the President "displayed none of the elation he said he felt." But the article also provided two explanations for this demeanor. The first was a direct quote from Bush: "I'm just not an emotional kind of guy." The second was a quote from an unidentified White House staff member who explained that the reason for the President's "low-key manner was a desire to avoid

inflaming the situation in East Germany.” Both of these statements are consistent with the White House’s rhetorical message following November 9.<sup>335</sup>

President Bush began the question-and-answer session by stating, “We just wanted to make a brief statement here.” The President never intended to make a long, formal speech. He was simply relaying to the media, and thereby the American people, that he was informed (by referring to the briefings Secretary of State Baker and National Security Advisor Scowcroft) and that he welcomed the East German decision. More specifically, Bush complimented the East German decision in relation to the rights guaranteed in the Helsinki Final Act, which the GDR had signed, because it would improve the East German human rights record. The United States acknowledged the GDR’s existence and understood that proper diplomatic behavior is often crucial in times of fast-moving situations. The President also relayed a straightforward optimism that, if the GDR proceeded with like-minded reforms, the Berlin Wall would have very limited relevance to the future. The President then closed his remarks with a simple, “I am very pleased with this development.”

Then the flurry of questions from the media began, including the following:

Mr. President, would the United States now consider doing more to help West Germany house, to take care of some of these East Germans coming into that country? Is there more that you could do now to help West Germany accommodate? – *The President responded by focusing upon the close relationship between the two countries and that the U.S. would seriously consider such a request if Chancellor Kohl made it.*

Have you assured Mr. Kohl that if he does need help that we’ll be there for them? *The President responded by noting that he had not yet talked to Chancellor Kohl since he was currently in Poland, but that the two leaders had spoken the previous week and Bush was confident in Kohl’s knowledge that he could approach the United States if help was needed.*

---

<sup>335</sup> Maynard, 42-44.

Carl Leubsdorf, “Bush Please, Subdued Over E. German Decision,” Nov. 10, 1989, *Dallas Morning News*, News Summary, folder “Friday, November 10, 1989,” OA 90526-004, Office of the President – Daily Files, GBL.

Is this the end of the Iron Curtain, sir? *The President responded that no single event could end the Iron Curtain, but that the worst days had certainly passed.*

What's the danger here of events just spinning out of control? Secretary Baker commented earlier about how rapid the pace of change has been in Eastern Europe . . . Is there a danger here that things are accelerating too quickly? *The President responded that this development was something that the United States had long encouraged and refused to guess as to what exactly the future held. However, the U.S. was purposefully trying to avoid creating additional conflict while still supporting the democratization process.*

Did you ever imagine anything like this happening? On your watch? *The President replied that, certainly, he had imagined it; but he had not foreseen it at this particular point in time.*

Well, how elated are you? *The President responded, "I'm very pleased," both with the events themselves and with how the events were being handled before repeating "I feel very good about it [the events]."*

The President repeatedly emphasized that this was not a time for rushing decisions. He would stay in close touch with America's NATO allies, including West Germany, France, and the United Kingdom, to ensure a united response in handling whatever future events held, but, above all, the President was not going to gloat. He would recognize America's role, but this was a German triumph. It is also important to remember the old joke that NATO was formed "To keep the Americans in, the Germans down, and the Russians out." In other words, the American reaction to events in Berlin had repercussions stemming from the end of the Second World War, and would be felt across Europe, where memories are never short.<sup>336</sup>

This message was consistent throughout the President's upcoming speaking engagements. Since the speechwriters lacked the gift of prophecy, the rhetorical material

---

<sup>336</sup> Press Release, Statement by the President and Question and Answer Session, Nov. 9, 1989, folder "Presidential Press Conferences, 1989 [3]," OA 13207-010, Press Office – Administrative File, GBL. Jack Nelson, "Berlin Wall to Come Down, Bush Predicts," Sep. 5, 1989, *The Los Angeles Times*, Lexis Nexis Article Transcript, folder "AFL-CIO Convention 11/13/89 [1]," OA 6344, Office of Speechwriting – Speech File Backup, GBL.

inserted into these addresses was added on short notice; but, because these events were so significant, they needed to be added and they provided verbal reassurance that the President was keeping in touch with international events as well as the American people. In the President's remarks at the National Association of Realtors on November 10, the material was inserted as a prelude to the President's pre-established remarks. The President opened with the usual thanks and greetings and then stated, "Before going into my main remarks, let me just say a word about the momentous events in East Germany." Contrary to what one might expect following such an introduction, Bush's comments did not focus upon the Berliners. Rather, the President used the opportunity to reinforce to the American people that, despite his outward image the day before, he was excited over the events, saying, "I was moved, as you all were." The President then reminded the audience that, although he had doubted these events would happen during his first year in office, he had publicly stated his hopefulness at the Soviets' signs of opening in his speech at Texas A&M, and that he had urged Gorbachev to meet with him so that the two men could discuss matters face-to-face (which the two leaders would do in Malta in December 1989). Finally, the President urged the audience to continue its hope and encouragement since "we're living in fascinating times, and we will seize every opportunity to contribute to a lasting peace and to extend democracy."<sup>337</sup>

In contrast with this address, the President's remarks concerning Berlin later in the day at a Republican fundraising dinner were integrated into his message. However, the President noted some of the same points: that he would be meeting with President Gorbachev at Malta in December, that America should look at the events in Germany with

---

<sup>337</sup> George Bush, "Remarks to the National Association of Realtors in Dallas, Texas," Nov. 10, 1989. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=17785>.

encouragement and hope, and that the American people were living in exciting times. Bush did, however, include a new piece of information – he had talked to Chancellor Kohl. There is a simple reason why this could not be included in the earlier message – the phone conversation did not occur until 3:30 that afternoon. But Bush kept his word to Kohl that he would tell the American people of their conversation and of Kohl’s pronouncement that the events in Berlin would not have been possible without their American allies.<sup>338</sup>

The President’s remarks on November 11 stand in stark contrast to his comments of the previous day. Namely, the President dedicated only a three-sentence paragraph to the topic, and one of those sentences was a quote by Victor Hugo: “Nothing can stop an idea whose time has come.” The President simply said, “Look to the very heart of Europe, to Berlin, and you will see a great truth shining brighter with each passing day.” This truth, as expressed in the preceding paragraph, was that the peaceful American ideals “are now the ideals of the world.” Even if this statement was rather premature as a universal statement, it was as close as the President was willing to come to a victory statement that American capitalism had defeated Soviet communism.<sup>339</sup>

## Analysis

Little did the White House speechwriters know when they began writing the President’s address for the 1989 AFL-CIO Convention that events would occur that would drastically change the world as they knew it. But the address did not change as much as

---

<sup>338</sup> George Bush, “Remarks at a Republican Fundraising Dinner Honoring Governor Bill Clements in Dallas, Texas,” Nov. 10, 1989. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=17788>.

Phone Conversation, The President and Chancellor Helmut Kohl, Feb. 10, 1989. Accessed Dec. 30, 2011. Available at: [http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/pdfs/memcons\\_telcons/1989-11-10--Kohl.pdf](http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/pdfs/memcons_telcons/1989-11-10--Kohl.pdf).

<sup>339</sup> George Bush, “Remarks at the Dedication Ceremony for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Dallas, Texas,” Nov. 11, 1989. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=17790>.

might be expected. The edited speech drafts reveal that the majority of the wording remained virtually identical throughout the developmental process. Between the November 8 and November 13 draft versions, the speechwriting staff removed only six paragraphs of text and added three paragraphs of new text. In contrast, between the November 13 and November 15 drafts, the staff added an additional 1.5 pages of material and removed next to nothing. In comparing the first page of the speech from the November 8 draft with the first page of the November 15 draft, the only difference is that the latest version tweaks the names of two union groups and adds three more unions to the list. Considering the November 8 draft was circulated to nine individuals, including the National Security Adviser, for “Action” and an additional seven individuals, including the Vice President and the White House Chief of Staff, for “Information,” this was no small feat.<sup>340</sup>

The President’s address before the AFL-CIO on November 15, 1989, constituted his first full-length speech following the fall of the Berlin Wall. Through the speech’s sections – Introductory Remarks, Laboring Together, Labor Transforming the World, Labor’s Sacrifice – the White House saw this event as an opportunity for the President to reaffirm his support for labor along with addressing events cascading across Eastern Europe. He would try to do so without boasting, so as to encourage further Soviet reform without antagonizing Gorbachev, while maintaining political relations with an audience with whom he frequently disagreed politically. So many sensitive issues, along with the fact that the world was paying keen attention to everything he said and did – or did not say or do – put Bush in a delicate position.

---

<sup>340</sup> Speech Drafts, folder “AFL-CIO Convention, 11/15/89,” OA 13512-001, Office of Speechwriting – Speech File Draft Files – Chron. File, GBL. Speech Drafts, Document Range 089012SS-089012CU, SP623, WHORM Subject File, GBL.

## Introductory Remarks

The 1989 AFL-CIO Convention was not merely a gathering of labor activists, it was also a moment designated to the honor of Lech Walesa, a Polish dissident who helped successfully organize Solidarity – the first unionized labor movement behind the Iron Curtain. Walesa was a hero to the Polish people and free labor supporters around the world, including the AFL-CIO, which had a long record of opposing Soviet inroads into the western labor movement. When President Bush visited Poland in June 1989, a quarter of a million people crammed into the public square to hear Walesa and Bush speak, a crowd that overwhelmed Walesa who was heard repeatedly muttering, “Oh my God, oh my God” in English in the car as he and Bush drove through. The throng welcomed Walesa with open arms and thunderous applause. The assemblage issued a resoundingly positive welcome to President Bush as well, chanting, “Stay with us!” in Polish in response to Bush’s speech in which he said, “And I answered that in this time of bright promise, of historic transition, of unique opportunity, I would want to stay in Poland and be part of it, help make the dream come true for all the Polish people.”<sup>341</sup>

In November 1989, it was time for the American people to likewise support Lech Walesa. Walesa had been awarded the George Meany Human Rights Award in 1981, but had not been permitted to travel to the United States to claim it. Eight years later, the Polish government allowed the journey where the AFL-CIO and President Bush honored Walesa. Walesa’s presence in the United States was a key indicator of the changes occurring throughout Eastern Europe. There had once been a time when not only would such a visit

---

<sup>341</sup> George Bush, “Remarks at the Biannual Convention of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations,” Nov. 15, 1989. Online by John T. Woolley and Gerhard Peters, *The American Presidency Project*. Available at: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=17811>. [hereafter noted as “Bush, ‘AFL-CIO.’”] Schlesinger, 371.

have been impossible, but the mere suggestion by the United States that Walesa be honored would have raised a storm in Moscow. The President used his introductory remarks to recognize this remarkable man whose actions would be integrated throughout the speech.

In giving the speech before the AFL-CIO, the President knew that he was not exactly among friends. The large labor unions, historically, do not lean towards the Republican Party in their political affinity, which is why it was prudent for Bush to establish early rapport with his audience. Above all, the President needed to find the common ground with his audience. He began this process by making a couple of jokes. This was a standard speechwriting technique. As White House speechwriter Peggy Noonan stated, “Every speech needs it [humor] and you need it too, probably at the top . . . It’s a speaker’s way of saying, ‘This won’t be painful, humor is allowed here’ . . . Humor is gracious and shows respect. It shows the audience you think enough of them to want to entertain them.” Bush was not well-known for his public sense of humor, but he did possess one, albeit one that often differed from that of his speechwriters. (Bush maintained a strong dislike of prepared humor throughout his presidency.) He first joked about identifying with Walesa’s long wait to attend the AFL-CIO’s convention, saying, “I understand what it’s like, to wait so long to get here . . .” before continuing and saying that the wait was worthwhile and teasing that it was nice seeing the members who had supported his presidential candidacy sitting in the back row. The President also played to his audience in a third joke, in an attempt to establish a level of rapport between himself and the audience, claiming that First Lady Barbara Bush had caught the President singing “Union Yes” in the shower that morning – “America Works Best, When We Say ‘Union, Yes!’”<sup>342</sup>

---

<sup>342</sup> Noonan, *Simply*, 11, 114.  
Bush, “AFL-CIO.”

## Laboring Together

Despite President Bush possessing political disagreements with the AFL-CIO, his speech emphasized that this diversity was a natural part of a democratic system that should be celebrated. Labor had great political successes around the world in expanding liberty; Bush had great political successes around the world in expanding liberty. The AFL-CIO in particular had a historically anti-Communist, anti-totalitarian government stance, just like Bush. As Bush noted, American labor organizations were among the first to recognize Hitler's evil in Germany and immediately assisted the underground resistance movements. Likewise, when Soviet Communism threatened Eastern Europe, American labor once again stood its ground and continued supporting its European labor networks. Not every national labor organization could say the same thing. Furthermore, as Bush relayed in his speech, both the AFL-CIO and the President believed that the people held the potential for controlling their individual and collective future. The democratic process was the key to "a way of life that demands respect for differences and respects an honest opinion as much as it respects an honest day's work." In spite of his disagreement with the union leadership, Bush stated that he maintained an appreciation and respect for the "frankness and directness" with which they delivered their messages. There was a time for debate and a time to set differences aside. To Bush, assisting Poland in making continued strides toward political openness and labor reform was one such time.<sup>343</sup>

This international cooperation with Poland was not just wishful thinking on Bush's part, but an action to which he had made multiple commitments. First, while on his visit to Gdansk, he committed verbally to the Polish people that the American government, American labor, and the American people would stand together with the Polish people. The

---

<sup>343</sup> Bush, "AFL-CIO."

President made a similar promise in Warsaw to help the Polish economic system transfer from a “discredited centrally planned economic system” (i.e. Socialist Communism) to “one of free markets and hope for a better future” (i.e. Capitalism). Second, the President enlisted other government officials, like Secretary of Labor Elizabeth Dole, to meet with various international government labor officials to garner their support for the Polish people as well. Dole met with British Prime Minister Thatcher and the British Labor Minister on the same day that Bush delivered his speech to the AFL-CIO.<sup>344</sup>

Third, President Bush had already solicited support from the AFL-CIO, which had a long-established record of assisting Solidarity. Since the Polish press was still under governmental control, Lech Walesa had appealed via the Norwegian press for financial assistance from Western trade unions. The AFL-CIO verified that its help would be welcome and created the Polish Workers Aid Fund, which provided non-financial aid for items not available for purchase in Poland, including office equipment, printing presses, a minibus, and similar items of practical use, but no direct funds. James M. Shevis, an assistant editor of the *AFL-CIO News*, made the following bold claim: “the AFL-CIO has done more than any other national labor center to help Solidarity.” Despite Soviet and other Eastern Bloc countries protesting their assistance and accusing them of collaborating with the Central Intelligence Agency and even pressure from the Carter administration to cease their activities, the AFL-CIO remained steadfastly dedicated to the Polish cause. AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland made it quite clear that Carter’s administration and its warning from Secretary of State Muskie that U.S. labor support for Solidarity might trigger a Soviet invasion of Poland had no sway over the labor organization:

---

<sup>344</sup> Bush, “AFL-CIO.”

I know of no place and no case where the organization and development of free trade unions has proceeded under the blanket of quiet diplomacy. Free trade unionism does not advance and will not advance in this world on little cat feet. And I will not accept the proposition that we will pussy-foot about it at all.

Kirkland's bold statement solicited a private response from Polish-born National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski, who wrote a note to Kirkland thanking him for his eloquent remarks and highlighting the reality that "there is a difference between what the government can do publicly to support the workers and what an independent organization such as yours can do." Despite their different approaches and methods, Brzezinski, like President Bush several years later, commented that he and Kirkland shared "the same basic objective" – personal liberty. The President specifically highlighted that his administration and the labor movement could find common ground and work together on a mutually beneficial endeavor. He did this by notifying the public that Lane Kirkland would join Secretary Dole and other leaders on a "Presidential mission to Poland." Given Kirkland's and the AFL-CIO's historic ties with Solidarity, this was a politically prudent request. Additionally, having Kirkland's support would greatly assist the President in his call to the American labor unions, labor movement, business community, and government to find ways to work in partnership with the Polish people to continue the progress already made in Eastern Europe, despite the fact that under Kirkland's watch the AFL-CIO's membership dropped significantly.<sup>345</sup>

Finally, President Bush had already discussed economic strategy at length with the night's honoree – Lech Walesa. Ironically, this point was not included until the November 15 draft. This reality is puzzling since the AFL-CIO was honoring Walesa at the convention to which the President was delivering his speech. Regardless of this anomaly, Walesa was a

---

<sup>345</sup> Bush, "AFL-CIO."  
James M. Shevis, "The AFL-CIO and Poland's Solidarity," *World Affairs* (Vol. 144, No. 1, Summer 1981), 31-33.

man of great accomplishments. He led the 1980-1981 Solidarity revolution (Poland's first non-governmental, free trade union which at its height represented 50% of the population) that is credited with helping end the Cold War and for which he won the 1983 Nobel Peace Prize. He would then go on to serve as Poland's President from 1990-1995, during which time he helped secure western investment as well as reductions in the country's national debts to western banks. In the West, Walesa enjoyed a larger-than-life image of straightforward heroism which Peggy Simpson described as "the very personification of Solidarity's challenge to the Soviet authorities." Given his fame in the West and in Poland, Walesa was a logical choice to serve as a liaison between Washington and Warsaw. Furthermore, even though Walesa and Bush possessed some ideological differences, they had a respectful relationship. As Bush related in his speech, they talked business – "labor's son and democracy's advocate" came together to discuss banking and investment in Poland. It was a key meeting between key leaders, one that could only be possible through the frankness and directness that Bush praised earlier in his speech.<sup>346</sup>

### **Labor Transforming the World**

Bush continued his support of labor's endeavors by elaborating upon the transformations occurring across Eastern Europe and praising the role labor movements played in making these transformations possible. According to Bush's speech, the movement began in Poland where Solidarity, with the support of the AFL-CIO, "unlocked freedom's door . . . risking everything for democracy." This action, according to the speech, gave

---

<sup>346</sup> Bush, "AFL-CIO."

Peggy Simpson, "The Troubled Reign of Lech Walesa in Poland," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* (Vol. 26, No. 2, Spring 1996), 317-318, 322.

Speech Draft, Nov. 15, 1989, Document Range 089012SS-089012CU, SP623, WHORM Subject File, GBL.

Soviet miners the courage to peacefully strike “for the first time since the early 1920s.” This was the main area in which the President needed to watch his words carefully to avoid any unnecessary antagonism towards the Soviets. Even though Gorbachev had revoked the Brezhnev Doctrine, the Soviets still had a presence and investment in its bloc and satellite countries. Direct threats to those long-held connections would certainly be noticed and would receive some manner of response from Moscow.<sup>347</sup>

Bush’s next point, the dismantling of the Iron Curtain, was the portion of the speech that was greatly expanded in response to the recent events. One point was also removed. The November 8 draft had the President drawing attention to Kazimerias Woka, “a young man from Lithuania . . . who is leading a fascinating double life as both Supreme Soviet member, and worker activist.” The draft was unclear regarding which reviewer crossed out the paragraph, and the searchable archive files did not reveal any memos explaining the reason for its removal. It is possible that Woka would no longer be in attendance at the speech or that the administration felt it was diplomatically unwise or potentially personally harmful to highlight Woka’s efforts to promote democratic reforms in such a public manner. However, Woka went on to sign the Act of the Re-Establishment of the State of Lithuania in March 1990, the document that formally declared Lithuania’s independence from the Soviet Union.<sup>348</sup>

The point of the speech’s expansion was the Berlin events of November 9 and its aftereffects in Eastern Europe. The AFL-CIO speech, in its original November 8 form, never mentioned the Berlin Wall because there was nothing new to report. However, the events of

---

<sup>347</sup> Bush, “AFL-CIO.”

<sup>348</sup> *Ibid.*

Speech Draft, Nov. 8, 1989, folder “AFL-CIO Convention, 11/15/89,” OA 13512-001, Office of Speechwriting Draft Files – Chronological File, GBL.

the next day changed that scenario and caused the White House speechwriters to maintain an urgent call for the President to “capitalize on the moment by making a decisive statement.” In keeping with his desire to “not dance on the Berlin Wall,” Bush resisted. Most individuals would not consider the AFL-CIO speech’s inclusion of Berlin to be a “decisive statement,” but the fact that the speechwriters added a page and a half of material relating to the Berlin Wall, the subsequent similar movements in other Eastern European countries, and the President’s upcoming meeting with Gorbachev within days of the events occurring is significant. It is unclear who made the decision to add the material to the speech, but the text did not exist in the November 8 drafts and then was added in two parts.<sup>349</sup>

Part one of the new material appeared in the November 13 draft and began with highlighting, yet again, the AFL-CIO’s righteous refusal “to deal with puppet unions controlled by either employers or governments” by aiding the rise of Hungarian, Bulgarian, and East German labor movements. The speechwriters then added a paragraph relating to Berlin that read:

In East Germany, a deep wound that has scarred the heart of Europe for 28 years is now healing. In the smiles, laughter, and tears of people greeting freedom like a long-lost friend. In the wonder of children tasting freedom for the first time.

By focusing upon human relationships, the text avoids any direct political criticism, thus potentially preventing a scuffle with the Soviet Union. Furthermore, the Wall was not even directly mentioned, although no knowledgeable person would associate a scar that had existed in East Germany for 28 years with anything other than the Wall.<sup>350</sup>

---

<sup>349</sup> Schlesinger, 375.

Speech Drafts, folder “AFL-CIO Convention, 11/15/89,” OA 13512-001, Office of Speechwriting – Speech File Draft Files – Chron. File, GBL.

Speech Drafts, Document Range 089012SS-089012CU, SP623, WHORM Subject File, GBL.

<sup>350</sup> Speech Draft, Nov. 13, 1989, Document Range 089012SS-089012CU, SP623, WHORM Subject File, GBL.

The joyous, sweet rhetoric is still found within the November 15 draft and final version of the speech, but the paragraph's opening line as well as the subsequent material changed. The speechwriters added the sentence, "Uplifted by the hope that Europe will one day be whole and free, last week we watched in awe as Berliners danced atop the Berlin Wall." This sentence provided a smooth transition from Bush's points regarding the expansion of labor and liberty in Eastern Europe to the changes now rocking that part of the continent. This sentence, as written, encapsulated the feelings of so many around the world as they watched the events unfolding – awe. One might chuckle at the irony of Bush's statement – "as Berliners danced atop the Berlin Wall" – because it is virtually identical to what the President himself said he refused to do rhetorically.<sup>351</sup>

The President continued his emphasis upon the Berlin Wall by recounting his prediction that the Wall would fall, that he expected it to fall in his lifetime, and that he had hoped for its demise within the next three years of his administration. However, while this statement exists in the transcript of what the President actually said in the speech, it, along with the sentence that immediately followed it, does not exist in the November 15 draft. This reality raises a significant point of consideration relating to the speechwriting process. Speeches were sometimes tweaked up until shortly before the speech was delivered, although that was not the preferred norm. The November 15 draft includes a time specification in addition to the date – 11:45 a.m. President Bush was scheduled to begin his speech at 3:30 p.m. (In reality, the President began speaking at 3:40 p.m.) So, in those three hours and forty-five minutes, either a speechwriter added the text or President Bush added it extemporaneously as he was delivering the speech. The first of these options seems more

---

<sup>351</sup> Speech Draft, Nov. 13, 1989, Document Range 089012SS-089012CU, SP623, WHORM Subject File, GBL.

likely given the formulaic development of a usual speech, but Bush was infamous for straying from the prepared text and adlibbing.<sup>352</sup>

One can make a strong argument that President Bush added the text. There are two key supports for this argument. First, it would be very unusual for a speechwriter to add only two sentences of text and change nothing else only a couple of hours before a speech's delivery. These two sentences did not relay breaking news that was of utmost importance. Second, the language within the two sentences is different than the rhetoric used elsewhere in the speech. Specifically, Bush said:

Last summer, I remember predicting that the wall would come down. I expected it during my lifetime; I hoped for it during these next 3 years. But you know, quite apart from predictions, change has a way of sweeping through like a fast-moving train. And no one and no government should stand in its way.

In the paragraph in question, one sees another sentence that begins, "But you know." This is a very casual statement that does not fit with the formality of the surrounding text. Also, the sentences are choppy – a characteristic of Bush's speaking style. Peggy Noonan described Bush as "a man briskly walking down a city sidewalk, stopping all of a sudden to greet a friend and then plowing on, slowing briefly for a light, going forward with the crowd, turning to say hello to the man at the hot dog stand, moving on." Bush's natural speaking style came "in bursts," a description that fits this paragraph. Finally, President Bush, as Peggy Noonan again noted, had the tendency to begin sentences with "and." Thus, it is entirely probable that Bush added this two-sentence paragraph on his own. What he had to say was not bad. Perhaps it was not worded in the best manner possible, but he did not make any factual errors and he did not say something that made no sense. What Bush said fit with the topic he was

---

<sup>352</sup> Bush, "AFL-CIO." Speech Draft, Nov. 15, 1989, Document Range 089012SS-089012CU, SP623, WHORM Subject File, GBL.

discussing, and his speechwriters had practically been begging him to lay claim to helping make the events in Berlin and Eastern Europe possible. Bush also urged governments to stay out of the way of change – a small warning to the Soviets and other Communist governments to not attempt to halt the revolutions taking place<sup>353</sup>

The President then moved his attention to the after-effects of the Wall coming down. Czechoslovakia had made a similar political move by permitting freedom of travel for its citizens. The President applauded this step and then boldly stated that it was not enough. Based upon this, one would ask, “What would be enough?” The President provided an answer to that unspoken question: “Only free and unfettered elections can satisfy the yearnings of free people.” Thanks to the Czech Velvet Revolution, which arose two days after Bush delivered his speech to the AFL-CIO and ended shortly after Christmas of the same year, democracy returned to Czechoslovakia and helped pave the way for playwright and former dissident Vaclav Havel to become its President.<sup>354</sup>

The last component added to the November 15 draft was a reminder of Bush’s upcoming summit with Gorbachev in Malta. The Bush administration was reluctant to release to the press the particulars of what the President intended to discuss with the Soviet leader within the AFL-CIO speech. However, the President was willing to outline one specific point which the two men would *not* be discussing – the negotiation of Europe’s future. That future lay in the peoples’ hands, and the people were “speaking their own minds about that future” through actions such as flooding the Berlin Wall checkpoints, crying out for freedom, and joining labor movements like Solidarity. The President added a personal

---

<sup>353</sup> Bush, “AFL-CIO.”  
Speech Draft, Nov. 15, 1989, Document Range 089012SS-089012CU, SP623, WHORM Subject File, GBL.  
Noonan, *Simply*, 103-104.

<sup>354</sup> Bush, “AFL-CIO.”

message to Lech Walesa, telling him to “take this message back with you” to the people of Poland. That natural-sounding statement stands in stark contrast to the 1944 Yalta talks between Franklin Roosevelt, Josef Stalin, and Winston Churchill, which some believe ratified the division of Europe into separate camps. It put agency into the peoples of Europe, not their leaders – at least not leaders who could not claim true democratic validity. Therefore, Bush’s breezy statements concealed a radical element at their core.<sup>355</sup>

The speechwriters had not gotten their way in desiring a clear, decisive presidential statement, although one could say that Bush made an attempt at doing so on his own terms. Certainly, these statements about the Wall and expanding European freedom were better than nothing, but they fell short of real celebration or heralding another step in bringing the Cold War to a close. Indeed, according to Robert Schlesinger, President Bush took so long to make a statement regarding his actions helping end the Cold War that by the time he did, too much time had elapsed and the events were not fresh enough in the American people’s minds for them to readily associate them with President Bush.<sup>356</sup>

### **Labor’s Sacrifice**

By noting and honoring the supporters of international labor who had given their lives to the cause of liberty, President Bush was again showing how his administration and the AFL-CIO could reach a consensus. Both understood the purpose of the sacrifice – freedom came at a price. President Bush highlighted two labor martyrs – Mike Hammer and Mark Pearlman – whom he described as dying “at the hands of a right-wing death squad” in El Salvador. Considering that Hammer and Pearlman were killed in January 1981, eight years

---

<sup>355</sup> Speech Draft, Nov. 15, 1989, Document Range 089012SS-089012CU, SP623, WHORM Subject File, GBL. Bush, “AFL-CIO.”

<sup>356</sup> Schlesinger, 375-276.

before the President's speech, it is interesting that Bush would choose to highlight these two men. However, Hammer and Pearlman's inclusion makes sense. The two men's deaths created a great stir around the country since they were not government or military officials. They were men who had dedicated their professional and religious lives to helping Latin America's poor. Hammer knew that corrupt local officials and guerilla movements resented their presence and frequently thwarted his team's efforts to provide the peasants with something as basic as a water cistern by which they could access free water. Hammer had survived four previous assassination attempts, but he, and his pilot, Pearlman, did not survive the fifth. By special dispensation, Mike Hammer was given a hero's burial in Arlington National Cemetery, one of few social reformers to receive such an honor.<sup>357</sup>

Just as Hammer and Pearlman had supported labor movements in opposition to corrupt leadership, so too had the AFL-CIO had stood against Communist governments in Eastern Europe. Labor has long advocated equality and opportunity among the workforce, a trademark of socialism. However, the AFL-CIO made the distinction between democratic "equality" and Soviet-style "equality." According to Soviet doctrine, the Communist government represented the proletariat, and therefore there was no need for labor unions independent of such a regime. But independent labor unions were exactly what the AFL-CIO supported. For this reason, totalitarian governments targeted the independent unions. According to Bush's speech, in 1988 alone, "over 200 free trade unionists were murdered last year around the world."

Bush highlighted the message that worker's rights maintain a direct tie with human rights. The people had a right to safe working conditions, without fear of government interference or reprisal. By organizing under free labor unions, the people had a means of

---

<sup>357</sup> Robert Kleiman, "The Editorial Notebook: Death in El Salvador," Jan. 8, 1981, *New York Times*.

fighting back against unfair and unsafe labor practices, including the trafficking of children and women. In fighting these injustices and providing a voice for the people, the unions were taking their fight beyond the labor zone and into the philosophical, moral arena. This principle would also transform the labor unions into voices for democracy, a point, again, where the AFL-CIO and President Bush could agree.<sup>358</sup>

It is noteworthy that Bush did not include a single example from the Soviet bloc (he referenced Thailand, South Korea, Malaysia, and the Philippines as guilty of human rights violations), which could hardly be viewed as accidental given Bush's willingness to focus upon Poland's Solidarity movement and the well-documented labor abuses in the Soviet Union. Indeed, the Soviet Union receives no criticism within the speech, evidence of Bush attempting to avoid antagonizing Gorbachev ahead of the Malta Summit. The President even complimented the Soviets for permitting a banner reading, "Workers of the world, we apologize" to be carried in a protest march as the Soviets celebrated the anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution. Certainly, such an action was noteworthy both for the protestors and for the government officials who approved its presence. As Bush stated, 1989 was truly becoming a year of change throughout the world, and the President was excited to see what additional progressive events and challenges the year would bring.

### **Immediate Response**

The President's Daily Files at the Bush Presidential Library included a daily news summary collated and circulated by the White House Office of the Press Secretary each week Monday through Friday. Each news summary provided prominent headlines with a one-sentence abstract, as well as lead stories from major U.S. news sources like the *Boston*

---

<sup>358</sup> Bush, "AFL-CIO."

*Globe, Dallas Morning News, Washington Post, USA Today, New York Times, Los Angeles Times, Associated Press, and Reuters, as well as the network television news stations and major talk shows. The summary paid particular attention to international news.*

Unsurprisingly, the November 10 news summary is dominated by one event – the fall of the Berlin Wall. Indeed, in the entire summary, only a handful of news items did not relate to Germany. These included the following headlines: “[President] Aquino [of the Philippines] Gets Pledge of Help from Bush,” “Senate Turns Down Line Item Veto,” and “Soviet Ships Suspected of Using Lasers: U.S. Planes Report Incidents in Pacific.” Furthermore, an examination of the news summary reveals a significant point of commonality – none were negative towards the President. At worst, the articles were a neutral reporting of the facts, while others praised the President’s actions. The only articles that came close to criticizing the President were the ones noted earlier that questioned the President’s body language in comparison with what he said and another article that relayed that the President admitted to being caught off guard by the rapidly changing events.<sup>359</sup>

The Berlin Wall continued to dominate the news over the weekend, both in print and in the network news coverage. The Monday, November 13 news summary included the following headlines: “Changes Praised, but White House Calls for Caution,” “U.S., Soviets Meet on Berlin; E. Germans Set Party Congress,” “Administration Defends Reaction to East German Reforms,” “U.S. Aid to E. Germany Depends on Reform, Baker Says,” “USA, W. Germany Optimistic,” and others. Again, the newspaper coverage was positive. The administration was delighted with the events, but continued to act cautiously because that

---

<sup>359</sup> News Summary, Nov. 10, 1989, folder “Friday, November 10, 1989,” OA 90526-004, Office of the President – Daily Files, GBL.

was in the United States' best interest. Only an article within *USA Today* questioned the President's long-term strategy, noting that it appeared "short on specifics."<sup>360</sup>

The news show coverage, however, was more particular in its questioning of administration officials who appeared on the various shows. ABC's *This Week with David Brinkley* featured an interview with Secretary of State Baker and Soviet Foreign Ministry Advisor Vitaly Churkin. Within this article, Baker faced some pointed questions regarding President Bush's response, including:

It was the President, people thought, [that] did not react with sufficient enthusiasm, wasn't it?

One of the reasons President Bush is accused of being timid or cautious is because the United States seems to always be trailing these events and . . . takes an inordinate amount of time . . . to decide to do something about [them] . . . . Is there any plan now to aid Krenz, or East Germany . . . in any economic sense, or political sense, or any sense?

Why doesn't President Bush do something dramatic such as offer to meet with Egon Krenz?

What would you say to people in Congress who say . . . the rationale for having the current level of U.S. troops in Europe is antiquated?

NBC's *Meet the Press* likewise posed difficult questions relating primarily to German reunification. Program guests included Helmut Schmidt, former Chancellor of West Germany, and Dick Cheney, Secretary of Defense. In essence, the news shows were not questioning what the President had said, but the emotion (or lack of emotion) with which he had said it. The opposition's perception that the President was slow in developing his international policies, particularly in relation to the Soviet Union, was trickling over into the public perception of how the President handled the Berlin Wall's demise. If there was failure on Bush's part, it was a failure of style, not substance. In reality, these perceptions can be

---

<sup>360</sup> News Summary, Nov. 13, 1989, folder "Monday, November 13, 1989," OA 90526-007, Office of the President – Daily Files, GBL.

adequately summarized in one statement – George Bush was not Ronald Reagan. Reagan was demonstrative, a master of the spoken word. Bush was reserved, a cautiously methodical planner.<sup>361</sup>

However, not all the news shows targeted government officials; some shows relied upon political pundits, journalists, and analysts instead. *The McLaughlin Group* invited Fred Barnes (political commentator), Pat Buchanan (political commentator, author, politician, and broadcaster), Jack Germond (journalist, author, and political pundit), and Morton Kondracke (political commentator and journalist) to discuss German reunification, President Bush’s “strategy of restraint,” and Gorbachev’s future. *Inside Washington*, with moderator Gordon Peterson, featured a similarly-constructed panel as *The McLaughlin Group* – Charles Krauthammer (Pulitzer-Prize winning syndicated columnist), Carl Rowan (nationally syndicated op-ed columnist and former government official), Strobe Talbott (political analyst and former U.S. Ambassador to the USSR), and Juan Williams (journalist and political analyst). Again, the question of German reunification arose, as did the upcoming Malta summit meeting and the 1990 mid-term elections.<sup>362</sup>

Such coverage also provided a valuable insight into the distinct dichotomy in the reactions the President received to his treatment of the Berlin Wall. One of the most compelling examples came from *Face the Nation* on CBS, hosted by Lesley Stahl. Stahl first asked Gennadi Gerasimov, the Soviet Foreign Ministry spokesperson, “What do you think about how [President Bush] is handling the situation?” Gerasimov responded, “I think he is

---

<sup>361</sup> Transcript, *This Week with David Brinkley*, News Summary, Nov. 13, 1989, folder “Monday, November 13, 1989,” OA 90526-007, Office of the President – Daily Files, GBL.

Transcript, *Meet the Press*, News Summary, Nov. 13, 1989, folder “Monday, November 13, 1989,” OA 90526-007, Office of the President – Daily Files, GBL.

<sup>362</sup> Transcript, *The McLaughlin Group*, News Summary, Nov. 13, 1989, folder “Monday, November 13, 1989,” OA 90526-007, Office of the President – Daily Files, GBL.

Transcript, *Inside Washington*, News Summary, Nov. 13, 1989, folder “Monday, November 13, 1989,” OA 90526-007, Office of the President – Daily Files, GBL.

handling it as a real statesman.” Coming from a member of the Soviet government, this was high praise indeed and arguably more important than what anyone in the media had to say. This was not a member of Bush’s own team saying these words; this was a member of the Soviet opposition giving the President a great compliment.<sup>363</sup>

In contrast, when Stahl asked a nearly identical version of the same question to Angela Stent (an Associate Professor of Government who went on to become the Director of the Center for Eurasian, Russian, and Eastern Europe Studies at Georgetown University) and Stephen Rosenfeld (then deputy editor and columnist for the *Washington Post*), Rosenfeld answered less positively, whereas Stent responded in a manner more in keeping with Gerasimov’s earlier brief comment. Rosenfeld replied, “He doesn’t light up and enthuse to these surges of human freedom . . . and I wish he had that extra little fuse in him,” to which Stahl responded, “He needs to have more rhetoric, more poetry.” Based upon this comment, Rosenfeld, as a member of the press, wanted an exciting response to draw readership to his news articles. Stahl’s comment could be taken one of two ways: (1) that Stahl was simply summarizing and clarifying Rosenfeld’s remark or (2) that Stahl was adding his support and affirmation to Rosenfeld’s remark. Following this interchange, Stent came to the President’s defense, saying, “But he has to be very careful. He has to be very sensitive to the Federal Republic; he also has to be sensitive to Soviet concerns. I think, therefore, the response is entirely appropriate.” Such a statement was an acknowledgement of the President’s diplomatic knowledge, and, given the historic and contemporary context, a logical answer from an academic perspective.<sup>364</sup>

---

<sup>363</sup> Transcript, *Face the Nation*, News Summary, Nov. 13, 1989, folder “Monday, November 13, 1989,” OA 90526-007, Office of the President – Daily Files, GBL.

<sup>364</sup> *Ibid.*

The back and forth trading of polite criticisms versus compliments was not complete. Rosenfeld, in answering Stahl's question regarding the relaxed American response, commented that he felt America had begun too slowly, but that Bush had managed to catch up with the rushing events. Rosenfeld had been worried at the President's reaction and that "he's [Bush] losing touch," but that was no longer the case. However, he still felt the President was "perhaps an hour late, but not a day late" with his actions and initiatives. Stent's answer did not directly address the speech. Rather, she looked to the next step down the road, which she supposed "will be to grant most-favored nation status to East Germany," and thus allow U.S. businesses to become involved in the East Germany economy as well as ease immigration regulations.<sup>365</sup>

The *Face the Nation* discourse offered one additional point of disagreement regarding President Bush's handling of the Berlin Wall events. Lesley Stahl asked Rosenfeld and Stent, "But I'd like to know what you think our plan is for this Malta summit [between Bush and Gorbachev]. Do we have a proposal . . .?" Rosenfeld, again in the semi-negative, replied with "I don't think we have a plan," yet acknowledged that having a firmly established plan at that point in time would "almost certainly doom us to the wrong one." Stent, in the positive, replied, "And the Soviets themselves don't have a plan. This is damage limitation for them. They want to make sure that things don't get out of hand, but they do not have long-range plans." One could interpret Rosenfeld's statement as simply one of realism, but given Rosenfeld's prior statements regarding the administration's slow response as well as Stent's immediate defense by pointing out the lack of planning by the Soviets, it is logical to

---

<sup>365</sup> Transcript, *Face the Nation*, News Summary, Nov. 13, 1989, folder "Monday, November 13, 1989," OA 90526-007, Office of the President – Daily Files, GBL.

assume that it would be very difficult for the Bush administration to meet Rosenfeld's expectations.<sup>366</sup>

An examination of the aforementioned articles, network news stories, and news show questions reveals threads of common discussion. Although the fall of the Berlin Wall was of central importance, that topic was not the primary area where the questions focused. Reporters relayed the news of new checkpoints being opened and new holes appearing in the Wall, which was newsworthy, but not debate-worthy. The media debated how the United States was handling the situation, what kind of impact these events would have on the Malta summit, and how these events would impact Germany in the long term (i.e. reunification). In short, the American press was looking to the future and speculating on what and how events would unfold. As former Chancellor Helmut Schmidt stated during his time on *Meet the Press*, that question existed to a greater scale outside of Germany than it did within Germany. Did Schmidt think reunification was possible? Yes, but "someday in the future, maybe even in the next century." For the moment, the German people were busy with the task at hand – developing procedures for working with an East German government in a state of flux and handling the large number of people who could now cross back and forth across the border with relative ease.<sup>367</sup>

Even though the debates surrounding the events of November 9 flooded the airwaves, television screens, and newspapers immediately following the event, it did not take long for other stories to creep into the White House news summaries. By Wednesday, November 15,

---

<sup>366</sup> Transcript, *Face the Nation*, News Summary, Nov. 13, 1989, folder "Monday, November 13, 1989," OA 90526-007, Office of the President – Daily Files, GBL.

<sup>367</sup> News Summary, Nov. 10, 1989, folder "Friday, November 10, 1989," OA 90526-004, Office of the President – Daily Files, GBL.  
 News Summary, Nov. 13, 1989, folder "Monday, November 13, 1989," OA 90526-007, Office of the President – Daily Files, GBL.  
 Transcript, *Meet the Press*, News Summary, Nov. 13, 1989, folder "Monday, November 13, 1989," OA 90526-007, Office of the President – Daily Files, GBL.

Latin America was a key point of discussion, as was the Senate Democrats' filibuster over a proposed cut in the capital gains tax, the Navy halting operations for 48 hours to review safety procedures, and the Bush administration's decision to extend a federal ban on the federal financing of fetal tissue experimentation. As the *New York City Herald Tribune* commented in a November 14 headline, "A Red-Letter Day, But What Next?" November 9 had indeed been a "red-letter day," but the international celebration was beginning to wind down and it was now time to think about what was next.<sup>368</sup>

Although the media plays an important role in examining the cultural reaction to a speech, the polling of presidential approval does as well. In this particular example, the questions of primary concern were: (1) "What changes, if any, were there within the presidential approval ratings going into November 9 and then in the months afterwards?" and (2) "If there were changes, do they reflect the media's concern over President Bush's calm, undemonstrative response to the fall of the Berlin Wall?" The data answers these questions with relative ease. President Bush's Gallup approval rating data for the months surrounding November 9, 1989 was:

10/13-23/89	60% approve	23% disapprove	18% no opinion
11/2-5/89	70% approve	17% disapprove	13% no opinion
11/9-12/89	70% approve	17% disapprove	13% no opinion
12/7-19/89	71% approve	20% disapprove	9% no opinion
1/4-7/90	80% approve	11% disapprove	9% no opinion

Based upon this general information, although the poll date groupings are not as close in sequence as would be preferred, the President received an increase in approval in the time immediately surrounding November 9 and the Berlin Wall, and that approval held steady through mid-December. The only change through mid-December came from those switching

---

<sup>368</sup> New Summary, Nov. 15, 1989, folder "Wednesday, November 15, 1989," OA 90526-010, Office of the President – Daily Files, GBL.

their views of the President from “no opinion” to “disapprove,” but those numbers reversed themselves a month later, awarding Bush with one of the highest approval ratings of his entire administration. In December and January, the closest event of significant international interest was the President’s summit with Gorbachev at Malta, which was only moderately connected with the events in Germany. Thus, based upon the data above, one could assume that the President’s unemotional reaction to the Berlin Wall coming down was not of great enough significance to have an impact on his ratings to any measurable extent within the immediate future.<sup>369</sup>

An NBC and *Wall Street Journal* poll included with the Presidential Daily Files for November 9 (according to the attached memo, the poll would be on that night’s NBC news as well as in the next day’s *Wall Street Journal*) goes into further detail. In answering for “Attitude Toward Job Bush is Doing in General,” the polls indicate: 67% approve, 22% disapprove, 11% not sure. These numbers are very close to the Gallup polling information discussed earlier. However, the NBC/*WSJ* poll included more questions than Gallup, including one specifically measuring the “Attitude Toward Job Bush is doing on Foreign Affairs.” For this question, those polled responded: 59% approve, 27% disapprove, 14% not sure. These numbers hold steady with the data included from the same polling source from September 16-19 (58% approve, 26% disapprove, 16% not sure) and show a moderate difference between the President’s general approval rating and his rating on this specific issue. Furthermore, the NBC/*WSJ* poll broke the data down even further, including party registration. Logically, the President received lower approval ratings from registered Democrats than from registered Republicans or even from Independents (43%, 76%, and

---

<sup>369</sup> “Job Performance Ratings for President Bush (G.H.W.), 01/24/1989-01/08/1993, Accessed Jan. 5, 2012. Available at [http://webapps.ropercenter.uconn.edu/CFIDE/roper/presidential/webroot/presidential\\_rating.cfm#.TzL93IEbFlc](http://webapps.ropercenter.uconn.edu/CFIDE/roper/presidential/webroot/presidential_rating.cfm#.TzL93IEbFlc)

57% respectively) and higher disapproval ratings from Democrats than from Republicans or Independents (38%, 15%, and 30% respectively). Even those numbers would be considered respectable regardless of the man sitting in the Oval Office, not to mention the major international events associated with the Cold War. The *NBC/WSJ* numbers are based upon data collected immediately before the Berlin Wall fell, but based upon the demographic numbers and considering the Gallup information, it is relatively unlikely that they would have fallen in the weeks following November 9.<sup>370</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Against his speechwriters' advice, President Bush refused to bask in the glory of the Berlin Wall's fall, a claim proved clearly in his speeches November 9-15, 1989. President Bush possessed the capability to stand at the presidential podium in the White House and pronounce, "We have won! We have defeated the East Germans; we have caused the Berlin Wall to come down! The Cold War is coming to an end and we are the winners!" However, such proclamations would have been a political and historical error and likely caused a public outcry. Instead, President Bush used a different approach and chose to soft-pedal the American response. Bush possessed the historical understanding that the German celebrations could turn just as quickly into German mourning or anger if the Soviets intervened. The Cold War was not yet over. The Berlin Wall's removal was a significant step, but it was not the end. Communism and the Soviet system still dominated Eastern Europe, violating the World War II accords.

---

<sup>370</sup> *NBC/Wall Street Journal* Polling Data, folder "Thursday, November 9, 1989," OA 90526-003, Office of the President – Daily Files, GBL.

The President's response did not appear to have an impact on his approval ratings in the short term. However, as this chapter exhibits, his response ( or perceived lack of response) to economic issues at home would greatly affect his ratings and his attempted run for a second term in office. Based upon the evidence presented herein, the President's willingness to allow others to take the credit for the pinnacle moments of the Cold War ending, the Soviet Union disbanding, and the two Germanys reuniting hurt him politically. Bush's detractors remembered him as the man who was President when the events occurred rather than as the President who helped usher in a new era. This chapter reveals that Bush responded in the manner in which he felt most comfortable and that he thought was best given the situation at the time. Another man might have responded differently, but that is a key point within this dissertation. Each President responded in his own way to the challenges he faced at a particular moment in time. The rightness or wrongness of Bush's decision is a point of conjecture. One can only speculate as to what might have occurred if the President had "danced on the Berlin Wall."

## Concluding Comparisons

Given the Berlin Wall's place as one of the great icons of the Cold War, the different rhetorical treatment the Wall received among the three Presidents is important to understand. One gave a town-hall speech in Berlin, one gave a formal speech in Berlin, and one gave no speech at all in Berlin. These three examples show that the setting should not overshadow the words themselves. Despite their stylistic differences, the three President's rhetoric combines to present a unified perspective toward the Berlin Wall. The archival materials show that all three Presidents expressed a view that the German people were resilient in the face of the adversity created by the Wall's existence. Likewise, all three said that they believed that the Wall should and would come down, but the timing of that event was uncertain. Furthermore, they reaffirmed continuity with the original American policy towards the Federal Republic of Germany established in the post-war years.

In considering the presidential compliments to the German people, particularly West Berliners, for their resilience in the face of adversity from the East German government and the Soviets, one should first recognize that each President spoke in his own way. Some of their compliments were direct, like Carter praising the Berliners as irrepressible and steadfast in the face of East German border guards. Others were indirect, like Reagan noting the West Berliners' ability to rebuild their city from the destruction of World War II and Bush highlighting their refusal to abandon hope of seeing their loved ones on the other side of the Wall again. These remarks all highlighted the positive, which is a vital point of consideration. If the Presidents had spoken only of all the obstacles which the Berliners had to overcome, it would have created negative rhetoric. The Berliners did not need more discouragement; they needed hope. One might argue, in fact, that optimism and hope were

what the Berliners expected and needed from an American leader. Berliners knew the problems they faced far better than any American President. What they needed, and what each of the three Presidents provided, was recognition of the problem balanced with hopeful solutions – foremost, that the Wall would one day come down and Germany would be whole again.<sup>371</sup>

The Americans could not remove the Wall by themselves without starting a war. Likewise, words alone would be insufficient to cause the Wall to crumble. Actions, specifically on the part of the Soviet Union and East Germany, were required. Words, like Reagan urging Gorbachev to tear down the Wall, could be used as encouragement or leverage to spur action, but words alone do not constitute action. For this reason, while recognizing the significant role his speech played as part of the Berlin Wall's history, it is important to remember that Ronald Reagan's speech at the Brandenburg Gate did not cause the Wall to come down. Nevertheless, words are important – the ones examined within this dissertation certainly were – and rhetoric afforded the American Presidents the opportunity to communicate their desires, hopes, and dreams to the people of Berlin, America, and the world.

The primary reason all three Presidents gave for the destruction of the Berlin Wall was that it violated human rights. The Wall split families and prevented the free movement of a people, a basic tenet of human freedom. This was not a wall built between historically separate or disparate nations. It was a wall built between the sundered entities of a formerly unified people. Furthermore, not only was Germany split in two, Berlin was likewise split, resulting in the enclave of free Berliners in the midst of East Germany. The Berlin Wall did

---

<sup>371</sup> Carter, "Town Meeting"  
Reagan, "Brandenburg Gate"  
Bush, "AFL-CIO"

not merely determine the fate of those living within the city limits, but rather of the entire German people. Over its 28-year lifespan, the West used a multitude of adjectives to describe the Wall, none of them complimentary, but the Wall itself was not the entire problem. The real menace was the ideology and conditions that spurred the Wall's building in the first place. The Wall was an outward manifestation of an inner cause. Attacking a visible object is far easier than attacking an intangible idea. The Presidents did not outline the ideological origins behind the Berlin Wall (aside from stating that the Soviet-East German system was the one which felt the need to pen its people in); rather, they explained why the Wall should not exist.

Even though all the Presidents called for the Berlin Wall's removal prior to November 9, 1989, they did so using different rhetorical tones. Carter's tone was the most docile. In his Town Hall Meeting he made no demands (he used "I hope" to lead into his statement), gave no timeframes (he said "I have no idea when it might be"), and passed no judgments (he said nothing regarding the Wall from a moral or legal standpoint or in reference to the East German or Soviet officials who perpetuated the Wall's existence). Reagan's remarks stand almost in complete contrast to Carter's. Where Carter was docile, Reagan was forceful, stating in a clear, determined tone emphasized by the use of exclamation points within the typed transcript, "Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!" Although that is his most memorable line, fitting as it does into his reputation for telling truth to Soviet power, Reagan did balance his forcefulness with a fatherly tone in the lines immediately following, relating his understanding of the Berliners' fear and pain and assuring all of America's peaceful desires. In a statement released on August 12, 1989, the 28<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Berlin Wall, President Bush relayed clearly his

feelings regarding the Wall, which he called stark, inhuman, and an affront to the free world. These remarks mirrored Reagan's tone. Within the same statement, reminiscent of Carter, Bush gave no timeframe and made no demands. He simply said, "The United States is also committed to . . . bringing closer the day when the city [of Berlin] is again united," followed by polite utterances of "we have asked the Soviet Union" and "we still await what we hope will be a positive response." Based upon this rhetorical evidence, one can see the Presidents' two approaches towards the Berlin Wall: firmness and resolve in exhibiting a clear anti-Wall position versus caring and diplomacy in handling the Berliners and the Soviets so as to avoid unnecessary conflict. The tactics may have differed depending on the rhetorical context, but each President also expressed a firm belief that the Wall would eventually be removed.<sup>372</sup>

In examining what the Presidents did say and how they said it, one should also recognize what they did not say. First, Carter, Reagan, and Bush never made threats within their speeches. They made no specific demands of the Soviet or East German governments. Even in calling for the Wall's removal, their word selection was quite careful and within the bounds of political acceptability. Second, none of the three called for an uprising in Berlin, which would have caused serious strategic problems for all nations involved. Third, the Presidents refused to place German reunification ahead of the Berlin Wall's removal. Reunification had long been a point of contention, as evidenced by Carter's Town Hall meeting, questions during presidential press conferences, and phone conversations between the White House and West German leaders. There was a formal American commitment to reunification dating back to the establishment of West Germany, but the method and timing

---

<sup>372</sup> Carter, "Town Meeting"

Reagan, "Brandenburg Gate"

Bush, "AFL-CIO"

George Bush, "Statement on the Anniversary of the Berlin Wall," Aug. 12, 1989. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=17423>.

of reunification was always left open. One must remember that there was opposition to reunification, at least on American and West German terms, especially from the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom. The Soviets did not want to lose control of their East German prize and obviously had historically-rooted reasons to loathe the idea of a reunited, strong Germany not under their domination. The British, while technically adhering to the abstract concept of reunification, feared allowing Germany to regain its historic strength in continental Europe. Meanwhile, the French, whose objections to reunification had once been the most vociferous, had become more relaxed about the idea as their economy and West Germany's grew interconnected during years of European integration. Suffice to say that there were different opinions about the need for a newly united Germany. Repeatedly, and wisely, American Presidents stated that reunification was a German decision. The country had been divided by external forces, but it must be put back together by internal forces.<sup>373</sup>

Ultimately, the Wall would come down, Germany would be pieced back together, and the world would move on. Only a handful of the words Presidents uttered over or about the Wall would endure within the public's mind after the Wall disappeared from view – namely, Kennedy's and Reagan's speeches. Other speeches, like Carter's and Bush's, would fall by the wayside or be relegated to some dusty back corner. A speech's treatment after it is delivered raises a separate point of contention. Within the confines of this dissertation, the reality what matters most is that these pieces of rhetoric were significant at the time they were given; they did have political and public impact; and they did help to define an era.

---

<sup>373</sup> Carter, "Town Meeting"  
Reagan, "Brandenburg Gate"  
Bush, "AFL-CIO"  
Langston, 488-489.

## Conclusion

By examining Carter's, Reagan's, and Bush's vision for America as expressed in their Inaugural Addresses, perspectives on Communism, and views of the Berlin Wall, this dissertation has argued that the presidential speeches examined herein exhibit continuity across the late Cold War era while maintaining their individual social relevance to the times in which they were delivered. All three Presidents adjusted their rhetoric to meet the political and historical needs of the moment. These speeches rightfully deserve examination not only as part of a particular administration, but in relation to the surrounding administrations so as to develop a greater sense of the rhetorical relationship between presidencies. Furthermore, each speech tells a story beyond the words spoken publicly. The internal debates, the draft development, and the public's reaction all play an important role in the game of presidential rhetoric. By combining established scholarship and historical knowledge with new archival information, this dissertation has strived to expand the reader's understanding of these individual speeches, the three presidential administrations, and the late Cold War era.

The reality remains that President needs to address the public. Indeed, as Matthew Eshbaugh-Soha argues, "Presidential speeches are central to the power of the modern presidency" because the President utilizes speeches to "attempt to influence legislation before Congress, cultivate public support, and set the media's agenda . . . [and] to achieve their goals in spite of the difficulties of governance." These arguments all find support within this dissertation. President Bush raised the issue of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment in his Texas A&M Commencement Address; Reagan's Berlin visit and his Brandenburg Gate

speech dominated the media spotlight; Carter used his State of the Union Address to push the new Carter Doctrine for the Middle East.<sup>374</sup>

As Brandon Rottinghaus summarizes, “Presidents have not been shy about using the bully pulpit to carry their messages to the American public, believing it to be important to their policy success while in office and to their political legacy after they leave office.” Presidential success in this area, however, is debated. Some scholars argue that presidential effectiveness in this area lags due to shrinking audiences, political partisanship, and a lack of audience education on the issues. Why the shrinking audiences? Some blame the 24-7 media cycle; some blame the fast-paced American lifestyle; and some, like Peggy Noonan, complain that the President speaks too much.\* That debate, however, falls outside the scope of this dissertation. The pertinent point is that televised presidential speeches can be used effectively to influence public opinion, support, and action. Presidents frequently appeal to the viewing audience to contact members of Congress to influence legislative action (or inaction). Similarly, Reagan was a master at using televised addresses to gain public support for his various foreign policy initiatives. This was called “going directly to the American people,” with the implication of evading Congress. That is a tough trick for any President. It can be done, but using a speech to gain public support requires utmost care and precision, as the speech’s developmental process evidences.<sup>375</sup>

---

<sup>374</sup> Matthew Eshbaugh-Soha, *The President’s Speeches: Beyond “Going Public* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2006), 1.

<sup>375</sup> Daniel Rottinghaus, *The Provisional Pulpit: Modern Presidential Leadership of Public Opinion* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2010), 4, 76.  
Noonan, *Simply Speaking*, 9, 123.

\* Noonan also stated that no speech, but especially no presidential speech, should ever be longer than 20 minutes. Why did she hold this as her standard? Because Ronald Reagan had said such. Reagan felt that 20 minutes was more than sufficient time to say what needed to be said without causing the audience discomfort from sitting too long.

Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson argue that the Inaugural Address “is a discourse whose significance all recognize, but few praise.” This dissertation agrees with that, but would take the idea one step further – *presidential speeches* are a discourse whose significance all recognize, but few praise. When the President of the United States addresses the nation, the television cameras all focus on him, along with a good part of the citizenry. But once the President steps away from the cameras, what then? How long will the news cycle last? Presidential rhetoric has the power to change the world as it is known at the time, but all too often it drops by the wayside, forgotten. It might be consequential, or it might be evanescent.<sup>376</sup>

To better understand presidential speeches is to better understand a presidential administration. To examine the inner debates and speech development process is to examine ideology and policy. To sense the public’s reaction is to sense an era. Whether they address the Berlin Wall, Communism, or America’s future – or other issues – presidential speeches offer a window into a political world where few dare to venture, but where key historical and political revelations await the scholar willing to gaze therein and analyze the contents.

---

<sup>376</sup> Campbell and Jamieson, 29.

## **Bibliography**

### **Primary Sources: George Bush Presidential Library**

Presidential Phone Conversations: Ben Ali, Corazon Aquino, Aleksandr Bessmertnykh, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, Mikhail Gorbachev, King Hussein I, Helmut Kohl, Walter Momper, Yevgeniy Primakov, Wolfgang Schaeuble, Yitzhak Shamir, Eduard Shevardnadze, Theo Waigel, Richard von Weizsaecker.

White House Office Files: National Security Council: European and Soviet Directorate; Office of Speechwriting: Administrative Files, Alphabetical File, Chronological File, Draft Files, Speech File Backup; Office of the President: Daily Files; Press Office: Administrative Files, Chronological Files, Daily Press Release Files,

White House Staff Files: Carol Aarhus, James Baker III, James Cicconi, Mark Davis, Richard Davis, Marlin Fitzwater, Mary Kate Grant, Virginia Lampley, Daniel McGroarty, Leigh Ann Metzger, Condoleeza Rice, Peter Rodman, Curt Smith, Tony Snow, Chriss Winston, Philip D. Zelikow,

WHORM Subject File: FO006-03, FO006-06, FO006-12, SP100, SP230-90, SP557, SP623

### **Primary Sources: Jimmy Carter Presidential Library**

1976 Campaign Transition File

1977 Inaugural Committee

White House Central Files: Speeches, Weekly Presidential Mail Sample

White House Office Files: Appointments Scheduling Advance Office; Domestic Policy Staff; First Lady's Office; National Security Adviser, Office of the Congressional Liaison; Office of Counsel to the President; Office of the First Lady; Office of the National Security Advisor; Office of the Staff Secretary: Presidential Handwriting File; Office of the White House Staff Director; Press Advance Office: Domestic and Foreign Trips; Press Office; Speechwriter's Office: Chronological File, Subject File

White House Staff Files: Bill Albers, Kathryne Bernick, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Lloyd Norton Cutler, Hedley W. Donovan, Ann Edwards, Stuart Eizenstat, James Fallows, Rex Granum, Hendrik Hertzberg, Deborah Hyatt, Marie Keech LeGrand, ,Robert J. Lipshutz, Alonzo L. McDonald, Achsah Nesmith, Richard Neustadt, Jody Powell, Florence Prioleau, Lyn Sandage, Charles Schultze, Evelyn Small, Sarah Weddington, Franklin White, Anne Wexler

### Primary Sources: Ronald Reagan Presidential Library

White House Office Files: National Security Council: Country File (East Germany (FRG) and West Germany), European and Soviet Affairs Directorate, Executive Secretariat Meeting File, Records, Subject Files; Office of Speechwriting: Presidential Handwriting, Speech Drafts, Research

White House Staff Files: Aram Baksian Jr., Michael K. Deaver, Anthony "Tony" Dolan, Kenneth Duberstein, Marlin Fitzwater, Thomas Griscom, Edwin Harper, James L. Hooley, Kenneth Khachigian, Sven Kraemer, Peter M. Robinson, Peter R. Sommer

WHORM Subject File: Bonn Economic Summit Trip; CO054; CO054-01; FG006-01; Presidential Handwriting File: Speeches; SP100, SP729, SP1150

### Primary Sources: Public Statements and Speeches

Bush, George. "Inaugural Address." Jan. 20, 1989. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*.

<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=16610>.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session with Reporters Following Discussion with Chancellor Helmut Kohl in Bonn, Federal Republic of Germany." May 30, 1989. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=17079>.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Remarks at a Republican Fundraising Dinner Honoring Governor Bill Clements in Dallas, Texas." Nov. 10, 1989. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=17788>.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Remarks at the Biannual Convention of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations." Nov. 15, 1989. Online by John T. Woolley and Gerhard Peters, *The American Presidency Project*. Available at: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=17811>.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Remarks at the Dedication Ceremony for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Dallas, Texas." Nov. 11, 1989. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=17790>.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Remarks at the Texas A&M University Commencement Ceremony in College Station." May 12, 1989. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=17022>

\_\_\_\_\_. "Remarks to the Citizens in Mainz, Federal Republic of Germany," May 31, 1989. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=17085>.

- \_\_\_\_\_. "Remarks to the National Association of Realtors in Dallas, Texas." Nov. 10, 1989. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=17785>.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Statement on the Anniversary of the Berlin Wall." Aug. 12, 1989. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=17423>.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Toast at a Dinner Hosted by Chancellor Helmut Kohl in Bonn, Federal Republic of Germany." May 30, 1989. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=17080>.
- Carter, Jimmy. "Address to the Nation of the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan." Jan. 4, 1980. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=32911>.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "American Hostages in Iran and Soviet Intervention in Afghanistan Remarks to Reporters." Dec. 28, 1979. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=31881>.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Berlin, Federal Republic of Germany Question-and-Answer Session at a Town Meeting." Jul. 15, 1978. John T. Woolley and Gerhard Peters, *The American Presidency Project* [online]. Santa Barbara, CA. Available at <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=31087>.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Berlin, Federal Republic of Germany Remarks at a Wreathlaying Ceremony at the Airlift Memorial." Jul. 15, 1978. John T. Woolley and Gerhard Peters, *The American Presidency Project* [online]. Santa Barbara, CA. Available at <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=31086>.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Bonn Economic Summit Conference Informal Exchange with Reporters." Jul. 17, 1978. John T. Woolley and Gerhard Peters, *The American Presidency Project* [online]. Santa Barbara, CA. Available at <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=31090>.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Bonn, Federal Republic of Germany Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session with Reporters Following a Meeting with Chancellor Helmut Schmidt." Jul. 14, 1978. John T. Woolley and Gerhard Peters, *The American Presidency Project* [online]. Santa Barbara, CA. Available at <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=31081>.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Inaugural Address." Jan. 20, 1977. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=6575>.

- \_\_\_\_\_. "The State of the Union Address Delivered Before a Joint Session of the Congress." Jan. 23, 1979. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=32657>.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The State of the Union Address Delivered Before a Joint Session of the Congress." Jan. 19, 1978. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=30856>.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The State of the Union Address Delivered Before a Joint Session of the Congress." Jan. 23, 1980. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=33079>.
- Reagan, Ronald. "Address to Members of the British Parliament" Jun. 8, 1982. John T. Woolley and Gerhard Peters, The American Presidency Project [online]. Santa Barbara, CA. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=42614>.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "First Inaugural Address." Jan 20, 1981. Online by *The Miller Center Foundation*. <http://millercenter.org/president/speeches/detail/3407>.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Nomination of Dodie Truman Livingston To Be Commissioner of the Administration for Children, Youth, and Families," May 29, 1984. Available at: <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1984/52984a.htm>.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Remarks at the Welcoming Ceremony for Chancellor Helmut Schmidt of the Federal Republic of Germany." May 21, 1981. John T. Woolley and Gerhard Peters, The American Presidency Project [online]. Santa Barbara, CA. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=43848>.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Remarks in New York City Before the United Nations General Assembly Special Session Devoted to Disarmament." Jun. 17, 1982. John T. Woolley and Gerhard Peters, The American Presidency Project [online]. Santa Barbara, CA. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=42644>.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Remarks on Arrival in Berlin." Jun. 11, 1982. John T. Woolley and Gerhard Peters, *The American Presidency Project* [online]. Santa Barbara, CA. Available at <http://www.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=42622>.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Remarks on East-West Relations at the Brandenburg Gate in West Berlin." Jun. 12, 1987. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=34390>.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Remarks to the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences in Los Angeles, California," Mar. 2, 1990. Available at: [http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public\\_papers.php?id=1607&year=1990&month=all](http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=1607&year=1990&month=all).

- \_\_\_\_\_. "Remarks to the People of Berlin." Jun. 11, 1982. John T. Woolley and Gerhard Peters, *The American Presidency Project* [online]. Santa Barbara, CA. Available at <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=42623>.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Statement on the Twentieth Anniversary of the Berlin Wall." Aug. 31, 1981. John T. Woolley and Gerhard Peters, *The American Presidency Project* [online]. Santa Barbara, CA. Available from the World Wide Web: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=44162>.

### Secondary Sources

- Abernathy, M. Glenn. *The Carter Years: The President and Policy Making*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984.
- "About the Anti-Defamation League," *The Anti-Defamation League*. Accessed Jan. 15, 2011. Available at: <http://www.adl.org/about.asp?s=topmenu>.
- Ambrose, Stephen E. and Douglas G. Brinkley, eds. *Rise to Globalism: American Foreign Policy Since 1938*. New York: Penguin Books, 2011.
- Aune, James Arnt and Martin J. Medhurst, eds. *The Prospect of Presidential Rhetoric*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M Press, 2008.
- Boyd, Gerald M. "Raze Berlin Wall, Reagan Urges Soviet." *New York Times*. Jun. 13, 1989.
- Breslauer, George W. and Philip E. Tetlock, eds. *Learning in U.S. and Soviet Foreign Policy*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991.
- Brinkley, Douglas. *The Reagan Diaries*. New York: HarperCollins, 2007.
- Brown, Wendy. *Wall States; Waning Sovereignty*. Cambridge, MA: Zone Books, 2010.
- Buckingham, Peter H. *America Sees Red: Anti-Communism in America 1870s to 1980s*. Claremont, CA: Regina Books, 1988.
- Buckley, William F. *The Fall of the Berlin Wall*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2004.
- Bush, George W. "Eulogy for Ronald Reagan," Jun. 11, 2004. Accessed Mar. 3, 2011. Available at: <http://www.eulogyspeech.net/famous-eulogies/George-W-Bush-Eulogy-for-Ronald-Reagan.shtml>.
- Campbell, Karlyn Kohrs and Kathleen Hall Jamieson. *Presidents Creating the Presidency: Deeds Done in Words*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008.

- Campus Crusade for Christ International. Accessed Oct. 10, 2011. <http://www.ccci.org>.
- Cannon, Lou. *President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991.
- Chafe, William H. *The Rise and Fall of the American Century: The United States from 1890-2009*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Chamberlin, William Henry. *Beyond Containment*. Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1953.
- Cimbala, Stephen J. and Sidney R. Waldman, eds. *Controlling and Ending Conflict: Issues Before and After the Cold War*. New York: Greenwood Press, 1992.
- Clines, Francis X. "Pomp, Fur Coats and Sun for the Happy New President." *The New York Times*. Jan. 21, 1981.
- Cohen, Michael A. *Live from the Campaign Trail: The Greatest Presidential Campaign Speeches of the Twentieth Century and How They Shaped Modern America*. New York: Walker & Co., 2008.
- Craven, John Piña. *The Silent War: The Cold War Battle Beneath the Sea*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001.
- Dallek, Robert. *Ronald Reagan: The Politics of Symbolism*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984.
- Davis, Lanny. *Scandal: How "Gotcha" Politics Is Destroying America*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006.
- Dowd, Maureen. "Bush Voices Hope on Soviet Change, but with Caution." *New York Times*, May 13, 1989.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The 41<sup>st</sup> President: Speech Writer; A Stirring Breeze Sparks Feelings, Then Words for a President's Vision." *New York Times*, Jan. 21, 1989.
- Duka, John. "Inauguration Day '81: A Sartorial Controversy." *New York Times*, Jan. 2, 1981.
- "Enter President Reagan." *New York Times*. Jan. 21, 1981.
- Eshbaugh-Soha, Matthew. *The President's Speeches: Beyond "Going Public."* Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2006.
- Fallows, James. "The Passionless Presidency: The Trouble with Jimmy Carter's Administration." *The Atlantic Monthly*, May 1979. Accessed Dec. 22, 2011. Available at <http://www.theatlantic.com/past/unbound/flashbks/pres/fallpass.htm>.

Fischer, Benjamin B. *At Cold War's End: U.S. Intelligence on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, 1989-1991*. Washington, D.C.: The Central Intelligence Agency, 1999.

Fleming, D. F. "Is Containment Moral?" *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 362 (1965): 18-27.

Gaddis, John Lewis. "Containment: A Reassessment." *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 55, no. 4 (1977): 873-887.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Containment: Its Past and Future." *International Security*, vol. 5, no. 4 (1981): 74-102.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Cold War: A New History*. New York: The Penguin Press, 2005.

"George H. W. Bush Quotes." Accessed April 4, 2010. Available at [www.brainyquote.com](http://www.brainyquote.com).

Glad, Betty. *An Outsider in the White House: Jimmy Carter, His Advisors, and the Making of American Foreign Policy*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009.

Godbold, Jr., E. Stanly. *Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter: The George Years, 1924-1974*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Golway, Terry. *Ronald Reagan's America: His Voice, His Dreams, and His Vision of Tomorrow*. Naperville, IL.: Sourcebooks MediaFusion, 2008.

Graebner, Norman A., Richard Dean Burns, and Joseph M. Siracusa. *Reagan, Bush, Gorbachev: Revisiting the End of the Cold War*. Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2008.

Graebner, Norman A. "Whither Containment?" *The High School Journal*, vol. 53, no. 1 (1969): 19-36.

Guderzo, Max and Bruan Bagnato, eds. *The Globalization of the Cold War: Diplomacy and Local Confrontation, 1975-85*. New York: Routledge, 2010.

Gwertzman, Bernard. "President's Trip to Canada Today Put Off Because of Teheran Crisis." *New York Times*, Nov. 9, 1979.

Hay, Jeff. *The Fall of the Berlin Wall*. Chicago: Greenhaven Press, 2010.

Heller, Deane and David Heller. *The Berlin Wall*. New York: Walker and Company, 1962.

Hertzberg, Hendrik. *Politics: Observations and Arguments, 1966-2004*. New York: The Penguin Press, 2004.

- “History: Elephant Walk.” *Class Councils Elephant Walk & E-Walk*. Texas A&M University. Accessed Jan. 8, 2012. Available at <http://elephantwalk.tamu.edu/node/2>.
- Hobsbawm, Eric. *The Age of Extremes: A History of the World, 1914-1991*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1994.
- Horn, Gerd-Rainer and Padraic Kenney, eds. *Transnational Moments of Change: Europe 1945, 1968, 1989*. New York: Bowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004.
- Houck, Davis W. and Amos Kiewe, eds. *Actor, Ideologue, Politician: The Public Speeches of Ronald Reagan*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1993.
- Hult, Karen M. and Charles E. Walcott. *Empowering the White House: Governance under Nixon, Ford, and Carter*. Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2004.
- “Jimmy Carter Timeline” *PBS American Experience*. Accessed April 28, 2010. Available at <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/carter/timeline/index.html>.
- “Job Performance Ratings for President Bush (G.H.W.)” Accessed Jan. 5, 2012. Available at [http://webapps.ropercenter.uconn.edu/CFIDE/roper/presidential/webroot/presidential\\_rating.cfm#.TzL93IEbFlc](http://webapps.ropercenter.uconn.edu/CFIDE/roper/presidential/webroot/presidential_rating.cfm#.TzL93IEbFlc).
- “Job Performance Ratings for President Carter.” Accessed Jan. 5, 2012. Available at [http://webapps.ropercenter.uconn.edu/CFIDE/roper/presidential/webroot/presidential\\_rating.cfm#.TzL93IEbFlc](http://webapps.ropercenter.uconn.edu/CFIDE/roper/presidential/webroot/presidential_rating.cfm#.TzL93IEbFlc).
- “Job Performance Ratings for President Reagan.” Accessed Jan. 5, 2012. Available at [http://webapps.ropercenter.uconn.edu/CFIDE/roper/presidential/webroot/presidential\\_rating.cfm#.TzL93IEbFlc](http://webapps.ropercenter.uconn.edu/CFIDE/roper/presidential/webroot/presidential_rating.cfm#.TzL93IEbFlc).
- Jones, Jeffrey M. “Obama’s November Approval Weak from Historical Perspective: Only Carter had lower job approval during November of his third year.” Dec. 2, 2011. Accessed Dec. 22, 2010. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/151106/Obama-November-Approval-Weak-Historical-Perspective.aspx>
- Jorstad, Erling. *Holding Fast/Pressing On: Religion in America in the 1980s*. New York: Greenwood Press, 1990.
- Judt, Tony. *Reappraisals: Reflections on the Forgotten Twentieth Century*. New York: Penguin Books, 2008.
- Juviler, Peter and Hiroshi Kimura, eds. *The Gorbachev Regime: Consolidation to Reform*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1988.

- Kalb, Deborah, Gerhard Peters, and John T. Woolley, eds. *State of the Union: Presidential Rhetoric from Woodrow Wilson to George W. Bush*. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2007.
- Kengor, Paul. *Dupes: How America's Adversaries Have Manipulated Progressives for a Century*. Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2010.
- King, Wayne and Warren Weaver, Jr. "Washington Talk: Briefing; State of the Audience." *New York Times*, Jan. 28, 1987.
- Kirkland, Lane, Howard D. Samuel, Benjamin A. Sharman, Jack N. Behrman, Everett M. Kassalow, Shridath S. Ramphal, Peter Henle, Clas-Erik Odhner. "Labor's International Role." *Foreign Policy*, no. 26 (1977): 204-246.
- Kissinger, Henry. "Reflections on Containment." *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 73 (1994): 113-130.
- Kleiman, Robert. "The Editorial Notebook: Death in El Salvador." *New York Times*, Jan. 8, 1981.
- Langston, Thomas S. *The Cold War Presidency: A Documentary History*. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2007.
- Lentz, Ellen. "Carter Forum Surprises Germans." *New York Times*, Jul. 15, 1978.
- Lepore, Jill. "Birthright: What's Next for Planned Parenthood?" *The New Yorker*. Nov. 14, 2011.
- Lim, Elvin T. *The Anti-Intellectual Presidency: The Decline of Presidential Rhetoric from George Washington to George W. Bush*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Lucas, Stephen E. and Martin J. Medhurst, eds. *Words of a Century: The Top 100 American Speeches, 1900-1999*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Lukacs, John, ed. *Through the History of the Cold War: The Correspondence of George F. Kennan and John Lukacs*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010.
- Mander, John. *Berlin: Hostage for the West*. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1962.
- Mann, James. *The Rebellion of Ronald Reagan: A History of the End of the Cold War*. New York: Viking Penguin, 2009.
- Marx, Karl and Frederick Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*. Accessed Nov. 20, 2011. Available at <http://www.anu.edu.au/polsci/marx/classics/manifesto.html>.
- Maynard, Christopher. *Out of the Shadow: George H. W. Bush and the End of the Cold War*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2008.

- Medhurst, Martin J., ed. *Before the Rhetorical Presidency*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M Press, 2008.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Beyond the Rhetorical Presidency*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M Press, 1996.
- Medhurst, Martin J., Robert L. Ivie, Philip Wander, and Robert L. Scott, eds. *Cold War Rhetoric: Strategy, Metaphor, and Ideology*. East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 1990.
- Meyer, Michael. *The Year that Changed the World: The Untold Story behind the Fall of the Berlin Wall*. New York: Scribner, 2009.
- Miscamble, Wilson D., ed. *Go Forth and Do Good: Memorable Notre Dame Commencement Addresses*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003.
- Nelson, Michael and Russell L. Riley, eds. *The President's Words: Speeches and Speechwriting In the Modern White House*. Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2010.
- Noonan, Peggy. *Simply Speaking: How to Communicate Your Ideas with Style, Substance, and Clarity*. New York: ReganBooks, 1991.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *What I Saw at the Revolution: A Political Life in the Reagan Era*. New York: Random House, 1990.
- Oreskes, Michael. "For TV, a Festival of Glowing Images." *New York Times*, Jan. 13, 1989.
- Patterson, Bradley H. *To Serve the President: Continuity and Innovation in the White House Staff*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2008.
- Pear, Robert. "U.S. Plays Down Gorbachev Meeting." *New York Times*, Nov. 27, 1988.
- Puddington, Arch. *Lane Kirkland: Champion of American Labor*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2005.
- Ratnesar, Romesh. *Tear Down This Wall: A City, A President, and the Speech That Ended The Cold War*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2009.
- Reagan, Michael, ed. *The Greatest Speeches of Ronald Reagan*. West Palm Beach, FL: NewsMax.com, 2002.
- Reagan, Ronald with Richard G. Huler. *Where's the Rest of Me?* New York: Karz Publishers, 1981.
- "Remarks by Bush and Tower at News Conference in Capital." *New York Times*, Dec. 17, 1988.

- Remini, Robert V. and Terry Golway. *Fellow Citizens: The Penguin Book of U.S. Presidential Inaugural Addresses*. New York: Penguin Books, 2008.
- Reston, James. "Roaring into the 50's." *New York Times*, Jan. 27, 1980.
- Ritter, Kurt and Martin J. Medhurst, eds. *Presidential Speechwriting: From the New Deal to the Reagan Revolution and Beyond*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2003.
- Roberts, Chalmers M., W. Averell Harriman, Arthur Krock, and Dean Acheson. "How Containment Worked." *Foreign Policy*. No. 7 (Summer 1972), 41-53.
- Robinson, Peter. *How Ronald Reagan Changed My Life*. New York: HarperCollins, 2003.
- Rottinghaus, Brandon. *The Provisional Pulpit: Modern Presidential Leadership of Public Opinion*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2010.
- Rowland, Robert C. *Reagan at Westminster: Foreshadowing the End of the Cold War*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2012.
- Rowney, Edward L. *It Takes One to Tango*. Washington, D.C.: Brassey's, 1992.
- Ryan, Halford Ross. *Contemporary American Public Discourse: A Collection of Speeches and critical essays*. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 1992.
- Safire, William. "Bush's 'New Path.'" *New York Times*, May 15, 1989.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "On Language; Marking Bush's Inaugural." *New York Times*, Feb. 5, 1989.
- Salpukas, Agis. "Businessmen Cite Need for Speedy Action." *New York Times*. Jan. 21, 1981.
- Schaller, Michael. *Reckoning with Reagan: American and Its President in the 1980s*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.
- Schmemmann, Serge. "24,000 Demonstrate in Berlin against Reagan's Visit Today." *The New York Times*. Jun. 12, 1989.
- Schick, Jack M. *The Berlin Crisis: 1958-1962*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971.
- Schlesinger, Robert. *White House Ghosts: Presidents and Their Speechwriters*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2008.
- Schulz, Matthias and Thomas A. Schwartz, eds. *The Strained Alliance: U.S.-European Relations from Nixon to Carter*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

- Seth Cropsey Biography. *Hudson Institute*. Accessed Nov. 14, 2011. Available at: [http://www.hudson.org/learn/index.cfm?fuseaction=staff\\_bio&eid=CropSeth](http://www.hudson.org/learn/index.cfm?fuseaction=staff_bio&eid=CropSeth)
- Shevis, James M. "The AFL-CIO and Poland's Solidarity." *World Affairs*, vol. 1, no. 1 (1981): 31-35.
- Simpson, Peggy. "The Troubled Reign of Lech Walesa in Poland." *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, vol. 26, no. 2 (1996): 317-336.
- Skinner, Kiron K., Annelise Anderson and Martin Anderson, eds. *Reagan: A Life in Letters*. New York: The Free Press, 2003.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Reagan, In His Own Hand*. New York: The Free Press, 2001.
- Smith, Hedrick. "Carter's New Momentum." *New York Times*, Jan. 24, 1980.
- Smith, Terence. "Carter Addresses a 'Town Meeting' of West Berliners. East Germans Show Traffic. Disruption of Access to the City is Seen as Protest Against the Presence of Schmidt." *New York Times*, Jul. 16, 1978.
- Smyser, W. R. *Kennedy and the Berlin Wall: "A Hell of a Lot Better than a War."* New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009.
- "Soviet Deeds, American Words." *New York Times*, May 14, 1989.
- Thompson, Nicholas. *The Hawk and the Dove: Paul Nitze, George Kennan, and the History of the Cold War*. New York: Picador, 2010.
- "Transcript of Bush's Remarks on Transforming Soviet-American Relations." *New York Times*, May 13, 1989.
- Troy, Gil. *Morning in America: How Ronald Reagan Invented the 1980s*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005.
- Tucker, Robert W. and William Watts, eds. *Beyond Containment: U.S. Foreign Policy in Transition*. Washington, D.C., Potomac Associates, 1973.
- Verheyen, Dirk. *United City, Divided Memories?: Cold War Legacies in Contemporary Berlin*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008.
- Vinocur, John. "Carter, Received Politely, Touches No Emotional Chords." *New York Times*, Jul. 16, 1978.
- Weber, Ralph E., ed. *Dear Americans: Letters from the Desk of President Ronald Reagan*. New York: Doubleday, 2003.

Weinraub, Bernard. "Reagan Blames Carter 'Failure' for Soviet Move: Joins in G.O.P Criticism of the President's Speech." *New York Times*, Jan. 25, 1980.

"What East-West Policy?," *New York Times*, May 25, 1989.

Wildavsky, Aaron. *Beyond Containment: Alternative American Policies Toward the Soviet Union*. San Francisco: ICS Press, 1983.

Wilentz, Sean. *The Age of Reagan: A History, 1974-2008*. New York: HarperCollins, 2008.

Wilson, Robert A., ed. *Character Above All: Ten Presidents from FRD to George Bush*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995.

**Mary E. Clater, ABD**  
*Ph.D. Candidate, American Studies Program*  
*Penn State University, Harrisburg*

**EDUCATION:**

The Pennsylvania State University, Harrisburg

September - December 2007, August 2009 –

Ph.D. American Studies

Cognate Fields: Interdisciplinary History & Politics; Popular Culture & Folklife

Dissertation Committee: Dr. Charles Kupfer (chair), Dr. John Haddad, Dr. Anne Verplanck, Dr. David Witwer,  
Dr. Harold Shill

Honors: *summa cum laude* (coursework complete)

University of St. Andrews (Scotland)

September 2008 - June 2009

Postgraduate Diploma Modern History

Concentration: 20<sup>th</sup> century European social and intellectual movements

The Pennsylvania State University, Harrisburg

September 2006 - August 2007

M.A. American Studies

Concentration: 20<sup>th</sup> century American history and popular culture

Thesis: *Progressive Mayberry: Modern Thinking in America's Favorite "Old-Fashioned" Town*

Honors: *summa cum laude*

Clearwater Christian College

August 2002 - May 2006

B.S. Interdisciplinary Studies (concentrations: history, education); B.S. Music

Honors: *cum laude*

**ACHIEVEMENTS & HONORS (selected):**

2010-2011	President's Scholarship (declined), The Pennsylvania State University, Harrisburg
2009-2010	Graduate Assistantship, The Pennsylvania State University, Harrisburg
2009-2010	Board of Advisors Fellowship, The Pennsylvania State University, Harrisburg
2007	Most Outstanding Graduate Paper Award, Middle Atlantic American Studies Association/Chesapeake American Studies Association Joint Conference, Baltimore, Maryland
2006-2007	Graduate Assistantship, The Pennsylvania State University, Harrisburg

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (selected):**

2010-2012	Co-Chair, Students' Committee, American Studies Association
Summer 2010	Chancellor Search Committee, Penn State University, Harrisburg
2009	Student Representative to the Board of Directors, Middle Atlantic American Studies Association
Spring 2007	Communications Faculty Search Committee, The Pennsylvania State University, Harrisburg

**PAPER PRESENTATIONS (selected):**

Viewing a Scar: Perspectives on the Berlin Wall in Key Presidential Speeches, 1977-1992. Presented at the British Association for American Studies Conference, Manchester, U.K. April 13-15, 2012.

"Whose Memory?: The Politics of Memorializing the Holocaust." Presented at the Middle Atlantic American Studies Association/Middle Atlantic Folklore Association/Pennsylvania Political Science Association Joint Conference, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. April 8-9, 2011.

"Glorious Obscurity: The Rhetorical Influence Behind 'Tear Down This Wall.'" Presented at the Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association National Conference, St. Louis, Missouri. March 31-April 3, 2010.

"Progressive Mayberry: Modern Thinking in America's Favorite 'Old-Fashioned' Town." Presented at the annual Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association National Conference, Boston, Massachusetts. April 4-7, 2007.