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MEMORANDUM

TO: WILLIAM CASEY
FROM: ANTHONY R. DOLAN
RE: ACCEPTANCE SPEECH
DATE: June 28, 1980

I have strong ideas about opening and middle sections of speech.

For now, here are my thoughts on the most critical part -- the peroration -- the *cris de coeur* -- "America America."

The objective, of course, is to leave the country crying. And renewed.

1. Reagan ~~fishes~~ ^{fishes} part from his standard speech about the threat of Soviet expansionism and what it has cost the peoples of Eastern Europe.

2. He shows that communism is awful but in the most powerful words ever written about it, he quotes Whittaker Chambers: "What communist has not heard those screams?" (Chambers is talking about a German diplomat who stopped being pro-communist after, one night, he heard screams in Moscow, that's all, just screams.) "They come from husbands torn forever from their wives in midnight arrests. They come, muffled, from the execution cellars of the Lubyanka from all the citadels of terror that stretch from Berlin to Canton ... from the minds of men driven mad by mass starvation ... etc." It is a lengthy, devastating quote.

3. But Reagan transcends anti-communism -- he shows -- like Chambers -- that our crisis is a spiritual one. "I did not come here tonight to speak of the cruelties of communism. I came here to speak about America -- about us -- you and me."

4. A bitter and tense, sometimes bloody peace. Then riots, assassinations, Vietnam, Watergate, a toppled Presidency, now four years of drift and disaster. It really does seem, as Chambers said, "history hit us with a freight train."

5. We emerged from the great war, turning homeward at last, building a grand prosperity, determined to change the world and

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east the suffering of our ~~fell~~owman. In the early part of the 60's, we rediscovered our national passion for politics. Ronald Reagan made his first real entry then. He remembers the book that started the whole trend of poliitcal novels. Advise and Consent.

6. But then history hit us with that freight train and how much all of us in recent years have had thoughts similar to those in Advise and Consent: We have agonized over our "blundering, helpless, goodhearted nation that is fundamentally too decent to know how to deal with the ring of sharpies that encircle her, some with the faces of enemies, some with the faces of friends." Also, "the kindly, pleasant, greening land about to learn whether history still has a place for a nation so strangely composed of great ideals and uneasy compromises as she."

Then finally there is the memorable description of the hero: Orrin K²¹~~ew~~, that reads:

"Surprising and sudden, tears came into his eyes, 'O America,' he thought and it was like a crying in his heart, 'O America. Why do you suffer us your people, who are such fools, and what have we done to deserve you.'"

7. All of us have been tormented by similar emotions recently.

8. It struck home with the death of one man last year, the symbol of the country, a friend of Ronald Reagan's. "The Last American Hero -- Mr. America dies" said some of the headlines: John Wayne. And Ronald Reagan tells his marvelous story about his second inauguration, John Wayne, the Viet Cong flag and Jimmy Stewart's dead son in Vietnam.

9. Before we are too hard on ourselves, let's take a look at where we came from. Have we lacked heroes in recent decades?

10. No one would have been angrier at the thought of the "last American hero" than John Wayne -- he knew better. Just before he died he said about Americans "Give the American people a good cause, and there's nothing that they can't lick."

11. Reagan says something like: "Almost as if by cue, there were those backstreet, down-the-block kids who stood up to the Red Army Supermen in a small town in upstate New York. And soon, not just Lake Placid, but the whole world echoed the chant "U.S.A. U.S.A."

12. So let us remember our heroes of recent generations: At Midway -- (when things seemed darkest) Admiral Nagumo said of them "These Americans, they sacrifice themselves like Samurai." In Korea -- the unforgettable words of James Michener's Admiral in The Bridges-at Toko Ri: "Where does America get such men? Where do we get such men? They leave this ship, a tiny speck in the ocean ... to fly against an enemy ... etc. ... Where do we get such men?" In Vietnam, after hideous torture and captivity, men like Admiral Jerry Denton, who were there "When hell was in session," got off a plane at Clark Air Force Base, said "God Bless America" and actually thanked us for bringing them home. Reagan mentions the heroes of the Iranian desert, each by name.

13. But he does not celebrate the martial spirit -- he is talking about the American character. Our heroes are not only our soldiers. There was Tom Dooley, the doctor, some say a saint, who kept his promise and walked all those compassionate miles before he slept. There was Gus Grissom and other astronauts who died. He mentions the moon shot. There was Don Bolles, the Arizona reporter who died fighting corrupt and evil men. There was even baseball's designated patriot -- Rick Monday. (He was the Chicago Cub who rescued the flag from demonstrators who were about to burn it in center field as everyone leapt to their feet and sang God Bless America.)

14. Of course, we have had hard times. And some have said our great days are over, our energy spent, "a national malaise" has set in.

15. They have forgotten that most important of all gospel stories. It was the grimest moment for the women who saw the empty, defiled tomb (they thought). Now all had been lost and even in death there was no peace. They were terrified and weeping. Then suddenly a voice: "Why are you afraid? It is only me."

16. As in the gospels, as in the lives of individuals, so too in the lives of nations, just when things seem unbearable, there is a voice that reminds us that our ^{American} trials have meaning: "Why are you afraid? It is only me."

17. So it is not bombs and rockets but belief and resolve that keep and preserve freedom. It is not hubris before men but humility before God that matters.