

2-13-1992

Defusing a Rhetorical Situation through Apologia: Ronald Reagan and the Iran-Contra Affair

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<https://doi.org/10.15760/etd.6465>

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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF Roxane Yvonne Sutherland for
the Master of Science in Speech Communication presented
February 13, 1992.

Title: Defusing a Rhetorical Situation through Apologia:
Ronald Reagan and the Iran-Contra Affair.

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This thesis examines the manner in which Ronald Reagan responded to the Tower Commission Report concerning his involvement in the Iran-Contra Affair. It explores the following questions: 1) What were the factors leading to a rhetorical situation as defined by the media and which required Ronald Reagan to provide a public response of self-defense; 2) what strategies of apologia did Reagan employ;

and 3) how did the media and the White House characterize the outcome of Reagan's speech?

Data for analysis were drawn from nationally recognized newspapers that shaped public perception of the Iran-Contra Affair: The Washington Post, The New York Times, Los Angeles Times, and The Christian Science Monitor. In addition, The Tower Commission Report and Ronald Reagan's March 4, 1987 speech were used as primary texts.

It was found that the events of the Iran-Contra Affair qualified as a crisis, and exemplified an exigence needing a response. The thesis demonstrated that the Iran-Contra Affair was an appropriate case for study as a rhetorical situation. Analysis demonstrates how Ronald Reagan made full use of the conventional apologetic strategies of denial, bolstering, differentiation, and transcendence to regain lost credibility; moreover, analysis provides further evidence of the utility of genre criticism.

DEFUSING A RHETORICAL SITUATION THROUGH APOLOGIA:
RONALD REAGAN AND THE IRAN-CONTRA AFFAIR

by

ROXANE YVONNE SUTHERLAND

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE
in
SPEECH COMMUNICATION

Portland State University
1992

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"We live in a world of perceptions, not realities."

Lieutenant Colonel Oliver North

DEDICATION

Dedicated to my husband,
Dean Sutherland,
for his love, support, and encouragement
throughout my endeavor;
to my sons,
Jason and Jaret,
for without their help and support
this thesis would not have been possible;
to my friend and mentor,
Orv Iverson,
for introducing me to the world of rhetoric
and its influence on my life;
and to the memory of my father,
Donald Albert Paull,
who lived such a short life,
yet continues to have an impact on mine.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A number of people were instrumental in the preparation of this thesis. I am most grateful to Dr. Peter Ehrenhaus, chair of my committee, for his direction in keeping me focused, and his faith in my abilities. My gratitude to the rest of my committee: Dr. Stephen Kosokoff, Dr. Larry Steward, and Dr. David Johnson for their time and commitment toward my thesis.

I am especially grateful to those persons who reviewed the thesis and who made many valuable suggestions. For their time and their willingness to share their expertise and insights, I would like to thank Stan Hosman and Delores Pritchett. Finally, I would like to thank my mother, Evalue Carrell, for the many drafts she so faithfully read, and the encouragement she so often gave.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

He has been called the symbolic master--a man who personified America's best image of itself, being identified with the values of family, work, peace, and freedom (White, 1988). Time once described him as "a magician who carried a bright, ideal America like a holograph in his mind and projected its image in the air" ("The Unmaking," 1986, p. 2). But much of the Hollywood glitter once enjoyed by this "great communicator" was dulled. Having once possessed honored esteem in America's eyes, Ronald Reagan, 40th President of the United States, temporarily lost the position as most-approved leader by his involvement in a foreign policy crisis first uncovered in November, 1986 and commonly known as the Iran-Contra Affair.

Before the Iran-Contra crisis, Reagan had been sailing along with a healthy, positive second-term rating (as determined by public opinion polls) of 66% when news of the arms deal was leaked (Cosco, 1987). At a White House news conference on November 13, 1986, he denied the story of trading weapons for hostages ("Criticism mounts," 1986; Hoffman, 1986c; Weinraub, 1986a). This denial did not placate the American public. By January, a Newsweek poll indicated the President's rating plummeted to 40% ("Reagan's

Failure," 1987). Subsequent polls reported that a majority of Americans believed that Reagan was in fact lying ("Is Reagan Lying," 1987; "The Cynic," 1987; "A Distinct," 1987; "The Culture," 1987). More specifically, the press accused President Reagan of lying about not knowing that profits from the sale of arms to Iran were being used to supply arms and materials to Nicaraguan Contras. By denying knowledge of past events, Reagan's credibility began to waver.¹

Finally, Reagan appointed a commission to investigate the affair. After a three-month investigation into what the media labeled "Iranscam," the Presidential Review Board, more commonly known as the Tower Commission, headed by former Texas Senator John Tower, determined that the "initiative became in fact a series of arms-for-hostages deals" (Tower, Muskie, Scowcroft, 1987, p. 79). The Tower Commission's report was devastating--a searing appraisal of Reagan's presidency that threatened to shrink him to irrelevance for the rest of his lame-duck term. The report, while not indicting Reagan for involvement in the arms deal,

¹Since the writing of this thesis, Oliver North has published his autobiography, Under Fire, in which he speaks candidly of the President's involvement in the Iran-Contra Affair. North claims the emphasis on the diversion of funds to Nicaraguan Contras was, in itself, a diversion to protect the President. It is important to recognize that this thesis specifically examines Ronald Reagan's March 4, 1987 speech through the genre of apologia, not by way of administering culpability. This information was not available to the public at the time and thus could not contribute to public opinion. Therefore, it is not included in the analysis of this thesis.

portrayed him as a careless, remote and forgetful leader, too indifferent to supervise the reckless independence of his aides. His Iran policy was deemed foolish and counterproductive, and it was carried out unprofessionally and perhaps illegally (Tower et al., 1987).

The President finally conceded his error,² but not before his credibility was in question. Ronald Reagan delivered a nation-wide discourse responding to this foreign policy crisis. On March 4, 1987, President Ronald Reagan spoke in defense of himself to the American people and the press on matters known as the Iran-Contra Affair. Specifically, Reagan spoke in response to a crisis situation, one that shook the foundation of his legitimacy.

The news media and the American people wanted answers. Reagan publicly confronted the accusations directed at his credibility. Clearly, Ronald Reagan found himself in a dilemma. His effectiveness as a leader was questioned because of his involvement in the Iran-Contra crisis. The media's attention to the Tower Commission Report and the Iran-Contra hearings continued to focus on Reagan's credibility, and created a rhetorical exigence in which Reagan was compelled to defend himself. The Iran-Contra crisis can be viewed as a rhetorical situation within which to examine the expectations for, constraints upon, and

²The President conceded his error in terms of responsibility, not in terms of blame.

appropriateness of, Ronald Reagan's response.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the manner in which Ronald Reagan responded to the Tower Commission Report concerning his involvement in the Iran-Contra Affair. Specifically, this thesis will examine President Reagan's March 4, 1987 address in which he spoke in defense of himself and his involvement in the Iran-Contra Affair and seek answers to the following questions:

1. What were the factors leading to a rhetorical situation as defined by the media which required Ronald Reagan to provide a public response of self-defense?
2. To what issues did Ronald Reagan speak in his defense; and what strategies of apologia did Ronald Reagan employ?
3. Considering the answers to Question 2, how did the media and the White House characterize the outcome of Ronald Reagan's speech?

The reference materials I will be utilizing are first, nationally recognized newspapers that shaped public perception prior to the Tower Commission Report-- specifically, articles from The Washington Post, The New York Times, Los Angeles Times, and The Christian Science Monitor; second, the Tower Commission Report; third, Ronald Reagan's March 4, 1987 speech; and fourth, related news articles that described and defined reactions to the speech.

These materials will provide information about events leading up to the crisis, the Commission's response to Reagan's involvement in the crisis, Reagan's response to the Commission's report of his involvement, and reactions to that response.

It is the contention of this thesis that Ronald Reagan, in his March 4 address, employed various apologetic factors as a rhetorical strategy to regain credibility and favor with the American public. Personal observations and systematic analysis of historical examples of political apologia have convinced me that few presidents have utilized the art of political rhetoric more skillfully and applied the rhetorical strategies of persuasion as successfully as Ronald Reagan did.

CHAPTER II

THE PUBLIC PERSONA OF RONALD REAGAN

The 1970s had been a time of turmoil for the United States. Government corruption, economic problems, and foreign policy failures created a breach of trust between government and the American people. Watergate and Richard Nixon's near impeachment was still fresh in the public's mind. Disillusionment was widespread regarding the political process. President Carter declared America a "great national malaise":

We have been shaken by a tragic war abroad and by scandals and broken promises at home. Our nation has seen a failure of leadership. We have been hurt and disillusioned. We have seen a wall go up that separates us from our own government. . . . Our country has lived through a time of torment. (Carter, 1976, p. 510)

The economic forecast was bleak. The Christian Science Monitor reported an undercurrent of discontent among the public:

Not for years has there been so much speculation over the economic situation. It carries a special problem in that it involves inflation and the threat of recession at the same time. (Strout, 1979, p. 1)

We had a president who was charged by the American people with failure to deliver. President Carter was ineffective:

. . . in his support of the Panama Canal Treaty, his initial support of the Shah of Iran, his unsuccessful attempts to free the American hostages, his handling of escalating inflation,

his inability to prevent Castro from sending thousands of undesirables to the U.S., his inability to reform the social security system, and even his failure to halt White House leaks. (Martin, 1983, p. 16)

The lack of public faith in the functioning of government and ruling institutions had created a "confidence gap" (Lipset & Schneider, 1987). The public needed reassuring.

A Hollywood movie star, who created in the American people a vision of renewal for their nation, emerged as a presidential candidate. Ronald Reagan rode the campaign trail with two intertwined myths, "hero of the west" and "the glory that was once America" (Fisher, 1982). Ronald Reagan identified with western heroism. In October, 1979, Reader's Digest published a eulogy entitled "Unforgettable John Wayne." Ronald Reagan was the author of this piece of prose that spoke of his and Wayne's companionship, their common values, and their fight to keep "Communists" out of the film industry. Reagan stated that John Wayne "gave the whole world the image of what an American should be" (Reagan, 1979, p. 116).

Through this narrative, Hankins (1983) concluded, "the personalities and goals of the two men seemed to meld into a single heroic spirit" (p. 33). What Reagan had attempted to do was fuse the fictional movie image of Wayne into an identification with the characteristics that personified himself as a hero, one who would bring America back to the people (Martin, 1983). Reagan's image became the political

embodiment of the mythic westerner (Hankins, 1983). Fisher (1982) cites Reagan's origins, his love for western clothing, his pastime of horseback riding, his film and television roles, his rugged appearance, and his personal virtues of honesty, sincerity, innocence, optimism, and certainty as aiding his image of the "Town Marshall."

Because of the turmoil, unrest, and uncertainties experienced by the 1970s, it is not surprising that in 1980 Reagan was elected President of the United States. America's fascination with Reagan had just begun. Hankins (1983) traces America's attraction to Reagan by exploring the rhetoric of the archetypal hero. Hankins argues:

Each sociopolitical era must have a human representation as the embodiment of cultural values. Although these heroic images are archetypally the same, their style is determined by social and political events of the moment and those events which immediately preceded the emergence of the hero persona. (1983, p. 41)

A dramatic demonstration of Reagan's heroic orientation was his performance during, and following, the attempted assassination on his life. His humor portrayed him as courageous and fearless. Thomas Szasz of The Washington Post observed during this ordeal, "Mr. Reagan seemed to possess all the virtues of the Western hero he portrayed so often and so well on the screen" (1981, p. A19). In addition, Ivie (1984) also acknowledges the hero persona of Reagan. He states, "A Presidential persona incarnates the people's voice to lend a further note of rationality to the

heroic call for a strong America" (p. 39). Quite clearly, it seems that the presidential choice of the 80s was an attempt to align the individual with the image of a hero. The national malaise of the 70s focused on material conditions. Consequently, the American public wanted to elect a western hero to "act" out the role of an image that reassured them that their values were being protected. Reagan had cultivated the persona of the classic American Western hero.

Fisher (1982) supports the notion that there is a romantic strain in American history and politics and proposes characteristics of presidential heroes. He correlates Reagan's rhetoric to this romantic tradition and considers Reagan's chances of becoming a presidential hero:

Presidential heroes need to be romantic figures, but they need to be more than that. A romantic figure need only be an adventurous, colorful, daring, and impassioned exponent of certain American ideals, such as individualism, achievement, and success. To be an American hero, one must not only display these qualities, one must also be visionary and mythic, a subject for folklore and legend. The American hero evokes the image of the American Dream, of the ways people and things are when the spirit of America transcends the moment, and her destiny is manifest. The American hero is the symbolic embodiment of this dream in a single person, most predominantly, in certain presidents.
(Fisher, 1982, pp. 300-301)

Ronald Reagan came to the White House to conquer government, not to endorse it. Ironically, he presided over a resurgence of trust in the country's political institutions. The rebound in political confidence began with the public's

expectation that Reagan would be a strong leader. His personality, whether natural or self-managed, communicated a sense of pride in the nation and faith in its future. By the end of 1982, decreasing inflation and belief in Reagan's personal abilities had reversed a fifteen-year trend in waning political trust, despite economic recession (Citrin, Green, & Reingold, 1987).

Reagan's effectiveness portraying a "hero image" has been widely recognized. Wills (1987) analyzed the attraction to Reagan in his book, Reagan's America: Innocents at Home, tracing the connections between the image of Hollywood and the ideals Reagan brought with him to the presidency. Wills (1987) believes Reagan achieved an almost magical rapport with the American public, molding them to his personal moral vision. Wills describes America's self-image, nurtured by Reagan's myth, ideology, and special interests. He observes how Reagan combines his ideology with that of being a hero:

Reagan makes this absurdity believable, partly by believing in it so thoroughly himself. He believes that terrorists will stay away from jet planes if America acts like a cowboy. . . . He has used his annual messages to institute a cult of "heroes." (Wills, 1987, p. 381)

Reagan personified the American dream (Berman, 1990). David Gergen, Reagan's communications director from 1981 until 1984, observed, "over time, he [Reagan] converted much of the country to his own views and values" (1989, p. 28). In actuality, what Reagan changed were the country's images.

The basic image of Reagan as president remained remarkably unchanged from that of Reagan as Hollywood actor. The identity he had created in Hollywood merged magically with his White House persona. The studio movie set metamorphosed into the oval office. The major legacy of Reagan's acting career to his role as president was his unique ability to create the impression that his fantasy screen image--the western hero, and all-American nice guy--was actually the man himself (Metzger, 1989). In essence, Reagan appealed to American values by use of what McGee (1980) would label a "vocabulary of ideographs." Scheele (1984) supports these contentions when he argues, "value appeals enable a political communicator to identify with his audience, seek acceptance of his ideals, illuminate his political objectives, and promote his political ideology" (p. 53). Scheele (1984) states that Reagan employed various value appeals as rhetorical strategies to persuade his audience to respond favorably to his goal of becoming the President. McGee (1980) clarifies the link between rhetoric and ideology when he claims, "ideology in practice is a political language, preserved in rhetorical documents, with the capacity to dictate and control public belief and behavior" (p. 5). For McGee, "the political language which manifests ideology seems characterized by slogans, a vocabulary of ideographs" (1980, p. 23). Similar to a value, McGee defines ideograph as a linguistic abstraction

which is accorded general societal consensus. Ideographs are employed by rhetors to guide behavior and belief by suggesting acceptable or unacceptable courses of action (McGee, 1980). Value appeals most often employed by Reagan were: "family," "work," "a strong America," "peace," and "freedom" (Scheele, 1984). The values employed by Reagan were used to identify himself with his audience in order to establish credibility and rapport (Scheele, 1984). Essentially, he tied the strength and well-being of the nation to the pride and economic health of its "families."

Reagan's reputation as a communicator is almost legendary. His delivery, presence, and sincerity have been cited by numerous authors. The appeal of Reagan's vision was broad, and was reflected in his personal popularity (White, 1988). Even those who rejected his political rhetoric recognized his ability to give vision to American ideals (W.F.Lewis, 1987). Lewis (1987) observes that Reagan convincingly does this through "story telling." Reagan had a way with telling stories to the American public that transcended issues and focused on ideological images (White, 1988). In The New Politics of Old Values, White contends, "In politics, the persona--the role that a politician assumes to communicate his conscious intentions to himself and to others--is the starting point for success or failure" (1988, p. 7). As I have demonstrated, Reagan's success came from his ability to play a role and tell his "story," a

craft he had learned well in his former profession. The accuracy of those stories were often in doubt; yet, it was the moral of the story, the value that was reaffirmed, that endeared him to his listeners.

Reagan's mythological persona spoke to the values of family, faith, and determination. It was a theme that resonated throughout his presidency, reassuring millions of Americans that basic values were what was needed to make a great America. To some, his stories seemed diversions, yet they were also powerfully appealing. There is no doubt that Ronald Reagan became the western hero America was looking for to reassure them. He was the mythical ideograph of what the people believed they needed. His persona identified Americans with a renewed pride. However, this mythical persona was soon to be challenged. The following chapter details the events of the Iran-Contra crisis, the Tower Commission's report, and the news media's interpretation of President Reagan's dilemma which resulted in a tarnishing of Reagan's hero image.

CHAPTER III

THE IRAN-CONTRA AFFAIR

The Iran-Contra arms scandal garnered banner headlines for more than a year, examining one of the most important stories of the decade and the challenges posed for the Reagan administration in its final year. As early as August 1984, former National Security Advisor Robert McFarlane formally requested government agencies to reassess U.S. policy toward Iran. The U.S. was involved in foreign policy issues that included not only Iran and U.S. hostages being held in the Middle East, but also issues concerning Central America and the war in Nicaragua.

It is not germane to this study to ask what series of events led up to, and began, U.S. involvement, and ultimately led to the crisis that shook the foundations of a democratic government. What matters is that government officials, along with the President of the United States, became involved in a series of events that were illegal and unconstitutional (questions of legality and constitutionality are addressed later in this chapter).

In 1928 Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis stated, "the greatest dangers to liberty lurk in insidious encroachment by men of zeal, well-meaning but without understanding" (Olmstead v. U.S., 1928). These men of zeal,

in this case, the National Security Council, had taken matters into their own hands, believing that they knew better than Congress what was best for the nation.

The National Security Act of 1947 established the organization for national security matters within the Executive Branch. This Act created the National Security Council (NSC). Its statutory members are the President, Vice President, Secretary of State, and the Secretary of Defense. The President is head of the NSC.

The NSC deals with the most vital issues in the nation's national security policy. The National Security Council encounters issues that are complex, and often secret. However, by statute the NSC is neither a decision-making board, nor is it empowered to take action. Although its members hold official positions in the Government, when meeting as the NSC, they act as advisors to the President. The 1947 Act clearly states this advisory function:

The function of the Council shall be to advise the President with respect to the integration of domestic, foreign, and military policies relating to the national security so as to enable the military services and the other departments and agencies of the Government to cooperate more effectively in matters involving the national security. (Tower et al., 1987, p. 7)

From time to time, Presidents have invited department heads to attend NSC meetings, which have included the Director of Central Intelligence and the Chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Although closely associated with the NSC in the public mind, the Assistant to the President for National

Security Affairs is not a member. The position was created by President Eisenhower in 1953. Although its precise title has varied, the position has come to be known as the National Security Advisor. Under Eisenhower, the holder of this position served as the principal executive officer of the Council who set the agenda, briefed the President on Council matters, and supervised the staff. He was not a policy advocate. It was not until President Kennedy that the role of NSC Advisor took on its current form, emerging as an important personal advisor to the President.

What emerged from history was an NSC staff that was used by each President in a way that reflected his individual preferences and working style. Over time, the NSC has developed an important role within the Executive Branch of coordinating policy review, preparing issues for Presidential decisions, and monitoring implementation. Yet, it has remained the President's creation, molded as he chooses, to serve as his personal committee for national security affairs.

President Reagan entered office with a strong commitment to cabinet government. His principal advisors on national security affairs were to be Secretary of State George Shultz, Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger, and to a lesser extent, Director of Central Intelligence, William Casey. The position of the National Security Advisor was initially downgraded in both status and access

to the President. Within a six-year period five different people held the position. Robert McFarlane, followed by Vice Admiral John Poindexter, held this position during the Iran-Contra initiative. President Reagan appointed several additional members to the NSC and also allowed staff attendance at meetings. The size of these meetings led Reagan to subdivide into smaller groups. One, the National Security Planning Group (NSPG), was more restricted but included the main members of the NSC. Each subgroup of the NSC was supported by subsidiary groups called Interagency Groups. All were chaired by the National Security Advisor. Oliver North became instrumental through his position as Assistant Deputy Director for Political-Military Affairs at the NSC. In addition to North, key members within the NSC "conglomerate" involved in the Iran-Contra Affair were: Elliott Abrams, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs; David Abshire, former Ambassador to NATO; William Casey, CIA Director; Donald Gregg, Vice President George Bush's national security advisor; Robert McFarlane, President Reagan's National Security Advisor until November 1985; John Poindexter, McFarlane's successor as Reagan's national security advisor; Secretary of State George Shultz; William Webster, Director of the CIA and former head of the FBI; Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger; Vice President George Bush; and of course, President Reagan.

For two years the National Security Council covertly

dealt with the Iranian government and the Contra rebels. This "private network" of skilled operators redirected American foreign policy to a course that contradicted the laws of the United States.³ The entire enterprise was an exercise in extra-constitutional activity accompanied by the familiar "mea culpa--our hearts were in the right place, even if laws were broken" (Berman, 1990, p. 13). The question arises as to how this could happen. Explanations arise out of the media: in essence, we had a president who allowed this to happen by means of his incompetence, stupidity, or cleverness.

In essence, the Iran-Contra Affair was an "arms-for-hostages" agreement between the U.S. and the Iranian government (see Appendix A). In exchange for U.S. hostages held in Lebanon, the U.S. would sell arms to Iran, via Israel, and later, directly to Iran. In addition, monies made from the sale would be sent to support the Contras in Nicaragua.

In October, 1986, reports of an arms shipment to Iran, for the purpose of exchanging arms for hostages, began to surface (McManus, 1986; Omang & Wilson, 1986; Preston, 1986; LeMoyné, 1986). This operation became public when a U.S. cargo plane was shot down on Oct. 5, 1986, beginning the broad outlines of a sophisticated operation that involved

³Legislation prohibiting the CIA from using funds for the purpose of overthrowing the government of Nicaragua had passed September 27, 1982.

Nicaraguan rebel groups. As reported in U.S. News & World Report:

An American-registered military cargo plane is shot down over Nicaragua while hauling guns and ammunition to the anti-Sandinista rebels. The sole survivor, an American crewman . . . promptly confesses that the mission is only one of many coordinated by the Central Intelligence Agency out of El Salvador (Range & Emerson, 1986, p.6)

Newspapers across the country published headlines such as, "Shoot-down hits U.S. credibility" (Richey & Moffett, 1986), and "Political fallout spreads from Iran-Contra revelation" (Dillin, 1986). The Christian Science Monitor, in its October 10, 1986 issue reported:

The Reagan administration faces a growing credibility crisis over the downing of a privately chartered U.S. cargo plane in Nicaragua. . . . The loss of an aircraft to Nicaragua gunfire raises new questions about private American mercenaries and their links to the CIA. (Richey & Moffett, 1986, p. 1)

U.S. officials insisted that the downed pilot, Eugene Hasenfus, a soldier of fortune, was acting in a private capacity. Reagan administration officials insisted the plane, which was loaded with rifles, ammunition, and other military equipment destined for Contra guerrilla forces, had no connection to the U.S. government (Richey & Moffett, 1986). However, three weeks later The Christian Science Monitor reported that the Reagan administration appeared to be seeking limited accommodations with Iran, a move that seemed to be a reversal of U.S. policy on antiterrorism (Moffett, 1986a; Pincus, 1986a). According to reports from

the press, the motive was to secure Iran's help in gaining the release of six American hostages held by pro-Iranian Muslim fundamentalists in Lebanon (Moffett, 1986a).

President Reagan denied charges that he was involved:

Those charges are utterly false [italics added]. The United States has not made concessions to those who hold our people captive in Lebanon. And we will not. The United States has not swapped boatloads or planeloads of American weapons for the return of American hostages. And we will not. . . . To summarize, our Government has a firm policy not to capitulate to terrorist demands. That "no concessions" policy remains in force, in spite of the wildly speculative and false stories about arms for hostages and alleged ransom payments. We did not--repeat--did not trade weapons or anything else for hostages--nor will we. (Reagan, 1986. p. A8)

President Reagan's credibility became questionable when the media reported that a White House agency negotiated an arms-for-hostages deal with Iran (Saikowski, 1986; Moffett, 1986b; Harsch, 1986; Osterlund, 1986; "The Supply-Side," 1986; A. Lewis, 1986; Shipler, 1986; Reston, 1986; Fuerbringer, 1986). The deal was apparently made by NSC officials over the objections of Secretary of State George Shultz and Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger, and without the knowledge of Congress. In addition, there was a report that NSC officials had been involved in supplying arms to antigovernment rebels in Nicaragua (Moffett, 1986b). According to The Washington Post, President Reagan had ordered CIA Director William Casey not to inform the Congressional Intelligence Committee of covert action involving shipments of arms to Iran and release of American

hostages (Woodward, 1986). The activities of the NSC were contrary to the stated policy of the U.S. administration (Moffett, 1986b; Reston, 1986; "Many Laws Bear," 1986). Until this incident, Reagan officials contended that the U.S. should not negotiate with terrorists. Later, in a televised address to the nation, President Reagan acknowledged that the U.S. had sent "less than a planeload" of weapons to Iran, but denied that they were part of a hostage agreement (Reagan, 1986).

The media's attention to the arms-deal incident continued to focus on Reagan's credibility and leadership capabilities (Gwertzman, 1986; Hoffman, 1986a, 1986b, 1986c; Moffett, 1986b; Pincus, 1986a; Saikowski, 1986; "What's Wrong," 1986). Major news publications persisted in keeping before the public the failures of the President. The Christian Science Monitor's editorial writer, Joseph Harsch, reported the following:

We have a President who has had to abandon a policy of shipping arms to Iran--and admit it publicly on nationwide television. His first adviser, his secretary of state, has publicly, also on national television, disassociated himself from the policy. The leaders of his own party in the legislature have largely disassociated themselves from the policy. Public opinion had failed to rally to his cause. . . .

This is the sort of thing that identifies the absence of effective leadership [italics added].
(1986, p. 11)

That same day, The Washington Post printed an editorial stating, "A second time Wednesday night President Reagan tried to assuage concern over his handling of the Iran

affair. *A second time he largely failed* [italics added]" ("At the White House," 1986, p. A26).

Fewer than two weeks after President Reagan denied a "hostage-for-arms-deal," the media revealed that money from the sale of arms to Iran had been sent to Contra rebels in Nicaragua. Reagan claimed that he was "not fully informed." The President then announced the resignation of key NSC officials. According to the media, the most serious crisis of the Reagan administration was occurring:

Had he just admitted his mistake, Ronald Reagan might still have retrieved the situation. Instead, in the most critical public appearance of his Presidency, Reagan insisted that his decision to send secret shipments of arms to Iran was the "right" thing to do. . . .

At other moments of crisis in his six years in the White House, Reagan's impressive persuasive powers have kept him out of trouble. This time, however, the President may have been kidding himself.

When the full account of the Iran affair is written, it will surely be assessed as an enormous blunder. *What history is most likely to remember in its judgment is the President's awful loss of credibility* [italics added] at the very time he required it most. . . .

Reagan's power is slipping away so rapidly that veteran observers wonder whether his Presidency could wind up as crippled as those of some recent predecessors. (Duffy, Mullin, Walsh, Borger, Plattner, Emerson, Stanglin, Pope, & Chesnoff, 1986, pp. 12-13)

At issue was President Reagan's personal credibility, and his ability to control foreign policy for the remainder of his lame-duck term:

President Reagan is groping for a way out of a spate of diplomatic problems that is embarrassing the United States abroad and causing consternation at home.

Diplomatic observers voice concern that, without a fundamental shift in style, *the President will not be able to function credibly* [italics added] in his final two years in office. (Saikowski, 1986, p. 1; see also Dillin, 1986; Hoffman, 1986d; Gwertzman, 1986; Johnson, 1986; Osterlund, 1986; Pincus, 1986b; Shipler, 1986)

By stripping Reagan of his most valued asset, his credibility, the Iran-Contra affair had suddenly taken the political agenda out of Ronald Reagan's hands. Now, for the first time since he arrived in Washington, he could no longer dominate the political stage, and he appeared to be a diminished figure (Duffy et al., 1986).

A CBS News/New York Times poll conducted November 30, and reported December 2, 1986, indicated that Reagan's overall public approval rating had plummeted to 46% from 67% in one month. It was the lowest rating for Reagan since 1983 and the sharpest one-month drop in approval of a president's job performance ever recorded. The poll revealed that 56% of Americans disapproved of Reagan's conduct of foreign policy. Seventy-five percent opposed selling arms to Iran and 58% were against aiding the Nicaraguan Contras. Asked to choose whom they trusted more to make correct foreign policy decisions, respondents chose Congress over Reagan, 61% to 27% (Meislin, 1986).

The American people were disturbed by 1) the confirmation of arms sales to Iran in apparent return for the release of U.S. hostages, 2) the news that profits from the arms sales had been diverted to the Contras, 3) the

emergence of Lt. Col. Oliver North as a key figure in both operations and, 4) President Reagan's continued insistence that he knew nothing (Moffett & Thatcher, 1986; Dillin, 1986; Meislin, 1986). Reagan denied that he had circumvented any laws, stating in a November 13, 1986 speech that all cabinet officials had been informed of the operations and that congressional committees were fully informed (Reagan, 1986). When the White House revealed on November 25, 1986 that profits of the arms sales had been secretly diverted to help the Contras (Grier, 1986; Hoffman & Ifill, 1986; "The Right to Trust," 1986; Weinraub, 1986b), President Reagan was left facing the most serious crisis of his presidency. As reported in U.S. News & World Report:

The Reagan administration . . . is facing a new firestorm of criticism over revelations that money from the secret arms deal was handed over to Nicaraguan resistance leaders. The moves were the latest in a series of maneuvers to cope with the *most serious political crisis of the Reagan administration* [italics added]. (Moffett & Thatcher, 1986, p.1)

Suddenly, the revelations of the Iran-Contra Affair loosened the President's hold on the public and shook the very foundations of the presidency itself. Finally, on November 25, 1986, in an attempt to regain credibility, President Reagan appointed three people to a National Security Review Board to review the operation of the National Security Council and to recommend corrective action.

THE TOWER COMMISSION REPORT

The President's Special Review Board, commonly known as the Tower Commission, released its report on February 27, 1987. The report presented the first official public disclosure of the Iran-Contra arms scandal. It was given weight by the men who signed it: former Senator John Tower (R-Texas), former Senator and Secretary of State Edmund Muskie (D-Maine), and Brent Scowcroft, a retired Air Force general who had served under several Republican presidents as a key foreign policy advisor. Underlining the Board's significance was the fact that President Reagan himself had requested it to review the Iran-Contra Affair.

President Reagan directed the Tower Commission "to examine the proper role of the National Security Council staff in national security operations, including the arms transfer to Iran" (Tower et al., 1987, p. 2). However, the short deadline⁴ set by Reagan for completion of the Board's work and its limited access to resources inevitably made the Board's report deficient (Tower et al., 1987).

The Tower Commission held weeks of secret hearings and then filed a 290-page document quoting dozens of secret communications among senior national security officials

⁴The President's Special Review Board was commissioned on December 1, 1986; their report was filed on February 26, 1987.

(Cohen & Mitchell, 1989). The origins of the arms transfers to Iran seemed clear:

During the Board's work, it received evidence concerning the role of the NSC staff in support of the Contras during the period that such support was either barred or restricted by Congress. (Tower et al., 1987, p. 3)

Clearly, evidence indicted the illegality committed by the NSC; however, the evidence thereafter was contradictory and incomplete. In its effort to find documented evidence illuminating the affair, the Tower Commission discovered that within several days of the Iran-Contra leak, North, Poindexter, and other staff members had begun to prepare a chronology of the initiative. What the Board discovered was that in a 15-day period, this group had produced at least a dozen versions of this chronology. The earliest incarnations were merely lists of events; the last edited version was titled, "Historical Chronology" (Tower et al., 1987). After reviewing these documents, the Commission reported:

At best, these chronologies suggest a sense of confusion about both the facts and what to say about them. At worst, they suggest an attempt to limit the information that got to the President, the Cabinet, and the American people. (Tower et al., 1987, p. 480)

The Commission concluded:

The effort, hamstrung by poor record-keeping, produced a series of documents which are often conflicting and occasionally far from what we believe transpired. In short, the NSC chronologies provide more questions than answers. (Tower et al., 1987, p. 480)

In addition, key witnesses refused to testify, the Board discovered that evidence had been shredded, and important materials had been classified "secret." The Tower Commission's introductory remarks stated:

As of the date of this report, some key witnesses had refused to testify before any forum. Important documents located in other countries had yet to be released, and important witnesses in other countries were not available. (Tower et al., 1987, p.3)

On December 12, 1986, the Commission sent notices to Poindexter and North to request their appearance before the Board (Tower et al., 1987). Within four days, legal council for Poindexter responded: "At the present time, Admiral Poindexter must respectfully decline to appear before the Board" (Tower et al., 1987, p. 512). The previous day, December 15, Oliver North's legal council replied: "Lt. Col. North has asserted his constitutional right not to answer questions with respect to the subject matter of your December 12, 1986 letter" (Tower et al., 1987, p. 514). The Board interviewed former NSC Advisor Robert McFarlane on his knowledge of the President's involvement. The Board determined that, "McFarlane's various positions on the question of Presidential authorization in August and September, 1985 have made this question very difficult to resolve" (Tower et al., 1987, p. 484).

In addition, no evidence was obtained on the origin(s) or disposition of money which had been deposited in Swiss bank accounts. Efforts to get copies of the letters of

credit were fruitless. Holders of the confidential Swiss accounts had opposed requests by U.S. Justice Department lawyers to examine the accounts, citing a 1973 U.S.-Swiss treaty (Emerson & Healy, 1987). There was no confirmation on how the money had been acquired, how much, or to whom it belonged (Cohen & Mitchell, 1989).

It seems unlikely that the Tower Commission could have done the job it was charged with performing. Stumbling blocks and inconsistencies seemed to be the norm. President Reagan's "requirement" for a quick report left the Board very little time to investigate. Thus, the Board was unable to obtain evidence to either confirm or refute that North had destroyed documents. Many questions were left unanswered (Tower et al., 1987). Even so, the report faulted key members of the administration, individually and collectively (Tower et al., 1987). It criticized the men Reagan chose and on whom he relied, and it questioned the loose style of management Reagan employed (Tower et al., 1987). Few top administration officials escaped the criticism of the commission. Former National Security Advisor Robert McFarlane, Vice Admiral John Poindexter, Secretary of State George Shultz, White House Chief of Staff Donald Regan, Defense Secretary Casper Weinberger and Director of Central Intelligence William Casey were targeted (Tower et al., 1987). The report accused these men of giving President Reagan bad advice, saying they had failed

to grasp "the serious legal and political risks" involved in the whole undertaking:

In the case of the Iran initiative, the NSC process did not fail, it simply was largely ignored. The National Security Advisor and the NSC principals all had a duty to raise this issue and insist that orderly process be imposed. None of them did so. . . .

Mr. Regan also shares in this responsibility [italics added]. More than almost any Chief of Staff of recent memory, he asserted personal control over the White House staff and sought to extend this control to the National Security Advisor. . . . He must bear the primary responsibility for the chaos that descended upon the White House [italics added] when such disclosure did occur.

Mr. McFarlane appeared caught between a President who supported the initiative and the cabinet officers who strongly opposed it [italics added].

VADM Poindexter also failed grievously [italics added] on the matter of Contra diversion. . . . He apparently failed to appreciate or ignored the serious legal and political risks presented. His clear obligation was either to investigate the matter or take it to the President--or both. He did neither. Director Casey shared a similar responsibility [italics added]. Evidence suggests that he received information about the possible diversion of funds to the Contras almost a month before the story broke. . . .

Given the importance of the issue and the sharp policy divergences involved, however, Secretary Shultz and Secretary Weinberger in particular distanced themselves from the march of events. (Tower et al., 1987, pp. 81-82)

The Tower Commission Report makes clear the fact that the Iran-Contra Affair constituted a pair of grievous missteps: first, the covert sale of arms to Iran at a time when official American policy continued to call for the isolation of Ayatollah Khomeini, and second, the diversion of some of the profits to the Nicaraguan rebels at a time when Congress

had ruled out direct or indirect American government aid (Tower et al., 1987).

Perhaps the most devastating aspect of the Tower Commission Report was the picture it painted of President Reagan:

The NSC system will not work unless the President makes it work. By his actions, by his leadership, the President therefore determines the quality of its performance.

. . . with such a complex, high-risk operation and so much at stake, the President should have ensured that the NSC system did not fail him. At no time did he insist upon accountability and performance review. . . .

The Board found a strong consensus among NSC participants that the President's priority in the Iran initiative was the release of U.S. hostages. But setting priorities is not enough when it comes to sensitive and risky initiatives that directly affect U.S. national security. . . . *It is the President who must take responsibility for the NSC system and deal with the consequences* [italics added]. (Tower et al., 1987, p. 79)

Candidly stated, President Reagan failed in his responsibility as President. The confidence and control that previously characterized Reagan were replaced by a caricature of a man so distracted, confused, and so remote that he failed to understand the implications of implementing an initiative that would free American hostages and reestablish American influence in Iran (Tower et al., 1987).

The Commission's report faulted the National Security Council's unwarranted power and the President's style of management. According to the Tower Commission's findings:

The arms transfers to Iran and the activities of the NSC staff in support of the Contras are case studies in the perils of policy pursued outside the constraints of orderly process.

The Iran initiative ran directly counter to the Administration's own policies on terrorism, the Iran/Iraq war, and military support to Iran [italics added]. . . . The result taken as a whole was a U.S. policy that worked against itself. . . . The whole matter was handled too informally, without adequate written records of what had been considered, discussed, and decided. (Tower, et al., 1987, p. 62)

The political fallout from the release of the Tower Commission Report was swift. Lt. Col. Oliver North had already been fired, and National Security Advisor John Poindexter had already resigned his duties. In addition, key White House officials were removed: White House Chief of Staff Donald Regan was replaced by former Senate Republican leader Howard Baker (Cannon, 1987; Gerstenzang, 1987). The appointment of Baker was the first in a series of steps executed by Reagan to restore confidence in his presidency (Cannon, 1987). In addition to Baker, Reagan selected Frank Carlucci, former deputy director of the CIA, as his national security advisor, to replace Poindexter. Beyond the appointments of Baker and Carlucci, other personnel shifts gave the President a new White House spokesman, chief domestic policy advisor, director of communications and assistant for political affairs and intergovernmental relations. This shift in the uppermost level of the White House staff provided Reagan a new cabinet for his remaining 23 months in office. Even though some administration

officials managed to retain their positions, the Tower Commission report had weakened the entire White House administration by their involvement, or lack of knowledge, in the Iran-Contra scandal.

MEDIA INTERPRETATIONS

Leading news publications recounted the devastating image of Ronald Reagan that was depicted by the Commission:

By any standard, the contents of the blue-covered Report of the President's Special Review Board are riveting. . . . *It provides the most comprehensive record to date of the bizarre origins of the Iran-Contra mess that has all but crippled the administration of Ronald Reagan* [italics added]. Until a few months ago, Reagan had been the wonder of American politics, an apparent master of popular communication who had burnished the image of the Presidency and impressed his own distinctive stamp on the American political tableau. . . .

But now, with the damaging revelations of the Tower Commission report, chances are that history will take a less exalted view of Ronald Reagan. (Duffy, Mullin, Walsh, Borger, Plattner, Fenyvesi, Healy & Sanford, 1987, p. 14)

Journalists gave opinions, and demanded facts; information was leaked; damaging speculative stories were written:

However the spreading scandal and investigation finally sort out, *there seems little doubt that the President has been badly damaged* [italics added]. Aides and outsiders alike fear the scandal may have compromised Reagan's ability to pursue even limited domestic and foreign-policy initiatives. . . .

If that popular perception has been badly damaged, it may count as the greatest tragedy in the entire affair. . . . *The current crisis seems to have stripped Reagan of his near magical charm and credibility* [italics added]. (Duffy, Emerson, Mullin, Borger, Walsh, 1986, p. 16)

The day after the Tower Commission's report was made public, the front page of The Christian Science Monitor stated, "Beneath report's surface lurks the issue of cover-up" (Thatcher, 1987). On the same day, The Washington Post reported:

The Tower review board issued a highly critical report yesterday detailing how President Reagan swapped arms for hostages as White House aides secretly ran the contra war against Nicaragua and top officials lied to each other and the public while possibly breaking the law. . . .

Chronicling events that have badly unraveled the Reagan presidency, the board . . . held the president responsible for clandestine policy toward Iran that was riddled with "inconsistency." (Hoffman & Morgan, 1987, p. 1)

The revelations uncovered by the Tower Commission on the Iran-Contra Affair did not force Ronald Reagan from office, but they did profoundly affect relations between the President and the American people. A CBS/New York Times news poll, conducted between February 28 and March 1, revealed that Reagan's approval rating had plunged another 10 percentage points since the last poll had been taken 5 weeks prior (Dionne, Jr., 1987a). The Iran-Contra Affair changed the way the American people viewed the Reagan presidency, perhaps forever. The response from Representative Newt Gingrich, a conservative Republican from Georgia, poignantly addressed this concern. In response to the Tower Commission's report he stated, "He will never again be the Reagan that he was before he blew it. He is not going to regain our trust and our faith easily" (Apple

Jr., 1987b, p. A1). In addition, U.S. News & World Report's journalist, Brian Duffy, expressed his views:

Even with the reorganization, a new White House team and an aggressive public-relations plan to strengthen the President's battered leadership profile, many friends and foes believe that Reagan's moment has passed--that after the damage done by the Tower report, the consequences now preclude any significant comeback. (Duffy et al., 1987, p.15)

As the Iran-Contra Affair unraveled, President Reagan's authority and credibility continued to crumble. Reagan's management style was detached from the details of government. But the President cannot escape responsibility by stating, "I don't remember." To separate power from responsibility is to undermine the concept of democracy--and that is what the Tower Commission had concluded.

The New York Times Chief Washington correspondent, R.W. Apple Jr., wrote his commentary on the Tower report:

But it is not any individual finding in the report that seemed most likely to damage Ronald Reagan's ability to function as a vigorous and effective President for the last 23 months of his term and to cloud his place in history. *It is instead the almost pathetic picture of a man wholly out of touch with a central episode in his presidency [italics added]. . . .* And of a policy so convoluted and incomprehensible that some of the charts illustrating individual transactions look like Rube Goldberg cartoons, full of arrows, boxes, circles, number and labels.

This is not a portrait of venality. *It is a portrait of ineptitude verging on incompetence [italics added].* It is a portrait not of inadequate institutions but of stumbling, short-sighted stewardship of the national trust at a moment of crisis, from the President on down. (New York Times, 1987, pp. xv-xvi)

Newspapers across the country continued to keep the Iran-Contra crisis salient. These same newspapers reported the findings of the Tower report and their own responses.

The New York Times reported:

Mr. Reagan finds himself on the defensive, pictured by the report as unwilling to involve himself in the details of foreign policy and, at least in the Iran-Contra affair, unable to control his staff, unable even to remember when he authorized what. (Apple, 1987a, p.A12)

In addition, a February 27 editorial admonished the President's lack of supervision over the nation's security:

There is no graver set of Presidential responsibilities. . . . which commands that he "take care that the laws be faithfully executed." *The Tower commission offers powerful reason for believing that Mr. Reagan failed in that responsibility [italics added]. . . . Mr. Tower now says: "The President made mistakes." ("Fair, respectful," 1987, p. A26)*

With his authority already weakened by the months-old crisis, the President faced an on-going challenge of his leadership abilities and his trustworthiness, put forth by the press. The press focused on several issues: Reagan's detachment, a possible cover-up of Reagan's role, possible law violations, and even Reagan's political survival (Hoffman & Morgan, 1987; Johnson, 1987; Osterlund, 1987; Ostrow, 1987; Saikowski, 1987; Thatcher, 1987).

The Washington Post published statements made by Edmund Muskie, one of the three members of the Tower Commission, from the CBS News' "Face the Nation" interview. Muskie stated the Commission was astonished by the fact that Reagan

lacked any knowledge of the whole affair. Muskie stated:

We were appalled by the absence of the kind of alertness and vigilance to his job and to these policies that one expects of a president. . . . We do regard him as a president who didn't do his job. (Walsh & Cannon, 1987, p. A6)

Until the Iran-Contra affair became public, Reagan's credibility was undamaged. However, the CBS/New York Times poll has shown how quickly Reagan's credibility, like teflon, was chipped away. More Americans disapproved than approved of President Reagan's performance. Half of the public thought that Reagan really did know that profits from the Iran arms sale went to the Contras. Seven-out-of-ten Americans thought there was a cover-up (Dionne, 1987a). For the President's popularity to plummet 21 points in 30 days reflects the loss of faith that was felt by the American people. There was, according to The New York Times, "a sense of comeuppance on the left, of betrayal on the right, of disappointment in the middle" ("Teflon," 1987, p. E26).

SUMMARY

Before the Iran-Contra Affair, Reagan could have maintained his image by playing the role of a western hero (White, 1988). But Reagan acted contrary to his public persona by involving himself in an arms-for-hostages deal. Until that act, the American people believed Reagan was the embodiment of an American hero, and thus, the embodiment of all that was right with America (White, 1988). Reagan's

image was tarnished because he acted out of character. The crisis had rapidly spread far beyond Iran to, not only the credibility of the President, but to the competence and cohesion of his administration (Duffy et al., 1986).

In our culture, we insist that our elected officials account for the power entrusted to them. An implication of impropriety that the public's trust has been abused historically prompts a demand for full public disclosure, even when it will prove to be embarrassing to the nation as well as to its officials (Cohen & Mitchell, 1989).

In the past, whenever Ronald Reagan wanted to mobilize support, he relied on nationally televised discourse. The Iran-Contra Affair was indeed one of those moments. It had become obvious that the scandal had created a deep distrust and loss of credibility between the President and the American public. With the documentation I have presented, it seems clear that the Iran-Contra Affair was a crisis of confidence in the leadership abilities of the President of the United States.

Ronald Reagan was in a dilemma. His effectiveness as leader of the country was doubted. The media's attention to the Tower Commission Report and the Iran-Contra hearings kept the public's attention on Reagan's credibility, and thus created a scenario in which he was compelled to defend himself. The Los Angeles Times reported:

The President was so stung by the Tower Commission's portrayal of him as out of touch with

crucial national security issues that he agreed with some of his longtime advisers that he needed to react quickly and decisively." (Nelson, 1987, p. A1)

Reagan's challenge was to re-establish the perception that he was back, firmly in charge. To that end, his response to the Iran-Contra Affair and to the Tower Commission Report would be crucial. On March 4, 1987 Ronald Reagan addressed the nation to defend his credibility and to explain his involvement in the Iran-Contra Affair (see Appendix B). In the following chapter I will present the theoretical perspective from which I will conduct my analysis.

CHAPTER IV

UNDERSTANDING THE IRAN-CONTRA AFFAIR AS A RHETORICAL SITUATION

As previously demonstrated, the Iran-Contra Affair was a serious crisis in the presidency of Ronald Reagan. Until the crisis, Reagan was considered one of the nations most popular presidents. However, Reagan had transgressed public trust; the projected western hero image that had made him so popular had become flawed. President Reagan fell from the role of hero into that of an ordinary politician. The American people had been duped. The Iran-Contra Affair was a "situation" in which something needed to be done. Above all, Reagan had to restore his damaged credibility and renew the public's confidence in his leadership abilities. The Tower Commission report set a scene for Ronald Reagan, and the public waited to see what, if anything, he would do. The American people were eager to hear him confess his transgression. The action Ronald Reagan chose was to address the American people and respond to the crisis situation of the Iran-Contra Affair.

Lloyd Bitzer's concept of a "rhetorical situation" is appropriate to conceptualize the Iran-Contra Affair as a situation requiring a response. An examination of the historical development of this concept and the elements of a rhetorical situation will provide the means to analyze

Reagan's response as a speech of self-defense, and thus, as an example of the genre of apologia.

The Rhetoric of Western Thought provides the following perspective on rhetoric:

Genuine rhetoric occurs when a communicator presents an informative or suatory ethical verbal (written or oral) or non-verbal message specifically designed to create a persuasive effect in an audience comprised of readers or listeners who have a choice or perceived choice and the power to modify the exigencies upon which the discourse is constructed. (Golden, Berquist, & Coleman, 1983, p. 5)

It is against this background on the nature and relevance of rhetoric that Lloyd Bitzer suggests the parameters of rhetorical discourse. Bitzer proposed that the starting point of rhetoric was in the situation. Bitzer's essay, "The Rhetorical Situation," suggests that we may conceptualize rhetoric as discourse occurring in situations where solutions are wanted and where the needs or "exigencies" of the situation can be altered by discourse.

Bitzer (1968) defines a rhetorical situation as:

. . . a complex of persons, events, objects, and relations presenting an actual or potential exigence which can be completely or partially removed if discourse, introduced into the situation, can so constrain human decision or action as to bring about the significant modification of the exigence. (p. 5)

Bitzer identifies "situation" as a basis for realizing whether or not a response becomes rhetorical. Bitzer treats rhetoric as situational. According to Bitzer (1968), rhetoric functions in order to produce action or change in

society.

Rhetoric is a method of modifying reality; the speaker modifies reality by bringing into existence a discourse in which the audience becomes a controlling factor to its change. Without a situation lending itself to a response, persuasion, according to Bitzer, cannot take place. To say that rhetoric is situational means an event, or condition, must take place before there can be a response to it. Only then will the speaker's reply be of significance. As a result, the event controls the way in which the speaker responds.

Bitzer's proposition relies upon the situation as inviting a speaker's response through application of the speaker's method and creation of a discourse. Prior to the creation and presentation of a discourse, Bitzer (1968) claims there are three constituents, or elements, that must be present in order for persuasive discourse to take place: a rhetorical exigence, an audience, and constraints.

According to Bitzer:

An exigence which cannot be modified is not rhetorical. . . . An exigence is rhetorical when it is capable of positive modification and when positive modification requires discourse or can be assisted by discourse. . . . In any rhetorical situation there will be at least one controlling exigence . . . it specifies the audience to be addressed and the change to be effected. . . . When it is perceived and when it is strong and important, then it constrains the thought and action of the perceiver who may respond rhetorically if he is in a position to do so.
(1968, p. 6)

The second element in Bitzer's rhetorical situation is the audience. Rhetoric, according to Bitzer (1968), requires an audience that must be capable of changing its actions or beliefs. Thus, a rhetorical audience "consists only of those persons who are capable of being influenced by discourse and of being mediators of change" (p. 7).

The third, and final, element necessary in a rhetorical situation are the constraints. Every rhetorical situation contains a set of constraints made up of "persons, events, objects, and relations which are parts of the situation because they have the power to constrain decision and action needed to modify the exigence" (Bitzer, 1968, p. 7). Standard sources of constraints include beliefs, attitudes, documents, facts, traditions, images, interests, and motives. When the speaker enters the situation, the speech, according to Bitzer, "not only harnesses constraints given by situation but provides additional important constraints--for example, his personal character, his logical proofs, and his style" (1968, p. 7). These three elements of exigence, audience, and constraints constitute all that is necessary to meet the conditions for a rhetorical situation.

Although Bitzer's notion of the rhetorical situation generated controversy (see Vatz, 1973; Consigny, 1974; Brummett, 1976), other critics believed, as did Bitzer, that contexts or situations call rhetoric into existence (see Jamieson, 1973; Cherwitz & Hikins, 1986; White, 1980).

Sonja Foss (1989) explains the difference between the relationship of rhetorical artifacts and their contexts:

The relationship between a rhetorical artifact and its context is a subject of continuing debate in the speech communication field. Some critics believe that contexts or situations call rhetoric into existence. The situation presents a problem, and rhetoric comes into existence as a response to that problem or as an effort to resolve it. . . .

Other critics and theorists believe . . . that events and situations do not call for rhetorical responses. The existence of situations and how they are defined depend on the perspectives of the individuals involved. Thus, the meaning of a situation does not exist in a situation but is created by rhetors as they perceive and communicate about that situation. . . . A rhetor's perception of the situation, in this view, constitutes the situation, and different rhetors will perceive and define the situation in different ways.

A middle view . . . holds that the situation does not control the response of the rhetor, but neither is the rhetor free to create a situation at will. . . . Rhetors do not simply react to the situation; they perceive situations and define them through their rhetoric. (p. 68)

Yet, Bitzer's concept continues to be useful for analysis of situations calling for discourse.⁵

According to Bitzer (1968), a rhetorical situation focuses on the circumstances that lead up to a persuasive discourse. There has to be a reason, a situation, that calls for a discourse to be delivered. Clearly, the Iran-Contra crisis became what Bitzer would call a rhetorical exigence--a situation that required discourse that would produce a change in the audience's beliefs. It has been

⁵For further study of Bitzer's "rhetorical situation" see Carpenter & Seltzer, 1971; Brownlow & Davis, 1974; Hoban, 1980; Hoover, 1989.

established that Reagan's diminished credibility can be linked, in part, to the Iran-Contra crisis. This crisis demanded a response from the President. The American people, White House officials, and the media all demanded Reagan respond (Boyd, 1987). Thus, President Reagan decided that he "needed to react quickly and decisively" (Nelson, 1987, p. A1).

As I have noted, a rhetorical situation needs an audience that is capable of being influenced by discourse. Ronald Reagan's audience was the American public. He addressed the public on nation-wide television March 4, 1987. It has been established that before the Iran-Contra crisis, Reagan had an approval rating of 66%, by December 1986, Reagan's approval rating had dived to 46%, and by March 1987, his approval rating had dropped to 36%. The approval ratings were based on a CBS/New York Times poll (Dionne, 1987a). The media's interpretation, and their reporting of the events of the Iran-Contra crisis influenced the American public's perception of the crisis. Thus, it can be concluded that the American public was capable of being influenced by discourse. Undoubtedly, the audience to which Reagan spoke satisfies the second element of a rhetorical situation.

Finally, a rhetorical situation consists of constraints--who is the audience, what are their beliefs, what do they know. Ronald Reagan had to act appropriately

to the constraints of the audience in order to redeem his damaged credibility. Reagan was constrained by: 1) the knowledge of events (facts) already known to the public; 2) the attitudes of the people; and 3) his past image.

The public's knowledge of the events of the Iran-Contra Affair was governed by news reports. Because the media had reported the crisis, from the downed air-cargo plane in Nicaragua to the Tower Commission's report of Reagan's responsibility, Reagan could not offer information contradicting the already available information without further adverse consequences. The American public also had distinct attitudes concerning the crisis--they had lost confidence in Reagan. More than half the public believed Reagan knew that arms were traded for hostages ("Is Reagan Lying," 1987). Reagan's past image of a "western hero" was tarnished. Thus, Reagan had to adapt his response to the constraints of the situation. Additionally, the media were aware that Reagan needed to respond. As Kenneth Walsh, correspondent for U.S. News & World Report, affirmed:

And above all, the Great Communicator must somehow restore his administration's damaged credibility and, if possible, renew the once mystic personal bond with the American people that had made his the first truly successful Presidency in a generation. (1987, p. 20)

Accordingly, it was concluded:

His [Reagan] prime-time speech this week presents what may be his last opportunity to convince the American people he is in charge of his floundering administration. If he follows the advice of congressional confidants and old friends from

California, he will accept full responsibility, do a clean sweep through the upper levels of the White House staff and then tell the country what he has done. (Duffy et al., 1987, p. 19)

Thus, Ronald Reagan responded to the rhetorical exigence of the Iran-Contra crisis by speaking in defense of himself utilizing the rhetorical genre of apologia which will be examined in the following chapter.

CHAPTER V

UNDERSTANDING REAGAN'S RHETORICAL SITUATION THROUGH APOLOGIA

Ronald Reagan's response to the rhetorical exigence of the Iran-Contra crisis can be classified as a member of a genre. A genre, by definition, is a method of grouping or classifying speeches sharing similar characteristics. Reflecting societal conventions and norms, genres are intended to reflect how language is used in society. The term genre is a classification traditionally associated with literary criticism.

Literary genres can be traced back to Aristotle's Poetics: "Let us here deal with Poetry, its essence and its several species, with the characteristic function of each species. . ." (Aristotle, 1973, p. 5). Aristotle proposed criteria by which poetic genres could be classified.

Much later, in 1965, a generic approach to rhetorical criticism received its first endorsement with the appearance of Edwin Black's influential book, Rhetorical Criticism: A Study in Method. Even though Black did not present a detailed definition of genre, he used it to describe groups of rhetorical discourses that shared similar strategies, situations, and effects (Black, 1965). Black recognized a limitation in neo-Aristotelian thought, and proposed an alternative generic perspective: 1) "there is a limited

number of situations in which a rhetor can find himself;" 2) "there is a limited number of ways in which a rhetor can and will respond rhetorically to any given situational type;" 3) "the recurrence of a given situational type through history will provide the critic with information on the rhetorical responses available in that situation;" and 4) "although we can expect congregations of rhetorical discourses to form at distinct points along the scale, these points will be more or less arbitrary" (Black, 1965, pp. 133-134). Although Black's beginning work on generic criticism was limited, it was noteworthy for several reasons. According to Campbell and Jamieson (1978), Black's work:

. . . located clusters of discourses based on recurrent strategies, situations, and effects; and it revealed the weaknesses of the neo-Aristotelian perspective as a basis for writing a developmental history of rhetoric. For these reasons, among others, Black's book was a precursor of the explosion of unconventional critical essays that appeared in the late 1960's and 1970's. (p. 14)

Lloyd Bitzer's concept of the rhetorical situation also contributed to the development of generic criticism. Bitzer (1968) made a detailed analysis of the situational element of rhetorical action. He argued that rhetoric was situational, that it is the situation that calls a discourse into existence and provides a vocabulary through which to describe the variables in "rhetorical situations." According to Bitzer, similar situations generate similar responses:

From day to day, year to year, comparable situations occur, prompting comparable responses; hence rhetorical forms are born and a special vocabulary, grammar, and style are established. (1968, p. 13)

Another contribution to the development of genre criticism occurred in 1976 when Campbell and Jamieson presented their essay, "Form and Genre in Rhetorical Criticism," at a Speech Communication Association conference. Campbell and Jamieson traced the beginnings of formal and generic criticism, examined the relationships between the concepts of form and genre, and made suggestions for the role of a generic perspective in the total enterprise of criticism. They offered a series of propositions about the relationships among form, genre, and situation: 1) "Genres are groups of discourses which share substantive, stylistic, and situational characteristics;" 2) "Formal similarities establish genres, and the forms relevant to genres are complex forms present in all discourse. . . they will be the forms that rhetoricians ordinarily call "strategies"--substantive and stylistic forms chosen to respond to situational requirement;" 3) "The rhetorical forms that establish genres are stylistic and substantive responses to perceived situational demands;" 4) "A genre is given its character by a fusion of forms not by its individual elements;" and 5) "Genres often exist in dynamic responsiveness to situational demand" (1978, pp. 18-24).

The specific genre I will apply to Ronald Reagan's rhetorical response is that of apologia--the speech of self-defense. Apologia, as a rhetorical genre, is defined by discourses in which individuals defend their character (Kruse, 1981). Aristotelian and modern communication theory agree that one's ethos, or credibility, is a salient source of effectiveness (Aristotle, 1954; French & Raven, 1959; Gold, 1978; Hoban, 1980; Hoover, 1989; King, 1985; Ware & Linkugel, 1973). Apologia is used when credibility comes into question, and the accused responds through a speech of self-defense. Apologizing, however, is only one of several options available in speeches of self-defense. The rhetoric of apologia is appropriate when a person must explain or deny their actions, assure the audience of their proper motivation, reinforce in the public mind previous impressions of their good character, correct their "mistake," if possible, and, as a last resort, admit their mistakes and promise to do better in the future (Gold, 1978).

Apologiae have been used as examples of responses to rhetorical situations since Bitzer (1968) developed the idea of situations being the necessary element that calls into existence a discourse. Grounding in generic criticism and the genre of apologia to explain the redemptive process of defending oneself has been supported by several authors.

In 1969, Linkugel and Razak's article, published in the

Southern Speech Journal, was a case study of the rhetoric of self-defense. It analyzed the rhetorical strategy Sam Houston used in reestablishing his moral character (credibility) when Houston spoke in defense of himself on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives in 1832. Linkugel and Razak examined Houston's speech as a "rhetorical instance" and argued:

Many men facing charges detrimental to their character have felt compelled to speak in defense of themselves. The specifics surrounding each incident vary as widely as the times and persons involved, but the speeches have the common purpose of self-vindication. (1969, p. 263)

Butler (1972), in her essay, "The Apologia, 1971 Genre," utilizes Rosenfield's (1968) constants of apologetic discourse to analyze Truman's, Nixon's, and Edward Kennedy's speeches of self-defense via nationwide radio and television. Butler asserts that "the success or failure of these men in their efforts holds implications for future rhetorical discourse" (1972, p. 282). The purpose of her study was to answer the questions: 1) "How was his [Kennedy] apology like or unlike that of Truman and Nixon," and 2) "Why did he [Kennedy] seemingly fail when they succeeded;" and to speculate on the form of future apologia.

Gold's (1978) essay, "Political Apologia: The Ritual of Self-Defense," asserts that aspiring Presidents, and presidential candidates, can be successful or unsuccessful depending on their ability to practice the ritual of self-defense. In addition, Gold discusses the role of the media

in issues of campaign coverage. According to Gold, candidates are highly susceptible to the scrutiny of media attacks, and thus have been forced to respond publicly through apologia in order to justify motives and defend credibility. Faced with the dramatic event which focuses attention on character instead of policy issues, the candidate must protect his or her reputation by countering the potentially damaging charges.

Kruse (1981) agrees that apologia exists as a rhetorical genre and that apologiae are discourses in which individuals defend their characters. Her essay, "The Scope of Apologetic Discourse: Establishing Generic Parameters," attempts to establish boundaries of apologia genre in order to assist critics in testing apologetic discourses more effectively. According to Kruse, "the first step in any exercise of generic criticism is the establishment of the parameters of the genre in which the items to be scrutinized are to be located" (p. 290). Kruse asserts that apologia is discourse produced in response to an actual situation where an individual's credibility has been attacked, and that the exigence leading to the apology occurs within an observable environment. The speaker's motive is thus a "repair of reputation."

Blair (1984), in her essay, "From 'All the President's Men' to Every Man for Himself: The Strategies of Post-Watergate Apologia," determined that characteristics

attributed to apologia discourse were present in the Watergate autobiographies that she analyzed. She described the rhetorical situation to see what constraints the authors were placed in to discover how they had shaped apologia.

WARE AND LINKUGEL

Apologia theory has cultivated strategies used in rebuilding a person's character. Ronald Reagan seems to have been put in a similar position in defending his character in response to his involvement in the Iran-Contra Affair.

Ware and Linkugel (1973) assert that speeches of self-defense, apologetical discourse, constitute a distinct form of public address, so as to warrant a rhetorical genre of its own. They examined speeches resulting from occasions where speakers spoke in their own defense in order to discover factors which characterize the apologetic form--that of denial, bolstering, differentiation, and transcendence. Ware and Linkugel adapted their four factors from earlier concepts identified by Abelson (1959) as "modes of resolution" of "belief dilemmas."

The first factor of verbal self-defense is denial. According to Ware and Linkugel, denial consists of:

. . . the simple disavowal by the speaker of any participation in, relationship to, or positive sentiment toward whatever it is that repels the audience. . . .

One may deny the alleged facts, sentiments, objects, or relationships. . . . Strategies of

denial are obviously useful to the speaker only to the extent that such negations do not constitute a known distortion of reality or to the point that they conflict with other beliefs held by the audience. (1973, pp. 275-276)

In other words, a person may deny the facts, introducing a different version; a person may give more information, "the whole story," essentially denying that previous information was sufficient to arrive at a conclusion. In addition, speeches of apology may rely upon the "denial of intentions," arguing that the action was misunderstood or misinterpreted in order to achieve affective change in the audience. Ware and Linkugel (1973) believe:

The person who is charged with some despicable action often finds a disclaimer of intent as an attractive means of escaping stigma if the denial of the existence of the action itself is too great a reformation of reality to gain acceptance.
(p 276)

The speaker assumes the position of one who is acted upon rather than one who acts with intent. In other words, he or she is an innocent bystander or a victim of circumstances.

The bolstering factor can be thought of as being parallel to that of denial. Bolstering refers to "any rhetorical strategy which reinforces the existence of a fact, sentiment, object, or relationship" (Ware & Linkugel, 1973, p. 277). Bolstering strategies involve reminding the audience of previous occasions in which the accused was viewed favorably by the audience. Bolstering, like denial, is reformative in the sense that the speaker does not totally invent the identification, or try to change the

audience's attitude toward those things with which the speaker can identify, but tries to put an end to, or improve the situation by change; the speaker removes the fault or abuse of the situation. In the case of bolstering strategies, the accused is limited to some extent by the reality the audience already perceives.

Bolstering and denial, according to Ware and Linkugel (1973), are factors vital to the apologetic form of public address. Denial is a means of negation; bolstering is a basis for identification. And finally, according to Ware and Linkugel (1973), "strategies of bolstering and denial are reformative in the sense that they do not alter the audience's meaning for the cognitive elements involved" (p. 278). In other words, the speaker attempts to "reform" by putting an end to or removing the faults and/or abuses with which he or she is charged.

Differentiation, the third factor in apologetic discourse "subsumes those strategies which serve the purpose of separating some fact, sentiment, object, or relationship from some larger context within which the audience presently views that attribute" (Ware & Linkugel, 1973, p. 278). The speaker attempts to divide the original situation into a new construct, or constructs, of reality which is then accompanied by a change in the audience's meaning of the situation. The charge is made less abstract. Gold (1978) claims, "In political campaigns, the candidate may try not

only to redefine the larger context for the audience, but to separate himself symbolically from the accusation by attacking the source" (p. 308). The presence of differentiation as an important factor in apologia is often signaled by the accused's request for a postponement of judgement until the actions can be viewed from a different momentary perspective (Ware & Linkugel, 1973).

The fourth and final major factor in Ware and Linkugel's (1973) apologia of self-defense is transcendence. This factor takes in "any strategy which cognitively joins some fact, sentiment, object, or relationship with some larger context within which the audience does not presently view that attribute" (Ware & Linkugel, 1973, p. 280). Those strategies which involve a change in cognitive identification and in meaning combine to form transcendence. Transcendental strategies, therefore, emotionally divert the audience's attention away from the particulars of the charge at hand in a direction toward some more abstract, general view of the speaker's character.

Ware and Linkugel (1973) also argue that speakers usually assume one of four rhetorical postures, or attitudes, when speaking in defense of their characters--absolution, vindication, explanation, or justification. These postures are what Ware and Linkugel define as subgenres of apologia:

The types of discourses within the genre . . .

the combination of factors found in speeches of self-defense. (1973, p. 274)

Ware and Linkugel believe that each apology is unique:

People speak in defense of themselves against diverse charges, in varied situations, and through the use of many different strategies. (1973, p. 274)

An absolute discourse, resulting from combining primarily the differentiation and denial factors, is one in which the speaker seeks acquittal. The absolute discourse denies any wrong-doing and differentiates any personal characteristics viewed by the audience as inappropriate (Ware & Linkugel, 1973). The vindictive discourse relies heavily upon transcendental strategies and denial. Such an apology aims not only at preserving the accused's reputation, but also in the recognition that the accused has a greater worth as a human being in relation to those accusing (Ware & Linkugel, 1973). In the explanative discourse the speaker assumes that if the audience understands his or her motives they will be unable to criticize. The speaker chooses a somewhat defensive method, combining the strategies of bolstering and differentiation (Ware & Linkugel, 1973). The justificative discourse appeals not only for understanding, but also for approval. Rhetorical postures used in this attitude of self-defense rely upon the factors of bolstering and transcendence strategies (Ware & Linkugel, 1973).

Reagan's speech of self-defense (see Appendix A)

combines several of the factors in apologia characterized by Ware and Linkugel. In order to maintain an organized arrangement, I will begin by providing examples of Reagan's speech that can be applied to the factor of denial, followed by examples applicable to the remaining three factors--bolstering, differentiation, transcendence--which characterize speeches of self-defense.

Factors of Denial

According to Ware and Linkugel (1973), the factor of denial consists of denying the facts of, or any relationship to, the situation. Denial may also involve the "denial of intentions"--the accused does not deny that an action took place, but does deny that there was harmful intent. In the denial stage, a speaker may also appear as an "innocent bystander" in the situation.

In his discourse, Reagan employed strategies appropriate to the factor of denial. When the Iran-Contra Affair first gained public attention, Reagan's first response was to deny the facts. In his first televised address to the nation Reagan claimed, "Those charges are utterly false. . . . We did not--repeat--did not trade weapons or anything else for hostages--nor will we" (Reagan, 1986, p. A8). However, when the Tower report confirmed that the U.S. did trade arms for hostages, Reagan was compelled to take a different approach. Thus, Reagan employed other methods of the denial factor. First, Reagan accepts

responsibility, but not blame; he then takes the role of the innocent bystander by telling his audience that activities were performed without his knowledge:

First, let me say *I take full responsibility* [italics added] for my own actions and for those of my Administration. As angry as I may be about activities undertaken *without my knowledge, I am still accountable for those activities* [italics added]. As disappointed as I may be in some who served me, I am still the one who must answer to the American people for this behavior. And as personally distasteful as I find secret bank accounts and diverted funds, well, as the Navy would say, this happened on my watch. . . .

As I told the Tower board, *I didn't know about any diversion of funds* [italics added] to the contras. But as President, I cannot escape responsibility. (Reagan, 1987, p. 323)

Reagan also relied upon what Ware and Linkugel define as the denial of intentions. The American public accepted as fact that arms were traded for hostages--there could be no denial. Therefore, Reagan was compelled to communicate that his intentions were honorable. Reagan no longer denied that there was an arms-for-hostages exchange; he told the American public that his intentions were to develop better relations with Iran, and that his greatest concern was in the welfare of the hostages:

A few months ago I told the American people I did not trade arms for hostages. *My heart and my best intentions still tell me that is true* [italics added], but the facts and the evidence tell me it is not. . . .

I undertook the original Iran initiative in order to develop relations with those who might assume leadership in a post-Khomeini Government. . . . I let my personal concern for the hostages spill over in to geopolitical strategy of reaching out to Iran. I asked so many questions about the

hostages' welfare that I didn't ask enough about the specifics of the total plan. (Reagan, 1987, p. 323)

Factors of Bolstering

Reagan did not stop with strategies of denial. He moved from the denial stage into strategies of bolstering. Reagan reminds the audience of his attributes that the public had previously viewed as favorable:

I'm often accused of *being an optimist* [italics added]. . . .

Much has been said about my management style, a *style that's worked successfully for me* [italics added] during my eight years as governor of California and for most of my presidency. The way I work is to identify the problem, find the right individuals to do the job and then let them go do it. I've found this invariably brings out the best in people. They seem to rise to their full capability, and *in the long run you get more done* [italics added]. (Reagan, 1987, p. 323)

Reagan then moves toward trying to improve the situation by change--he tells his audience that he is taking steps to remove the abuse that took place:

I've already begun correcting this. As a start, yesterday I met with the entire professional staff of the National Security Council. I defined for them the values I want to guide the national security policies of this country. I told them that I wanted a policy that was as justifiable and understandable in public as it was in secret. . . . And I told them that there'll be no more freelancing by individuals when it comes to our national security. . . .

I'm going beyond its [Tower board] recommendations, so as to put the house in even better order. (Reagan, 1987, p. 323)

In bolstering, Reagan had to identify with something that was viewed favorably by the audience. The American people

wanted the blunder corrected. Most of Reagan's speech did just that. He told his audience that he was taking steps for more accountability in the areas of personnel, national security policy, and the process for making decisions (Reagan, 1987). He gave an in depth report of all changes that would take place, and the changes that had already taken place:

I'm taking action
 I've brought in an accomplished and highly
 respected new team. . . .
 . . . my new chief of staff. . . .
 . . . my new national security adviser
 Already, almost half the N.S.C. professional staff
 is comprised of new people. . . .
 Yesterday I nominated
 . . . I have ordered
 I have also directed
 I have had issued
 I have asked
 . . . I am adopting
 I've created
 I am also determined. . . . Proper procedures
 . . . will be followed, not only in letter but in
 spirit. (Reagan, 1987, p. 323)

Reagan relied primarily on the factor of bolstering. His purpose seemed to be one that he used quite frequently in other discourses--identifying his views and values with that of the American public's (White, 1988). Realizing the effects the scandal had caused regarding his own credibility, Reagan used the strategy of bolstering when he told his audience that changes would be made so that a crisis like this would not happen again.

Factors of Differentiation

Strategies within the factor of differentiation are

used in order to separate the situation or crisis from the larger context within which the audience presently views it, or to change the audience's understanding of the situation by urging the audience to postpone judgement so that the situation can be viewed differently (Ware & Linkugel, 1973). The information that the audience received about the Iran-Contra Affair was so damaging that trying to change the American public's understanding of the situation would not have been realistic. However, Reagan did attempt to separate himself from the Iran-Contra Affair and implies that the audience should defer judgement until they have all of the facts:

The reason I haven't spoken to you before now is this: You deserved the truth. And, as frustrating as the waiting has been, I felt it was improper to come to you with sketchy reports, or possibly even erroneous statements, which would then have to be corrected, creating even more doubt and confusion. There's been enough of that.

I've paid a price for my silence in terms of your trust and confidence. But *I have had to wait, as have you* [italics added], for the complete story. (Reagan, 1987, p. 322)

Reagan separates himself from the situation by attacking those involved, "*This runs counter to my own beliefs* [italics added], to Administration policy and to the original strategy we had in mind" (Reagan, 1987, p. 323).

Factors of Transcendence

The final factor in Ware and Linkugel's taxonomy is transcendence. Those strategies which involve a modification in cognitive identification and in meaning

combine to form transcendence (Ware & Linkugel, 1973). Transcendental strategies emotionally shift the audience away from a specific accusation toward a more ideal view of the speaker's character. Reagan diverted the audience away from the specific crisis of selling arms to a foreign enemy by ignoring questions raised by the Tower review board; he did not address the report that NSC advisors secretly managed aid to Contra rebels. He even ignored the board's disclosure of his top aides covering up the affair. What Reagan did was shift the audience's attention toward the Tower Report's recommendations. He reminded his audience that it was he who requested a thorough investigation into the Iran-Contra Affair; and it was he who reminded the audience of his absolution, by the Tower Commission, of any guilt.

Reagan goes beyond the reasons for the investigation and directs the audience's attention toward other issues. He transcends the problem of the N.S.C.'s trustworthiness and explains how dedicated the N.S.C. is:

You've heard a lot about the staff. . . . I can tell you, they are good and dedicated Government employees, who put in long hours for the nation's benefit. They are eager and anxious to serve their country. (Reagan, 1987, p. 323)

Reagan shifts attention from the Tower Report's findings, to personally addressing the hostage families:

Let me say to the hostage families, we have not given up. We never will, and I promise you we'll use every legitimate means to free your loved ones from captivity. But I must caution that those

Americans who freely remain in such dangerous areas must know that they're responsible for their own safety. (Reagan, 1987, p. 323)

Finally, Reagan becomes the main character in his own narrative. He attempts to create an identification with his audience in order for them to experience the trauma of overcoming a crisis situation. He talks about what happens when people make mistakes:

You take your knocks, you learn your lessons and then you move on [italics added]. That's the healthiest way to deal with a problem. . . . *The business of our country must proceed* [italics added]. . . . I've heard this message from you, the American people.

You know, by the time you reach my age, you've made plenty of mistakes if you've lived your life properly. So you learn. You put things in perspective. You pull your energies together. You change. *You go forward* [italics added].

My fellow Americans, *I have a great deal that I want to accomplish* [italics added] with you and for you over the next two years, and, the Lord willing, *that's exactly what I intend to do* [italics added]. (Reagan, 1987, p. 324)

Ronald Reagan transcended the original emphasis of his discourse, that of denying guilt, and told a story about how good people make mistakes, that mistakes are a part of life --if you learn from your mistakes. Reagan attempted to divert his audience away from the accusations of guilt to starting over and leaving the past.

Postures of Apologia

Ware and Linkugel (1973) believe that in speeches of self-defense a speaker usually assumes a certain posture, or attitude, when delivering a discourse. The postures Ware

and Linkugel have identified are 1) absolution; 2) vindication; 3) explanation; and 4) justification. In analyzing Reagan's apologetic discourse I found that he assumed more than just one posture.

Reagan combined the factors of denial, bolstering, differentiation, and transcendence throughout his speech. Although Ware and Linkugel assert that a speaker usually assumes one of four rhetorical postures when defending his or her character, I have determined that Reagan, from time to time, assumed all four postures. Reagan attempted to absolve himself from the crisis by denying any wrong-doing and by requesting his audience to postpone judgement until all facts had been revealed.

A goal of Reagan's speech was to sustain his reputation. One of the reasons he chose to address the American public was to regain the credibility that he had lost. Through vindication Reagan asked the audience to view him as having a greater worth than the image that was focused on him due to the Iran-Contra crisis.

In assuming a justificative posture, speakers appeal to audiences for understanding and approval. Reagan relied upon the factors of bolstering and transcendence--he sought the audience's understanding and their approval.

The major strategy Reagan used in his speech was bolstering. Bolstering and differentiation is classified by Ware and Linkugel (1973) under the posture of explanation.

Reagan's primary purpose in speaking was one of explanation. Although Reagan found the need to absolve himself from accusations of guilt, there was a greater need to explain why the crisis took place, and, that changes would take place so that situations like this would not happen in the future.

SUMMARY

President Reagan's response to the Tower Commission's report can be identified as apologia--a speech of self-defense. His speech illustrates those factors that Ware and Linkugel allege are necessary when defending a person's credibility. Understanding those factors used in apologia are beneficial to the rhetorical critic when examining speeches used in self-defense.

Ronald Reagan's involvement in the Iran-Contra crisis compelled him to respond to the public and explain the situation. His discourse required the use of specific strategies necessary to rebuild a person's credibility. Reagan applied the communication skills he had used so successfully in the past. President Reagan had to combat the image that had been forced upon him due to the Tower Report. The ability to recover had rested squarely on his shoulders (Boyd, 1987; "The Tower," 1987). In the following chapter I will draw upon the media's assessment of Reagan's discourse to ascertain whether Reagan recovered his lost credibility.

CHAPTER VI

MEDIA ASSESSMENTS OF REAGAN'S RESPONSE

On the evening of March 4, 1987, as Ronald Reagan stood before the nation to deliver his discourse, the media and the American public awaited his words. The media loved crucifixions, but the American public loved repentance and resurrections (Boyd, 1987).

While there is no doubt that the Iran-Contra Affair diminished the public's faith in Reagan's credibility, evaluations by the media of Reagan's March 4 discourse indicated approval of the rhetorical strategies used. The day after President Reagan delivered his discourse, The Washington Post reported:

Leaders of both parties said last night they think that *President Reagan has turned the corner toward political recovery* [italics added] by acknowledging responsibility for failings of his Iran policy and taking credible steps to improve his White House staff and national-security operation. (Broder & Walsh, 1987, p. A1)

Writers and commentators for The Washington Post continued their evaluations of Reagan's discourse:

Last night's televised address by Ronald Reagan was one of the most crucial of his presidency, a screen test in the literal sense, and a *first impression is that he passed it* [italics added]. (Shales, 1987, p. B1)

The media believed Reagan was reauditioning for the role of "The Gipper," and that he had played his part well: "he was

masterful and his buoyancy reassuring [italics added]"

(Shales, 1987, p. B1). Shales final assessment of Reagan's speech was that The Gipper was back:

If you could have taken a voice vote of viewers at the moment the speech ended, it's likely they would have chosen precisely what their pal the president wanted. *It sounded so right and reasonable they way he said it* [italics added]. (1987, p. B4)

Commentator Richard Cohen assessed Reagan's speech as "making a comeback." Although Cohen stated, "A speech is just a speech," he also admitted, "But this was a good, not to mention clever, one" (1987, p. A23). He believed that Reagan had met the test others had set for him:

The easiest thing in public life is to accept responsibility. The hardest is to accept blame. There is a world of difference between them, and in his televised speech to the nation, President Reagan closed the gap that he had opened between the two. He accepted both. (Cohen, 1987, p. A23)

Cohen also scored Reagan above others who had attempted to redeem their credibility, but had failed:

As always, Reagan set his own grading curve. Where others would be faulted, *he is pardoned* [italics added]. Where others would be held accountable, he is not. He advances into every political battle shielded by his own shimmering persona--his humanity, his total oneness with the American people. That was on display Wednesday night. *He remains what he always was: a winning and engaging man* [italics added]. (1987, p. A23)

Los Angeles Times columnist David Broder questioned why Reagan had taken so long to tell the public of the mistakes that were made: "Historians of the Reagan presidency will face the challenge of explaining why he delayed so long in

saying and doing things that were so clearly necessary and so evidently in the nation's interest" (1987, p. B5). Even so, Broder appraised Reagan's speech as "a new beginning."

Journalists continued to write of the magic Reagan was able to invoke in his speech:

Ronald Reagan is back [italics added]. Only a few weeks ago it looked to many as though the last two years of the Reagan presidency would be unsalvageable. . . . But *the diatribe against this President is softening as he performs his magic of reconciliation* [italics added] with Congress and the American public. . . .

So far, *President Reagan is making maximum benefit of a recovery that many said could never happen* [italics added]. (Nickles, 1987, p. B5)

Although Democrats tried their best to diffuse Reagan's performance, Republicans, eager to put the affair behind them, described Reagan's speech as "a turning point":

President Reagan's speech tonight was a turning point in the crisis [italics added]. . . .

"*The Gipper's back* [italics added]," said Senator Dan Quayle, Republican of Indiana. "He's learned his lesson and he's ready to move forward." John G. Tower, a Republican who headed the Presidential board that investigated the affair, called the President's performance "*brilliant* [italics added]." (Dionne, 1987b, p. A18)

In addition, a New York Times news analysis compared Reagan's response to the Iran-Contra crisis to that of John F. Kennedy and his response to the Bay of Pigs fiasco:

President Reagan spoke to the American people tonight in a spirit of contrition that has not been heard from the White House in a quarter century. . . . Not since John F. Kennedy took the blame for the catastrophic Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961 has any President so openly confessed error.

President Kennedy [like Reagan] did not explicitly apologize after the Bay of Pigs

invasion, nor did he describe his policies as a failure. He said the United States would "profit from this lesson," remarked that "victory has a hundred fathers and defeat is an orphan," and pointedly, "I'm the responsible officer of the Government."

In very much the same spirit, Mr. Reagan declared tonight, "This happened on my watch." (Apple, 1987b, pp. A1, A18; see also Borger & Walsh, 1987)

Clearly, the consensus of the media was that President Reagan gave the right speech to reestablish his credibility. He did not apologize, yet he assumed responsibility. Reagan admitted mistakes and pledged to redeem the damage in his final two years in office. There was no crucifixion, as some had speculated (Boyd, 1987), just repentance and resurrection. Less than one week later Reagan's credibility slowly began to ascend ("Opinion," 1988; Citrin, Green, & Reingold, 1987).

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

Historical documents provide evidence that the Iran-Contra Affair significantly diminished President Reagan's high credibility standing with the American public. Reagan responded to the rhetorical situation, defended his credibility through a speech of self-defense, and regained the confidence of the American people. Following his speech, Reagan's credibility rating slowly increased. Although other factors may have contributed to the increase, news polls clearly confirmed an immediate increase in Reagan's approval rating after he delivered his discourse ("Opinion," 1988).

Reagan survived. He was able to defuse the situation and rebuild his credibility. His popularity and apparent sincerity had a positive effect on his success because people tend to believe and accept facts from someone they like or trust (Cosco, 1987). The American people forgave him.

In the past, Reagan engendered trust from the American people. After his discourse, Reagan continued to draw from "the well." When President Reagan left office in January 1989, 68% of the American people approved of his overall job performance, 71% approved of his handling of foreign

relations, and 62% approved of his handling of the economy (Roberts, 1989).

In assessing Reagan's discourse as a speech of self-defense in response to a rhetorical situation, I have established that the events of the Iran-Contra Affair qualify as a crisis, and thus exemplify an exigence needing a response. I have demonstrated this through the elements of Bitzer's rhetorical situation by applying Reagan's response to the genre of apologia and the strategies useful in defending oneself.

An examination of Ronald Reagan's response, analyzed through the rhetorical genre of apologia, reveals the following: 1) The Iran-Contra Affair is an appropriate example and study for a rhetorical situation; 2) Ronald Reagan made full use of the conventional apologetic strategies of denial, bolstering, differentiation, and transcendence outlined by Ware and Linkugel; and 3) the utility of understanding apologia as a set of strategies for rebuilding credibility should be viewed as a salient constant.

This study confirms the utility of a particular genre-- that of apologia. It also suggests that there is a special relationship between the presidency and the populace. Presidential figures have, in the past, been placed before the public in regard to defending themselves: Lyndon Johnson defended his plans for expanding the Vietnam War; Richard

Nixon defended his involvement in the Watergate break-in; Jimmy Carter defended his intention to carry out the Desert One hostage rescue mission ("The Culture," 1987). In each situation the issue became the defense of one's character, not policy. Where these men failed, Reagan was successful. The media liked what he said and what he said pertained to the particular strategies of denial, bolstering, differentiation, and transcendence.

The persistent probing of the media into a person's moral character makes apologetic responses more difficult today. As Gold states:

The power of contemporary mass media to transmit and repeat such charges all over the country means that even frivolous accusations have great damaging potential. (1978, p. 308)

Presidential candidates are finding that their moral character is more newsworthy than their issues, policies and voting records. Reagan was successful, in spite of contemporary media.

One could conclude, and further study may suggest, that part of the relationship between the presidency and the populace may be in the form of symbolic performance--degradation rituals. There are times when a president must humble himself before the people before he can be elevated. It is entirely possible to argue that the rhetorical techniques and strategies available to politicians in defending themselves from attacks on their character can be generalized as a form of political apologia. A presidential

candidate's ability to cope with the accusations against his credibility and his response may be the determining factor of the election. Aspiring presidents may win or lose depending on their ability to practice the ritual of self-defense (Gold, 1978). Thus, when those in the public eye are faced with similar situations, they would be wise to follow the strategies employed by Reagan using the rhetorical genre of apologia in order to be successful.

Ronald Reagan's discourse is a valuable model in the study of apologia as a particular kind of communicative response. Rhetoric is shaped by prior rhetoric, by verbal conventions in a culture, and by past ideas and issues. By further developing theory of the rhetorical process, we can generate concepts on how we and others can more effectively communicate, understand, and perhaps even influence political discourse in the future.

Ronald Reagan, whether we admired him or not, proved himself to be "the great communicator" because he told his story the way the American people wanted to hear it; and he told it in a most persuasive way.

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APPENDIX A

CHRONOLOGY OF THE IRAN-CONTRA AFFAIR

Appendix A

Chronology of the Iran-Contra Affair

Following is a chronology of major events in the Iran-Contra Affair, based on reports from the House and Senate Select Committees formed to investigate the Iran-Contra Affair, and the Tower Commission, whose role was to investigate the National Security Council staff:

- 11/14/79 U.S. imposes embargo on arms shipments to Iran.
- 9/19/83 President signs finding authorizing covert aid intended to pressure the Sandinistas to negotiate a treaty with nearby countries.
- 10/23/83 Bombing of U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut, killing 241 Marines.
- 12/83 \$24-million cap on Contra funding imposed by Congress.
- 12/14/83 U.S. begins "Operation Staunch," urging allied governments to "stop transferring arms to Iran."
- 1/20/84 U.S. government officially lists Iran as a sponsor of international terrorism.
- 4/7/84 Disclosure of mining of Nicaraguan harbors. Public criticism of U.S. involvement undermines congressional support for assistance to the Contras.
- 5/84 McFarlane meets with Ambassador of "Country Two," who agrees to provide \$1 million per month as contribution to the Contras.
- Spring '84 According to North, he and Casey first discuss the "fall-guy plan," to provide "plausible deniability" to North's superiors.

- 6/25/84 National Security Planning Group (NSPG) meeting to consider options for funding Contra (President, Bush, Shultz, Weinberger, Casey, Meese, McFarlane present). Casey urges President to seek third-country funding. Shultz quotes Jim Baker that such would be an impeachable offense. Meese recalls William French Smith opinion providing authority for such. No decision made. Neither President nor McFarlane reveals County Two contribution already agreed to.
- Summer '84 At Casey's suggestion, according to North, North recruited retired Air Force Major General Richard Secord, operator of the "Enterprise," to assist in buying weapons for the Contras with the third-country funds being received.
- 8/31/84 National Security advisor Robert McFarlane formally requests government agencies to reassess and analyze U.S. policy toward Iran.
- 9/2/84 National Security staff member Lt. Col. Oliver North suggests to McFarlane that a private donor be found to give a helicopter to the Nicaraguan Contra rebels. It is an early indication of the NSC's interest in soliciting private aid for the Contras. U.S. military assistance to the Contras was barred by the so-called Boland Amendment enacted in 1982.
- 10/12/84 Boland II becomes law.
- 2/85 Country Two agrees to contribute additional \$24 million. President informed by head of state.
- Spring '85 First two arms shipments arranged by Secord and North reach Contras.
- 4/18/85 Lt. Col. North, according to the commission, sketches a diagram proposing how money from private donors might be channeled to the Contras under a program he dubs "Project Democracy."

- 4/23/85 House rejects administration's Contra-aid request.
- 5/1/85 President announces imposition of economic sanctions against Nicaragua.
- 5/3/85 Michael Ledeen, an NSC consultant, (with McFarlane's approval) meets with Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres and expresses interest in sharing intelligence on Iran. Peres asks Ledeen if the U.S. would approve a shipment of arms to Iran. Ledeen agrees on behalf of McFarlane. Hostages discussed, according to Israelis.
- 6/19/85 Ghorbanifar, Iranian arms dealer and businessman, and Furmark, New York businessman, meet Israelis in Israel to propose sale of 100 TOWs to Iran. Ghorbanifar agrees to set up meeting with Iranian official.
- 7/3/85 David Kimchee, Director General of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, tells McFarlane that Iran wants to open a "political discourse" with the U.S.
- 7/8/85 President's speech to American Bar Association. Calls Iran part of "confederation of terrorist states . . . a new international version of Murder Inc. America will never make concessions to terrorists." Refers to Iran, Libya, North Korea, Cuba, and Nicaragua as "outlaw states run by the strangest collection of misfits, Looney Tunes and squalid criminals since the advent of the Third Reich."
- 7/8/85 Israelis meet in Hamburg with Ghorbanifar, Khashoggi, Saudi Arabian businessman, and Iranian representative to discuss sale of 100 TOWs, with sale to be followed by release of the American hostages.
- 7/8/85 John Singlaub's (retired U.S. Army Major General) arms shipment received by Contras. Last arms shipment by dealer other than Secord, and last time funds were handled by Adolfo Calero, political director of the Nicaraguan Democratic Force, rather than by the "Enterprise."

7/18/85 President Reagan, recuperating in a hospital from cancer surgery, authorizes McFarlane to make contact with Iran through the Israelis. McFarlane later says the President was "all for letting the Israelis do anything they wanted" in dealing with Iran.

Late July '85 Ledeen meets in Israel with Iranian-born arms dealer Manucher Ghorbanifar, who says Iran might arrange to release U.S. hostages if the U.S. helps Iran obtain weapons.

8/2/85 Kimchee meets with McFarlane in Washington to seek explicit U.S. position on sale of 100 TOWs. McFarlane agrees to present issue to the President.

8/6/85 Meeting with the President, McFarlane, Bush, Shultz, Weinberger, and Regan. Permission for the sale of 100 TOWs to Iran by Israel is discussed. Shultz and Weinberger opposed. McFarlane testified that the President called him several days later and authorized the Israelis to proceed. (The President told the Tower Board that he had authorized the sale, then said that he had not authorized the sale, and finally said that he had no recollection one way or the other.)

8/8/85 President signs bill authorizing \$27 million in humanitarian assistance to the Contras.

8/10/85 North meets with Castillo, pseudonym for the CIA station chief in Costa Rica, and Tambs, Ambassador to Costa Rica, in Costa Rica to discuss establishment of secret air base for resupply of Contras in Nicaragua.

8/20/85 96 TOWs delivered by Israel to Iran. It is the first of at least eight separate arms shipments over the next 14 months. No hostages are released.

Fall '85 North meets with representative of Country Three at Hay-Adams Hotel to request funds for Contras. Country Three eventually donates \$2 million.

9/4-5/85 Ledeen meets in Paris with Israelis and Ghorbanifar. Ghorbanifar indicates that one hostage will be released in exchange for an additional 400 TOW missiles.

- 9/15/85 Israel delivers 408 missiles to Iran. McFarlane is given the choice of the release of any hostage other than Buckley. That same day Rev. Benjamin Weir becomes the first U.S. hostage to be released by pro-Iranian Shiite militiamen in Lebanon. Two more hostages are released over the next year.
- 10/10/85 White House spokesman Speakes reading statement following capture of hijackers of the Achille Lauro: "From the outset the United States Government made . . . clear to all the governments involved our firm opposition with negotiations with terrorists or concessions to them."
- 11/15/85 McFarlane meets with Israeli Defense Minister Rabin at White House and conveys President's authorization for further arms sale, with U.S. replenishment of Israeli stocks.
- 11/17/85 McFarlane informs President about shipment of 80 HAWKs just before they leave for summit meeting in Geneva.
- 11/18/85 Problem develops with flight clearances for shipment of HAWKs to Iran, and North recruits Secord to go to Europe to resolve it.
- 11/22/85 The Central Intelligence Agency arranges for the shipment of HAWK anti-aircraft missiles from Israel to Iran.
- 11/24-25/85 First 19 HAWK missiles delivered by CIA plane from Israel to Teheran. Remaining HAWKs rejected by Iran as obsolete. No hostages released.
- 11/25/85 John McMahon, CIA Deputy Director, declares that the CIA will not provide any more covert assistance unless President Reagan explicitly authorizes such operations.
- 11/30/85 McFarlane resigns as National Security Adviser.
- 12/4 85 Vice Admiral John Poindexter succeeds McFarlane as National Security Adviser.

- 12/5/85 In one of his first acts as National Security Adviser, Poindexter presents finding to President, who signs it. Regan, present at the briefing, has no memory of President's signing it.) Finding retroactively authorizes HAWK shipment and indicates exchange for hostages.
- 12/6/85 North tells Israeli officials at meeting in New York that U.S. wants to use profits from upcoming arms sale to Iran to fund activity in Nicaragua (according to Israeli Historical Chronology submitted to the Committee).
- 12/7/85 President Reagan holds a meeting in his office with Bush, Casey, Shultz, Weinberger, McFarlane, Poindexter, John McMahon, and Regan. Strong opposition to arms sale expressed by Shultz and Weinberger. President Reagan later says he recalls discussing a complex Iranian proposal for release of hostages keyed to arms shipments in installments from the Israelis.
- 12/8/85 McFarlane meets in London with Kimche, Secord, North, Nimrodi, former Israeli defense official and arms dealer, and Ghorbanifar. McFarlane is unhappy with Ghorbanifar's arms-for-hostage approach. North is unhappy with McFarlane's negative reaction, raises specter of hostage deaths if plan doesn't go forward.
- 12/9/85 North submits to Poindexter a memo proposing a direct arms-for-hostages exchange, to be handled by Secord, a North associate who is also believed to have been running a private supply network for the Contras, and Ghorbanifar. North, Ghorbanifar, Ledeen, Secord, new Israeli antiterrorist advisor Amiram Nir--who had taken Kimchee's place--jointly work out an arms-for-hostages plan over the next few weeks. It is not known who took the lead.
- 12/12/85 Poindexter visits Central America.
- 12/13/85 On return from Central America, Poindexter briefs President on secret airstrip in Costa Rica.

- 1/2/86 Nir meets with Poindexter and North in Washington to propose new arms sale involving 4,000 TOWs, the release of all American hostages and 20-30 Hizballah prisoners held by the Southern Lebanon Army.
- 1/3/86 North and Sporkin, CIA General Counsel, meet to draft new finding to authorize CIA participation in new arms sales (and inclusion of "third parties" in draft North prepared).
- 1/6/86 President Reagan signs a "finding," or order, authorizing covert action including arms shipments to Iran to help secure the release of American hostages. Reagan later tells the Commission he does not recall signing the finding; Chief of Staff Regan tells the Commission the order "may have been signed in error."
- 1/7/86 At National Security Council meeting, with President, Bush, Shultz, Weinberger, Meese, Casey, Poindexter, and Regan present, Weinberger and Shultz object strenuously. President's signing of the finding the previous day is not mentioned.
- 1/15/86 North gives National Security Agency-- provided KL-43 encryption devices to key members of the Contra resupply operation. This equipment and accompanying classified codes allowed secure communications among North, Secord, and others over open telephone lines.
- 1/17/86 Reagan signs a second finding authorizing arms shipments, with language only slightly revised from that of the first (insertion of the words "third parties," thereby allowing for the use of the "Enterprise").
- 1/22/86 North, Secord, and Nir meet with Ghorbanifar in London. Ghorbanifar, according to North testimony, suggests diversion in bathroom meeting. At London meeting, delivery schedule for 1,000 TOW missiles agreed upon.

- Early Feb.'86 By this time, according to the Commission, the CIA had begun acquiring weapons for Iran and had designated a Swiss bank account for the proceeds of the sales. The agency had also put two airplanes "at the disposal of General Secord."
- 2/17/86 First 500 TOWs shipped, returning with 17 rejected HAWKs from November 1985 shipment.
- 2/25/86 North, Secord, and Ghorbanifar meet with Iranian official in Frankfurt. Albert Hakim (Secord's business partner in the "Enterprise"), under disguise, serves as translator. Eventually agreement reached that sale of 1,000 missiles will lead to release of "a couple of hostages."
- 2/27/86 Second load of 500 TOWs delivered to Iran. No hostages released.
- 3/7/86 North, George Cave (retired CIA officer), Ghorbanifar, and Nir meet in Paris. Ghorbanifar indicates that Iranians are not interested in additional TOWs, but seek 240 HAWK spare parts.
- 4/1/86 First air resupply to the Nicaraguan Democratic Force (FDN) accomplished.
- 4/4/86 North writes memorandum for Poindexter to present to President Reagan saying \$12 million from the Iranian arms sales "will be used to purchase critically needed supplies" for the Nicaraguan Contra. However, the Commission says it has no evidence that Reagan saw the memo.
- 4/11/86 First successful air resupply mission into southern Nicaragua accomplished.
- 4/20/86 North and Secord meet at the air base in Central America with James J. Steele, Felix Rodriguez (alias "Max Gomez," former CIA operative recruited by North for resupply operation in Central America), and the military leadership of the FDN. Complaints about the age and reliability of the aircraft expressed.

- 5/1/86 Rodriguez meets with Bush. Scheduling memo states: "To brief the Vice President on the status of the war in [a Central American country] and resupply of the contras."
- 5/6/86 North, Nir, Cave, and Ghorbanifar meet in London to discuss pricing of spare-parts shipment. Agreement that HAWK parts would be brought on a plane with McFarlane for meeting with high Iranian officials in Teheran. Remainder of HAWK parts would be delivered after release of hostages took place.
- 5/15/86 President Reagan approves a mission to Teheran by McFarlane. The same day, Poindexter tells North to "generate a cover story" to conceal his heavy involvement with unauthorized Contra supply operations. The next day North sends a note to Poindexter saying the clandestine arms shipments "could well become a political embarrassment for the President." North has "no idea" what Chief of Staff Regan "does or does not know," North writes, but the President "obviously knows why he has been meeting with several select people to thank them" for providing donations to the Contras.
- 5/16/86 National Security Planning Group (NSPG) meeting with the President to discuss third-country humanitarian assistance. Shultz instructed to prepare list of potential third-country donors. No one mentions Country Two and Country Three funds already received by the Contras.
- 5/25/86 McFarlane, North and other U.S. officials travel to Teheran to meet with Iranian officials. Poindexter has rejected North's request for a prior meeting with the President and other cabinet officers because of potential objections from Shultz and Weinberger. The U.S. entourage shares the plane with a shipment of missile parts for Iran.
- 5/28/86 McFarlane breaks off Teheran negotiations and party leaves Teheran without the release of hostages, having delivered one pallet of HAWK parts.

- 6/6/86 President Reagan approves military planning to rescue the hostages. North told Poindexter in February that the NSC staff was drawing up plans.
- 6/16/86 Shultz first learns of Country Two solicitation from McFarlane.
- 6/25/86 House approves \$100 million for Contras.
- 7/4/86 Israelis and Ghorbanifar fail in effort to convince Iranians to arrange release of hostage in time for Statue of Liberty celebration.
- 7/26/86 Father Jenco is released, as arranged by Ghorbanifar and Israelis.
- 7/29/86 North memo to Poindexter predicts hostage will be killed if HAWK parts not delivered to Iran.
- 7/30/86 Poindexter indicates President approved shipment of HAWK parts.
- 8/8/86 240 HAWK missile parts shipped to Iran.
- 8/8/86 North, Ghorbanifar, and Nir meet in London to discuss continued initiative. North agrees to sequential deliveries of arms and hostages, subject to ratification by administration.
- 8/8/86 Elliott Abrams, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, meets Brunei representative in London and solicits \$10 million. Funds never reach Contras: North or Fawn Hall, secretary to North, transposes account number given to Brunei by Abrams.
- 8/8/86 Rodriguez meets with Donald T. Gregg, Bush's National Security Adviser and former CIA official, and voices allegations about Secord group overpricing, Edwin Wilson connections, etc. Rodriguez makes clear to Gregg (reflected in his notes) that North is involved. Gregg testified that he never told Bush this.
- 8/25/86 Secord and Hakim meet with the "Second Channel" in Brussels.

- 9/9/86 Another American, Frank Reed, Director of the Lebanese International School, is taken hostage in West Beirut.
- 9/9/86 North calls Costa Rican President Oscar Arias Sanchez and threatens to "withhold U.S. assistance" if Arias shuts down an airstrip used by the Contras.
- 9/12/86 Joseph Cicippio, Chief Accountant at the American University, is abducted in West Beirut, raising the number of American hostages in Lebanon to five.
- 9/12/86 Israeli Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin offers "a significant quantity of captured Soviet bloc arms" for use by the Contras. Poindexter discusses the offer prior to a meeting between Reagan and Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres Sept. 15.
- 9/15/86 North arranges for a Danish ship to pick up weapons in Israel and deliver them to the Contras.
- 9/19-20/86 Meeting in Washington with Iranians from Second Channel. Iranians tour White House with North.
- 9/25/86 Costa Rican officials hold press conference announcing discovery of secret airstrip in Costa Rica.
- 10/5/86 A cargo plane carrying arms to the Contras is shot down over Nicaragua and a crewman, Eugene Hasenfus, is captured. The U.S. denies any connection to the operation, but North Oct. 12 tells McFarlane that "we urgently need to find a high-powered lawyer and benefactor" for Hasenfus.
- 10/6-8/86 Meetings with Second Channel in Frankfurt. North leaves Hakim to negotiate with the Iranians. Agreement reached on nine-point so-called Hakim Accords.
- 10/7/86 Casey is informed by Roy Furmark, a business associate of Khashoggi, one of the principal financiers of the arms sales, that investors in the arms sales and Ghorbanifar are upset and threatening to go public.

- 10/13/86 According to North, Casey tells him sometime between October 13 and November 4, 1986:
" . . . this whole thing was coming unravelled and that things ought to be 'cleaned up.'" North testified that in response to this instruction he began shredding documents.
- 10/28/86 500 TOWs delivered to Iran under the "nine-point plan." This is apparently the last arms shipment.
- 10/29/86 North, Hakim, Cave, and Secord meet with Second Channel in Mainz, Germany, to discuss release of one or two hostages and completion of nine-point plan.
- 11/2/86 David Jacobsen is released.
- 11/3/86 Al-Shiraa, Lebanese newspaper, reports U.S. had sold arms to Iran.
- 11/86 According to North, shortly after disclosure of the arms sales, he and Casey discuss implementing the "fall-guy plan." According to North, Casey tells him that he (North) might not be "big enough" to be the "fall guy" and indicates that "it's probably going to go higher." Casey suggests: "Poindexter might have to be a fall guy."
- 11/6/86 Reagan, in his first public statement on the subject of the reports of U.S. arms sales to Iran, states they have "no foundation."
- 11/13/86 In a television address to the nation, President Reagan acknowledged that the U.S. had sent "less than a planeload" of weapons to Iran. He also stated, "We did not--repeat--not trade weapons or anything else for hostages nor will we."
- 11/18-19/86 McFarlane and North prepare a chronology of the arms sales for Reagan's reference that obscures the President's approval of the first shipment.
- 11/19/86 President denies third-country involvement in arms sales, asserts U.S. involvement only after January 17 finding, asserts that only 1,000 TOWs were shipped, and that everything "sold could be put in one cargo plane."

- 11/20/86 Shultz meets with President to inform him of misstatements at press conference and that he was receiving misinformation from subordinates. Shultz testified, "Not the kind of discussion I ever thought I would have with the President of the United States."
- 11/20/86 Meeting held in Poindexter's office to review Casey statement prepared for testimony before the House and Senate Intelligence Committees on November 21. Casey, Meese, Poindexter, North, Cooper (Assistant Attorney General, Office of Legal Counsel), Thompson (National Security Council Counsel), and Gates (CIA Deputy Director) attend. At North's suggestion, statement is changed to say "no one in the U.S. Government" knew at the time that the November 1985 shipment contained arms. The "oil drilling equipment" story agreed to at the meeting was false, as North admitted in his testimony. It was removed from Casey's testimony at the insistence of State Department Legal Adviser Abraham Sofaer.
- 11/21/86 President authorizes Meese to commence an inquiry into the arms-sales matter.
- 11/21/86 North instructs Fawn Hall to alter series of documents. North, Earl (Deputy to North), and Hall shred documents.
- 11/21/86 Poindexter tells North that the President was never told of the diversion of Iran arms-sales funds to the Contras.
- 11/21/86 Casey and Poindexter appear before the Intelligence Committees. Poindexter tells the Committees that the U.S. had disapproved of the Israeli arms shipments to Iran and that until the day before (11/20) he had believed that administration officials did not know of them until after they had occurred.
- 11/21/86 Poindexter destroys December 1985 retroactive presidential finding.

- 11/22/86 Diversion memo discovered by Reynolds (Assistant Attorney General, Civil Rights Division) and Richardson (Meese's Chief of Staff). Meese is told at lunch at Old Ebbitt Grill.
- 11/22/86 Casey and Poindexter have lunch for two and a half hours. Poindexter testified that he remembers nothing about what was discussed.
- 11/22/86 Meese meets with Casey at Casey's home (6:00 P.M.). According to Meese's later testimony, he does not ask about diversion.
- 11/23/86 Meese interviews North. North conceals existence of the "Enterprise"--Secord's companies and Swiss bank accounts-- telling Meese that funds went directly from Israelis to Calero's accounts.
- 11/23/86 Later that evening North shreds additional documents at his office, working until at least 4:15 A.M.
- 11/25/86 Meese press conference revealing diversion of funds from arms sales to Iran to Contras.
- 11/25/86 National Security Council security officer secures North's office.
- 11/25/86 Fawn Hall smuggles documents out of North's office.
- 11/25/86 Reagan accepts Poindexter's resignation and fires North after it is revealed that profits from the arms sales to Iran have been diverted to the Contras.
- 11/26/86 President Reagan appoints the Tower Commission to review the operation of the NSC and recommend corrective action.
- 12/1/86 Senate Select Committee on Intelligence begins preliminary inquiry.
- 12/2/86 Frank Carlucci is named National Security Adviser to replace Poindexter.
- 12/4/86 House and Senate leaders agree to form separate Watergate-style select committees to investigate the scandal, with work expected to begin in January.

- 12/6/86 Reagan in his weekly radio address acknowledges for the first time that "mistakes were made" in the plan to sell weapons to Iran and funnel profits to the Contras. He says the errors occurred only in the execution of policy, not "in the policies themselves."
- 12/8/86 Shultz testifies before House Foreign Affairs Committee, distancing himself again from the administration's actions concerning arms sales to Iran and the channeling of funds to the Contras. McFarlane testifies before the House Foreign Affairs Committee that North informed him in May that "the U.S. Government had applied part of the proceeds" from the sale of arms to Iran "to support the Contras." His testimony contradicts statements by Reagan and Meese that the U.S. was not involved in any transfer of funds to the rebels.
- 12/10/86 Casey testified before the House Foreign Affairs Committee that on Oct. 7, 1986 he was told by New York businessman Roy Furmark, a former legal client, about "the whole operation" involving arms to Iran and the possibility that "some of the money may have been diverted for other purposes." However, Casey claimed he had no knowledge of the diversion of funds to the Contras and repeatedly professed ignorance about CIA cash transactions involving Swiss bank accounts. He said the first official information he received came from Meese on or shortly before November 25.
- 12/10/86 Poindexter refuses to testify during a 10-minute appearance before the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence.
- 12/10/86 Swiss officials reported the U.S. failed to provide documentation to back up its request to freeze two bank accounts. As a result, one account effectively remains open to further transactions. Legal experts expressed surprise at the U.S. delay, one Swiss official hypothesizing that perhaps "the Americans don't really want us to block the accounts at all."

- 12/13/86 Meeting with Second Channel in Frankfurt. This is first meeting at which State Department is represented. As a result Shultz learns of the nine-point plan.
- 12/14/86 Shultz reports nine-point plan to the President. Shultz testified that the President was "stunned and furious." Poindexter testified that the President had approved the plan.
- 12/15/86 CIA Director Casey suffers arm and leg seizures and is admitted to Georgetown University Hospital where he is diagnosed as having lymphoma, a rare form of brain cancer. He is scheduled to testify before Congress the next day.
- 12/15/86 Regan testifies in closed session before the Senate Intelligence Committee. He said neither he nor Reagan had any prior knowledge of funds being diverted to the Contras, and that the President authorized the Israeli arms shipment after the fact.
- 12/15/86 Swiss officials said they had received an expanded request from the U.S. government requesting that all accounts associated with North and two others be frozen. On the basis of the request the Swiss government asked the Credit Suisse bank to block the appropriate accounts, and Credit Suisse complied, announcing that at least two accounts had been frozen.
- 12/15/86 Eugene Hasenfus, who had begun serving a 30-year sentence for transporting arms to Nicaragua, was pardoned by Daniel Ortega and released to visiting Senator Christopher Dodd.
- 12/19/86 Lawrence E. Walsh is named Independent Counsel with authority to investigate the Iran arms sales, the diversion of funds to "any foreign country, including, but limited to Nicaragua," and "the Provision or coordination of support for persons or entities engaged as military insurgents in armed conflict with the Government of Nicaragua since 1984."

- 12/26/86 David Abshire, outgoing NATO Ambassador, is appointed by Reagan to "coordinate White House activities in all aspects of the Iran matter," effective January 5, 1987.
- 1/6/87 Senate Select Committee created.
- 1/7/87 House Select Committee created.
- 1/24/87 The Army admits it undercharged the CIA \$2.5 million for 2,008 TOW antitank missile parts sent to Iran last year. Although the discrepancy was "an honest mistake," according to report, the administration, as a consequence, did not have to report the sale to Congress because it fell below the \$14 million cut-off for notification.
- 1/24/87 Three hostages kidnapped in Lebanon (Alann Steen, Jesse Turner, and Robert Polhill).
- 1/26/87 Reagan meets for 76 minutes with members of the Tower Commission. This is the first discussion of the controversy the President had held with any group other than his staff.
- 1/27/87 In his State of the Union address, Reagan acknowledged that "serious mistakes were made" in the program of selling arms to Iran, but does not disavow the policy itself. He also stood firmly behind the policy of aid to the Contras.
- 1/29/87 Senate Select Committee on Intelligence issues report on preliminary inquiry.
- 2/2/87 Casey resigns as Director of Central Intelligence Agency.
- 2/9/87 McFarlane takes an overdose of 20 to 30 Valium pills. Police officials, calling it a suicide attempt, said he wrote a note relating to the incident. Friends attribute his action to failing to live up to his own standards rather than fear of pending investigations. McFarlane was to testify before the Tower Commission the next day. He said later he tried to kill himself because he "failed the country."

- 2/26/87 The President's Special Review Board, known as the Tower Commission, released its report. This special commission created by President Reagan interviewed many of the participants and gathered most of the significant documents. The report, at the time the Iran-Contra Committee began its investigation, provided the basis for most of what was then known about the affair.
- 2/27/87 Reagan meets with Howard Baker to discuss Baker's taking over as White House Chief of Staff. After the 20 minute session, Baker accepts. Informed of the move, Regan immediately has a one-sentence letter of resignation typed out.
- 3/4/87 President's Oval Office Speech on Iran.
- 4/29/87 Carl Channell, private fund-raise for the Contras, pleads guilty to conspiracy and tax fraud, naming North and Richard R. Miller as co-conspirators.
- 5/5-8/87 House and Senate Committees investigating the Iran-Contra arms scandal opened their joint public hearings.
- 5/6/87 Miller pleads guilty to conspiracy and tax fraud.
- 5/6/87 Former CIA Director Casey dies of pneumonia. Because of his illness, which followed surgery to excise a brain tumor in 1986, Casey had not been expected to testify at the hearings.
- 5/11-14/87 Former White House National Security Adviser McFarlane testifies voluntarily. However, a combination of incomplete or evasive answers left specific details about Reagan's role still unclear.
- 5/14-19/88 Robert Owen, messenger between Contra leaders and North, testified before the Committees under a grant of immunity. Calling North the Contras' "quartermaster," Owen testified that he had delivered envelope full of cash from North's office safe to Contra leaders in Washington and Central America in 1984-85, at a time when a Congressional ban on U.S. aid to the Contras were in effect. Owen's

testimony was the most explicit to date in specifying the direct role North played in keeping the Contras funded.

- 5/15/87 After months of denying that he knew specifics about private aid to the Contras, Reagan tells a group of Southern journalists that he had been regularly briefed on Contra aid because it was "my idea to begin with."
- 5/19/87 Adolfo Calero, head of largest Contra faction, appears before the Joint Congressional Committee. His testimony focuses largely on allegations that North had used about \$2,000 in traveler's checks from Contra funds for apparently personal expenses, including snow tires and women's stockings. Despite the relatively small sums involved, the suggestion that North might have personally profited from the Contras overshadowed Calero's other statements. He revealed that he had worked closely with the CIA.
- 5/20-21/87 Singlaub takes the stand at the Congressional hearings. He claims that Assistant Secretary of State Elliott Abrams had agreed to assure two foreign governments--identified elsewhere as Taiwan and South Korea--that Singlaub had the administration's approval in soliciting aid from them for the Contras. The Committees then hear testimony from three wealthy donors to Contra causes: Joseph Coors Co.; Ellen St. John Garwood, an elderly heiress to the Anderson, Clayton & Co. fortune; and William O'Boyle, heir to a Texas oil fortune. Garwood and O'Boyle described meeting with North and fund-raiser Carl Channell to solicit money directly. According to Garwood, Channell promised that, for \$300,000, the donor would get a private, 15-minute meeting with President Reagan.
- 6/2-3/87 Elliott Abrams appears before the Congressional Committees. His testimony focuses almost entirely on whether he had intentionally deceived the Senate Intelligence Committee Nov. 25, 1986, just as the scandal broke. He admits that he had left a misleading impression with the committee, but insists that his statements

head been technically correct and that he had not intentionally deceived the senators. He also contradicts testimony given by Singlaub, saying that he had not met with Singlaub before the general's trip to Asia.

6/3-4/87 Testifying under a grant of limited immunity, Albert Hakim, Secord's business partner, appeared before the committees. Considered the person most familiar with the intricate financial arrangements behind the scandal, Hakim detailed for the committees the disposition of some of the profits left over from the sale of U.S. arms to Iran --those that were not diverted to the Contras. Hakim said that the structure of front corporations and numbered bank accounts had become so intricate that even he, who had set it up, was often confused. The payment that attracted the most attention was \$200,000 in an account that Hakim said was set up for North's family shortly before North travelled to Teheran on a secret, unsuccessful mission to rescue U.S. hostages held in Lebanon. Hakim himself made no secret of the fact that he was motivated by profit.

6/8/87 Bretton Sciaroni, counsel to the President's Intelligence Oversight Board, testifies before the Congressional Committees. Sciaroni had written the legal opinion cited by White House officials, including President Reagan, to support their claim that the Boland amendment banning covert aid to the Contras did not apply to the NSC. The questions focused on his qualifications as a lawyer and the thoroughness of his investigation of Boland. Sciaroni admits that he had failed the California bar exam twice and the District of Columbia exam twice before passing the bar in Pennsylvania, where he had never lived or worked. He also acknowledges that his 1985 legal opinion, his first such project as attorney, was based on brief talks with North and NSC lawyer Cmdr. Paul Thompson, and on quick review of documents that Thompson said were sufficient.

- 6/8-9/87 Fawn Hall testifies before the Congressional Committees. She offers few new details about her role in the scandal. Hall defends her actions in altering, shredding, and smuggling out certain documents. "Sometimes you have to go above the written law," she said.
- 7/7-14/87 Lt. Col. Oliver North begins his long-awaited testimony before the House and Senate Committees, saying that he believes that all his activities as a member of the NSC staff from 1981 through 1986 had been authorized by his superiors. He admits deceiving Congress and misusing some funds from the sale of arms to Iran, but he cites national security and the safety of his family to justify those actions. North, testifying under a grant of immunity and under a complex agreement worked out with the committees, says that he never "personally discussed" the diversion of funds with Reagan, but had "assumed that the President was aware of what I was doing and had, through my superiors, approved it."
- 7/15-21/87 Rear Adm. John Poindexter tells Congressional panel that he never told the President about the diversion of funds from arms transactions with Iran to the Contra rebels fighting the Nicaraguan government. Poindexter says that he had authorized the controversial diversion and deliberately kept Reagan in the dark in order to "provide some future deniability for the President if it ever leaked out."
- 7/23-24/87 Secretary of State George Shultz testifies before the Congressional Committees that his strong opposition to the secret arms sales to Iran had sparked a "battle royal" and "guerilla warfare" within the White House. He angrily testifies that Poindexter, McFarlane and Casey had lied to him and withheld information from President Reagan in order to continue the Iranian initiative and ultimately protect themselves. Shultz denies charges that he had deliberately kept himself uninformed about details of the Iran operation and the covert effort to resupply the Contras, and then tried to distance himself from the policies once the scandal broke. He says he had argued strenuously against the arms sales and worked to try to end them from the inside.

- 7/28-29/87 Attorney General Edwin Meese defends his own brief probe of the Iran arms affair, telling the committees that funds from the arms sales to Iran had been diverted to the Contras, but admits that he had failed to ask some critical questions of key participants.
- 7/30-31/87 Former White House Chief of Staff Donald Regan testifies that when no hostages were released following a February 1986 shipment of arms to Iran, Reagan felt that "we'd been had."
- 7/31-8/3/87 Secretary of Defense Weinberger testifies before the Congressional panels that he had repeatedly tried to stop the arms sales to Iran and that he thought he had succeeded each time, only to discover that White House officials had deceived him in order to keep the operation going.
- 8/3/87 Joint Congressional Committees conclude the public segment of their hearings.
- 8/12/87 Responding to the recently concluded congressional hearings in a nationally broadcast address, President Reagan stated, "Our original initiative got all tangled up in the sale of arms, and the sale of arms got tangled up with the hostages. . . . I let my preoccupation with the hostages intrude into areas where it didn't belong."
- 11/17/87 The Joint Congressional Committees investigating the Iran-Contra arms scandal submit their final report.
- 3/11/88 McFarlane pleads guilty to four counts of withholding information from Congress.
- 3/16/88 Indictments returned against North, Poindexter, Hakim, and Secord.

APPENDIX B

PRESIDENT'S RESPONSE TO THE TOWER COMMISSION REPORT

Appendix B

President's response to the Tower Commission Report
Carried on network television March 4, 1987

My fellow Americans, I've spoken to you from this historic office on many occasions and about many things. The power of the Presidency is often thought to reside within this Oval Office. Yet it doesn't rest here; it rests in you, the American people, and in your trust.

Your trust is what gives a President his powers of leadership and his personal strength, and it's what I want to talk to you about this evening.

For the past three months, I've been sitting silent on the revelations about Iran. You must have been thinking, "Well, why doesn't he tell us what's happening? Why doesn't he just speak to us as he has in the past when we've faced troubles or tragedies?" Others of you, I guess, were thinking, "What is he doing hiding out in the White House?"

The reason I haven't spoken to you before now is this: You deserved the truth. And, as frustrating as the waiting has been, I felt it was improper to come to you with sketchy reports, or possibly even erroneous statements, which would then have to be corrected, creating even more doubt and confusion. There's been enough of that.

I've paid a price for my silence in terms of your trust and confidence. But I have had to wait, as have you, for the complete story.

That's why I appointed Ambassador David Abshire as my special counselor to help get out the thousands of documents to the various investigations. And I appointed a special review board, the Tower board, which took on the chore of pulling the truth together for me and getting to the bottom of things. It has now issued its findings.

I'm often accused of being an optimist, and it's true I had to hunt pretty hard to find any good news in the board's report. As you know, it's well-stocked with criticisms, which I'll discuss in a moment, but I was very relieved to read this sentence, ". . . The board is convinced that the President does indeed want the full story to be told."

And that will continue to be my pledge to you as the other investigations go forward.

I want to thank the members of the panel--former Senator John Tower, former Secretary of State Edmund Muskie, and former National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft. They have done the nation, as well as me personally, a great service by submitting a report of such integrity and depth. They have my genuine and enduring gratitude.

I've studied the board's report. Its findings are honest, convincing and highly critical, and I accept them. And tonight I want to share with you my thoughts on these findings and report to you on the actions I'm taking to implement the board's recommendations.

First, let me say I take full responsibility for my own

actions and for those of my Administration. As angry as I may be about activities undertaken without my knowledge, I am still accountable for those activities. As disappointed as I may be in some who served me, I am still the one who must answer to the American people for this behavior. And as personally distasteful as I find secret bank accounts and diverted funds, well, as the Navy would say, this happened on my watch.

Let's start with the part that is the most controversial. A few months ago I told the American people I did not trade arms for hostages. My heart and my best intentions still tell me that is true, but the facts and the evidence tell me it is not.

As the Tower board reported, what began as a strategic opening to Iran deteriorated in its implementation into trading arms for hostages. This runs counter to my own beliefs, to Administration policy and to the original strategy we had in mind. There are reasons why it happened but no excuses. It was a mistake.

I undertook the original Iran initiative in order to develop relations with those who might assume leadership in a post-Khomeini Government. It's clear from the board's report, however, that I let my personal concern for the hostages spill over into the geopolitical strategy of reaching out to Iran. I asked so many questions about the hostages' welfare that I didn't ask enough about the

specifics of the total Iran plan.

Let me say to the hostage families, we have not given up. We never will, and I promise you we'll use every legitimate means to free your loved ones from captivity. But I must also caution that those Americans who freely remain in such dangerous areas must know that they're responsible for their own safety.

Now, another major aspect of the Board's findings regards the transfer of funds to the Nicaraguan contras. The Tower board wasn't able to find out what happened to this money, so the facts here will be left to the continuing investigations of the court-appointed independent counsel and the two Congressional investigating committees. I'm confident the truth will come out about this matter as well.

As I told the Tower board, I didn't know about any diversion of funds to the contras. But as President, I cannot escape responsibility.

Much has been said about my management style, a style that's worked successfully for me during eight years as governor of California and for most of my presidency. The way I work is to identify the problem, find the right individuals to do the job and then let them go to it. I've found this invariably brings out the best in people. They seem to rise to their full capability, and in the long run you get more done.

When it came to managing the N.S.C. staff, let's face

it, my style didn't match its previous track record. I've already begun correcting this. As a start, yesterday I met with the entire professional staff of the National Security Council. I defined for them the values I want to guide the national security policies of this country. I told them that I wanted a policy that was as justifiable and understandable in public as it was in secret. I wanted a policy that reflected the will of the Congress as well as the White House. And I told them that there'll be no more freelancing by individuals when it comes to our national security.

You've heard a lot about the staff of the National Security Council in recent months. I can tell you, they are good and dedicated Government employees, who put in long hours for the nation's benefit. They are eager and anxious to serve their country.

One thing still upsetting me, however, is that no one kept proper records of meetings or decisions. This led to my failure to recollect whether I approved an arms shipment before or after the fact. I did approve it; I just can't say specifically when. Rest assured, there's plenty of record-keeping now going on at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

For nearly a week now, I've been studying the board's report. I want the American people to know that this wrenching ordeal of recent months has not been in vain. I endorse every one of the Tower board's recommendations. In

fact, I'm going beyond its recommendations, so as to put the house in even better order.

I'm taking action in three basic areas--personnel, national security policy and the process for making sure that the system works.

First, personnel. I've brought in an accomplished and highly respected new team here at the White House. They bring new blood, new energy, and new credibility and experience.

Former Senator Howard Baker, my new chief of staff, possesses a breadth of legislative and foreign affairs skills that's impossible to match. I'm hopeful that his experience as minority and majority leader of the Senate can help us forge a new partnership with the Congress, especially on foreign and national security policies. I'm genuinely honored that he's given up his own Presidential aspirations to serve the country as my chief of staff.

Frank Carlucci, my new national security adviser, is respected for his experience in government and trusted for his judgment and counsel. Under him, the N.S.C. staff is being rebuilt with proper management discipline. Already, almost half the N.S.C. professional staff is comprised of new people.

Yesterday I nominated William Webster, a man of sterling reputation, to be Director of the Central Intelligence Agency. Mr. Webster has served as Director of

the F.B.I. and as a U.S. District Court judge. He understands the meaning of "Rule of Law."

So that his knowledge of national security matters can be available to me on a continuing basis, I will also appoint John Tower to serve as a member of my Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board.

I am considering other changes in personnel, and I'll move more furniture as I see fit in the weeks and months ahead.

Second, in the area of national security policy, I have ordered the N.S.C. to begin a comprehensive review of all covert operations.

I have also directed that any covert activity be in support of clear policy objectives and in compliance with American values. I expect a covert policy that if Americans saw it on the front page of their newspaper, they'd say, "That makes sense."

I have had issued a directive prohibiting the N.S.C. staff itself from undertaking covert operations--no if's, and's or but's.

I have asked Vice President Bush to reconvene his task force on terrorism to review our terrorist policy in light of the events that have occurred.

Third, in terms of the process of reaching national security decisions, I am adopting in total the Tower report's model of how the N.S.C. process and staff should

work. I am directing Mr. Carlucci to take the necessary steps to make that happen. He will report back to me on further reforms that might be needed.

I've created the post of N.S.C. legal adviser to assure a greater sensitivity to matters of law.

I am also determined to make the Congressional oversight process work. Proper procedures for consultation with the Congress will be followed, not only in letter but in spirit.

Before the end of March I will report to the Congress on all the steps I've taken in line with the Tower board's conclusions.

Now what should happen when you make a mistake is this: You take your knocks, you learn your lessons and then you move on. That's the healthiest way to deal with a problem. This in no way diminishes the importance of the other continuing investigations, but the business of our country and our people must proceed. I've gotten this message from Republicans and Democrats in Congress, from allies around the world--and if we're reading the signals right, even from the Soviets. And, of course, I've heard the message from you, the American people.

You know, by the time you reach my age, you've made plenty of mistakes if you've live your life properly. So you learn. You put things in perspective. You pull your energies together. You change. You go forward.

My fellow Americans, I have a great deal that I want to accomplish with you and for you over the next two years, and, the Lord willing, that's exactly what I intend to do. Goodnight and God bless you.