President Reagan's Rhetorical War Against Nicaragua, 1981-1987

Donald Morton
Western Kentucky University

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.wku.edu/theses

Part of the American Politics Commons, Journalism Studies Commons, Latin American Languages and Societies Commons, Mass Communication Commons, Political History Commons, Social Influence and Political Communication Commons, Speech and Rhetorical Studies Commons, and the United States History Commons

Recommended Citation
https://digitalcommons.wku.edu/theses/2669

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by TopSCHOLAR®. It has been accepted for inclusion in Masters Theses & Specialist Projects by an authorized administrator of TopSCHOLAR®. For more information, please contact topscholar@wku.edu.
Morton,
Donald J.
1992
PRESIDENT REAGAN'S RHETORICAL WAR

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the Department of
Communications and Broadcasting
Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green, Kentucky

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by Donald J. Morton
July 1992
AUTHORIZATION FOR USE OF THESIS

Permission is hereby

☒ granted to the Western Kentucky University Library to make, or allow to be made photocopies, microfilm or other copies of this thesis for appropriate research for scholarly purposes.

☐ reserved to the author for the making of any copies of this thesis except for brief sections for research or scholarly purposes.

Signed: 

Date: 10th July 1992

Please place an "X" in the appropriate box.

This form will be filed with the original of the thesis and will control future use of the thesis.

Date Recommended 7-17-92

Larry Fleming
Director of Thesis

Dr. Dale R. Wochlande

Judith S. Hoover

Date Approved August 7, 1992

Dean of the Graduate College
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 1 Background</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review of literature</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 2 Rhetorical Exigencies</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical background</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The &quot;Great Communicator&quot;</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Window dressing: Role of the media.</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 3 Semi-Covert War</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhetorical exigencies surrounding appeal</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main arguments--counter evidence</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metaphoric analysis</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dramatistic analysis</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reactions and conclusions</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 4 Not So Secret War</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhetorical exigencies surrounding appeal</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main arguments--counter evidence</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metaphoric analysis</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dramatistic analysis</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reactions and conclusions</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABSTRACT

The Reagan administration launched a two term campaign to win support for the Contra rebels fighting Nicaragua. The rhetorical war began in secrecy and ended in scandal. With Reagan's reputation as a "great communicator" and the priority he assigned to the Contra cause it seemed surprising to find virtually nothing on the topic in a search of the communication journals through mid 1992.

The central research question of this thesis is whether President Reagan used rhetorical strategies and similar depictions to other presidents in his prowar rhetoric against Nicaragua. A common theme of war rhetoric is the dehumanizing of the enemy in order to justify retaliation and to deflect the
attention of the audience away from the realities of war. Robert Ivie, using Burke's dramatistic analysis, found over a hundred and fifty years of presidential rhetoric a predictable pattern of justifications for war. He found motives for war arranged in a hierarchy with "rights" as the primary god-term for purpose. Before a textual evaluation this study reviewed the history of the region the role of the rhetor and of the media.

The data included a computer scan covering all of Reagan's statements on Nicaragua (59,000 words), a brief overview of 45 speeches and a detailed examination of three nationally televised speeches. The television speeches were analyzed in light of the following:

a) Rhetorical exigencies surrounding the appeal were researched.

b) Key players in the drama and their effect on the rhetoric were reviewed.

c) Main arguments and counter-evidence were related to the speeches.

d) A metaphoric analysis was conducted with particular emphasis on mega-images.

e) Identification strategies in Burkeian terms were applied to the speeches.

f) The speeches were subjected to a pentadic analysis to determine ratios and their relationship to motive.

g) The effects were reviewed in terms of the press, Congress and polls.
Summary

(A) The press overwhelmingly supported Reagan’s strategy and arguments.

(B) Public opinion polls showed a consistent 2:1 opposition to Reagan’s policies and Congress only once supported aid to the Contras.

(C) There were significant shifts in Reagan’s rhetorical strategy over the years.

(D) Mega-images were the central feature of Reagan’s rhetoric.

(E) There were significant breaks with Ivie’s conclusions particularly the replacement of “rights” with “freedom” as the primary purpose term. I also found a reversal of the primary purpose/agency ratio to agency/purpose. All other elements of the pentad are consubstantiated by their degree of conformity with the primary agency/purpose ratio. There was strong confirmation with Ivie’s conclusions that presidential justifications for war form terministic screens that block out reality for the audience.

(F) My results show that in spite of great communication skills and a sympathetic media, Reagan lost the rhetorical war because the rhetoric simply did not fit reality. Virtually the whole world and most of the American people supported the Sandinista’s view of reality and not Reagan’s.
Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

"The Contras are the moral equivalent of our founding fathers." 
President Ronald Reagan.

"The important thing is to tell a big lie and keep telling it." 
Joseph Goebbels, Hitler's Propaganda Chief.

Waging peace in a world reeling from conflict is a massive project and primarily a rhetorical task. Powers seeking war as the solution to conflict increasingly recognize "hearts and minds" of people as the first battleground to capture. Waging peace requires a comprehensive understanding of prowar rhetoric and could result in lessons on how some of the proven rhetorical tools in prowar rhetoric might be used to build a more peaceful world.

For the first 31 years of life I lived under South Africa's siege mentality and witnessed the growing war against South Africa's Black majority and its neighbors. The government, using state owned and controlled mass media, built an ongoing war psychosis, fueling old hatreds for generations to come. As a refugee to the U.S. arriving in 1971 when the debate about American involvement in the Vietnam war peaked, and since then witnessing several covert and overt American military operations, I remain a keen student of prowar rhetoric. A phrase commonly heard amongst Afrikaner white youth in
South Africa is: "Een man se brood is die ander man se doot." Literally translated that means one man’s bread is another man’s death. For centuries, that metaphor provided the ultimate justification for genocide against Black people.

Prowar rhetoric emerges throughout history as provocative and volatile. One man’s terrorist is another man’s hero. To the Romans Jesus was a seditionist, to his followers a Saviour. To the British government Ghandi was an agitator, to the people of India a great man of peace. For almost half a century Nelson Mandela was the most hated "terrorist" in South Africa, to the majority of the rest of the world he deserved the Nobel Peace Prize. To the Sandinistas, the Contras were murderers - to the Reagan administration, the moral equivalent of "our founding fathers."

In colonial histories, such depictions of reality converge through powerful images that carry in their wake notions, feelings and judgments in order to white-wash one side’s view of reality. To most whites, Washington, Jefferson, Jackson and Lincoln constitute the founding fathers but, to Blacks and Native Americans they neither fathered nor founded America. Washington owned slaves, Jackson held racist attitudes, and even Lincoln believed in the innate inferiority of Blacks. Jefferson fathered a child by his slave and sold the child into slavery (Borman, E. (1971), quoting Susan B. Anthony’s "No Union with Slave owners.") Some things have not changed with time. New immigrants coming to the United States in the 1980’s received a booklet to study entitled
"Twenty five lessons in citizenship" by D.C. Hennesy. It describes Native Americans as "wandering savages who did nothing to develop this great country." Some ugly images justify old wars even in new ages.

The Reagan administration mounted an unprecedented rhetorical campaign to win support for the Contras in Nicaragua, lasting through two presidential terms. The ongoing campaign bore many consequences. The American position strained relationships with European allies who consistently voted against the United States at the United Nations. The American position toward Nicaragua profoundly affected America's relations with other third world countries. Growing mistrust of American intentions posed serious misgivings as a result of prior support for Anastasia Samoza in Nicaragua, Salazar in Portugal, the Shah in Iran, "Baby Doc" Duvalier in Haiti, Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines and the white government in South Africa. President Reagan defied congressional restraints, ignored the World Court decision which found the United States guilty of violating international law and eschewed public opinion polls. Given the wide ranging consequences of the President's use of office as pulpit for the Contra cause for so long, it is surprising to find no study on Nicaragua in any of the communication journals according to the latest Matlon index, and reviewing Today's Speech, Southern Speech Communication Journal, Communication Monographs, Central States Speech Journal, Western Speech, Speech Monographs, and Central States Speech Journal from 1981 to May 1992. This thesis fills part of the vacuum.
METHODOLOGY

By reviewing the historical roots of the Nicaraguan conflict, we gain a deeper understanding of the causes and fears that permeated the period under scrutiny. President Reagan constantly and consistently posed the Nicaraguan question in terms of East versus West, superpower politics. One could easily be swayed into viewing the issues in those terms especially when focusing primarily on American interests and Reagan's speeches. Given the fact that we usually find two sides in every war, I will place the battle within the framework of an objective historical background by listening sensitively for the "other side" of the story (see chapter two).

The source credibility of the chief conveyor of the message is vital in any persuasive situation. The actor who depicts the drama of war is even more crucial to the outcome. A section of the study will analyze the peculiar strengths and weaknesses of Ronald Reagan, the "Great Communicator" (see chapter two).

At times, Reagan used the media very effectively to depict his version of the enemy. At other times the media seemed to subvert his plans and he blamed them for lack of public support of his Central American policies. In fact, the media have played an increasingly vital role in modern war times. Because media coverage in the case of Nicaragua proved crucial to both sides, a separate section (see chapter two) will focus on the media's role.
Reagan delivered 45 speeches and issued dozens of statements to garner public, congressional and international support for the Contras. These presidential messages spanning six years serve as raw material for this thesis providing the data base for descending frequency charts (see pg. 13) and for the general conclusions. Additionally, I will highlight three speeches that seem to serve as defining moments over the six year span.

I will dissect the landmark speeches with the use of a number of rhetorical instruments:

(A) The three most important speeches (carried on television) will be examined within the framework of existing war rhetoric theory and concepts.

(B) These three speeches will then be intertwined with events, depictions, justifications, polls and media coverage in order to place rhetorical events within context in what I call rhetorical drama charts.

(C) The three key speeches will be subjected to a metaphoric analysis using the mega-image lens to focus on motivational strategies.

(D) The key speeches will be analyzed using Burke's dramatistic analysis to determine whether there is a uniform vocabulary of motives in presidential justifications for war and whether such motives coincided with or conflicted with Ivie's hierarchy of vocabulary (Ivie, 1972).

Existing war rhetoric theory and concepts are dealt with under review of literature. Rhetorical drama charts and metaphoric mega-images, however, need further explanation.
Rhetorical Drama Chart

Key speeches will be fixed within the framework of other significant developments and events occurring more or less simultaneously. This broadening framework balances our perspective by recognizing the ripple effect of other significant events. Many of the events seem to set the stage for the next act in the drama. To the seasoned observer there is a sense of de ja vu. The degree to which Ronald Reagan and the C.I.A. staged the whole drama became clear only as this study unfolded. That rhetorical insight could easily have been overlooked had the study focused only on Reagan’s speeches. In fact, Reagan only mentioned the C.I.A. once in 59,000 words. This revelation of how "reality" can be distorted presents students of rhetoric a particularly important watchdog function. We have a duty towards the profession to say whether the "King" is clothed or not. A broad view of the exigencies surrounding the rhetoric might be called a rhetorical drama chart. In October, 1983, the following bore important relationships to each other.

* The military leaders of Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras (all created historically by American intervention) meet with Panamanian dictator Manuel Noriega and head of the United States Army Southern Command, General Paul Gorman. The "generals" reactivated the old anti-Cuban alliance, CONDECA, the Central American Defense Council. It was upon their "request" that Grenada would soon be invaded (Washington Post, October 15, 1983).

* Two days later, naval commandos attacked Nicaragua in high-speed boats
supplied by the C.I.A., blew up an Atlantic coast port in Nicaragua and burned 324,000 gallons of fuel.

* The same day, the five Central American heads of state, the Contadora group, put forth a 21 point peace plan. The next day eight fuel storage tanks at the port of Corinto ended up destroyed along with Nicaragua’s coffee exports (New York Times, 10/16/83).

* On October 20, the House of Representatives voted for the second time in less than three months to cut all United States aid for groups fighting the Nicaraguan government. The following day the Contras launched a "dollars for freedom" campaign in the United States. The Nicaraguan Foreign Minister presented the Reagan administration with their own peace proposals, basically endorsing the Contadora proposals (New York Times, 10/21/83). The next day, the United States rejected the peace treaties calling them deficient and containing "anti United States polemics" (New York Times, 10/22/83). The following day, the military leaders of the recently reactivated CONDECA met to discuss plans for joint military action against Nicaragua (New York Times, 10/23/83).

* On October 25, 1983, 1,900 American troops invaded Grenada, only one week after the strange assassination of socialist oriented Prime Minister Maurice Bishop (New York Times, 10/25/83). The same day 50,000 people rallied in Managua to protest the United States invasion of Grenada. The day after, on October 26, the U.S. cast the only negative vote, vetoing a United
Nation Security Council resolution "deeply deploring the foreign armed intervention in Grenada" (New York Times, 10/26/83). At the end of the month the United States sent nine combat ships with 5000 men and 80 planes to Caribbean waters on a "no notice" military exercise.

* The only comments made by the President about Nicaragua during this tumultuous two week period included his defense of the C.I.A.'s activities, when he said: "I think covert actions have been a part of government and a part of government's responsibilities as long as there has been government" (Reagan, 1983c).

* The latter half of October the C.I.A. training manual, prepared and used by the C.I.A. to train the Contras, became public. The manual clearly advocated assassination. The C.I.A. advised "Selective use of violence for propaganda effects. It is possible to neutralize carefully selected and planned targets, such as court judges, mesta judges, police and state security officials.... Professional criminals will be hired to bring about uprisings or shootings, which will cause the death of one or more persons" (Psychological Operations and Guerrilla Warfare. C.I.A. manual for Nicaraguan Contras Fall, 1983). The publicity surrounding the manual damaged, at least temporarily, the depiction of the Contras as the moral equivalent of our founding fathers.

On the evening of October 27, 1983, President Reagan addressed the nation on television concerning the events in Grenada. The speech produced an immediate surge in approval of the invasion, jumping to 65% from 52% two
days before. Over the next two weeks as students returned with stories of relief at being rescued, public support for the invasion continued to rise and peaked at over 70%. The swing was very significant. Within one week approval rose from 46% to 71% (LeoGrande, 1987).

The Grenada invasion produced a clear "rally around the flag" effect. The public’s rating of Reagan’s handling of foreign affairs jumped from 42% to 55%. This increased confidence translated into greater public confidence in the way Reagan was handling his job as President from a positive rating of 52% to 63%.

However, like the surge in public support for President Ford at the time of the Mayaguez incident and for President Carter when American hostages were first seized in Iran, the "rally around" effect proved to be short lived. Approval of Reagan’s handling of the situation in Central America swelled from a pre-invasion rating of 29% to a peak of 40% in November, 1983. By December approval fell back to 30% and disapproval rose to 64% (LeoGrande, Fig. 2.46). A Harris poll showed ratings for Reagan’s handling of the situation in Central America in the American Latino community exactly opposite to others, from a poor rating of 24% to 42% one month later. Perhaps Latinos could not identify with the flag as strongly, or perhaps they were more aware of the consequences of previous American invasions in Latin America.

As the preceding example illustrates, by spreading the information gathering net wider than a ceremonial speech one gains valuable insights into
the overall "sitz en lieben" and the ways various depictions of "reality" are caught in the ripple effect of other co-occurring events. Having seen the importance of the big picture we turn to the next stage in the methodology.

Metaphoric Analysis

Metaphors and the power they wield in prowar rhetoric hold the key to understanding basic strategies and motives in enemy depiction. Language plays a fundamental role in the structuring of experience. Social realities are constituted, cemented and reified for new generations of the community through words and images. Indeed metaphor becomes a major socializing vehicle in society. "Kaffir" for example, the South African equivalent of "nigger" means "non believer." That image carried through from generation to generation, forming a fundamental building block for a racist society.

Metaphors act as "frames" of reference, framing the world in a particular way. This framing technique is subtle in that it reflects old pre-existing notions (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). The "enduring" quality of certain metaphors is precisely what makes it so difficult to debunk old images. "Black is beautiful," for example was a conscious attempt to reverse the negative topoi of meanings commonly associated with black metaphors.

The ability of metaphors to highlight certain aspects of a situation is so strong that the metaphors hide other aspects of the situation that may be just as important. Thus, metaphors are not just stylistic devices in language, they actually structure experience.
Enemies viewed through metaphoric lenses become just that, enemies. By metaphoric depiction we describe them as enemy and in our responses we reiterate the original depiction. This self-fulfilling prophecy phenomenon functions with freight train force when using metaphoric language in war situations. Metaphors, in other words, present a reductionist, simplistic view of the world. The images are stereotypical oversimplifications of reality. A metaphoric depiction of reality tends to screen "in" only that which confirms pre-existing beliefs and perceptions and screen "out" those which clash with previous expectations.

Osborn (1976) has argued that the most important metaphors should be named archetypal metaphors. Archetypal metaphors carry certain defining characteristics:

(a) They are especially popular.
(b) They transcend time and culture.
(c) They are grounded in prominent human experiences like death and sex.
(d) They express people’s quest for power.
(e) They carry enormous persuasive potency.
(f) They motivate people to act in favor of the speaker.
(g) They occupy important positions in the speech structure, especially ceremonial speeches and at times of crisis.
(h) They are chosen when a speaker wishes to effect crucial changes or
speak to audiences beyond his/her own people and be remembered for a speech beyond his/her lifetime.

In seeking ways to describe the core images initiated by "overarching" metaphors Osborn described archetypal metaphors while Ivie (1972) described metaphorical topoi. Both prescribe certain limits on our ability to develop the full meanings and impact of these primary metaphors.

The limits of topoi lie in the fact that the concept is linear or one dimensional. The meanings ascribed to the word refer to "metaphorical reservoir from which rhetorical statements can be generalized, in other words associative clusters" (Ivie 1986). The concept is too general to be helpful. Ivie’s primary recurring metaphors for "enemy" in pro-war rhetoric over the last 40 years have been "savage" and "Soviet." Both these terms will diminish in importance in the pro-war metaphoric world. Modern nations in a post-communist world will find it much more difficult to describe the enemy. Those two labels which brought the strangest of bedfellows together against common enemies no longer apply as we approach the mid-nineties.

One of the most unexpected results of the descending frequency word count conducted on the entire text was finding the metaphor "savage" completely missing. The word "savageness" appeared once in 59,000 words counted. Even the supporting "decivilizing vehicles" barely appeared with no references in the categories of "savage," "animals," "primitive," "machines," and few references for others like "mentally disturbed" and "natural menace."
for god-term images and devil-term images to depict the enemy revealed that "freedom," "democracy" and "peace" dominated as opposed to the enemy terms like "Communist," "force" and "terrorist." A frequency rating of ten is considered high. For example, the common word "state" appeared 44 times. The following chart gives totals for all 59,000 words.

The Frequency Count Summary Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Devil Mega-Images</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COMMUNIST</td>
<td>700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Soviet, Cuban, Marxist, Red, Moscow)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FORCE</td>
<td>1,119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Fight, Revolution, Subvert, Attack, Threat)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TERRORIST</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Terror, Tyranny, Murderers, Brutal, Libya)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>God Mega-Images</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DEMOCRACY</td>
<td>721</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Democratic, Rights, Humanitarian, Independent)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FREEDOM</td>
<td>921</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Free, Liberty, Freedom Fighter, Security)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEACE</td>
<td>469</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Reconciliation, Justice, Law and Order)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"Mega-image" depicts the meanings ascribed to devil-terms "Communist," "force" and "terrorist" and their opposite god-terms "democracy," "freedom"
and "peace" more clearly than topoi like savage or Osborn's archetypal metaphor dark-light. A more applicable term is mega-image. The term Mega-images fulfills the following criteria:

(a) Mega-images are connected to the dominant ideology of the audience and use jargon popular during that period (thus allowing for variance).

(b) Mega-images carry powerful persuasive impact because they function in the Burkian sense of identification.

(c) Mega-images lend themselves to broad understanding, carry many satellite meanings in their wake and are easily reinforced by other supporting metaphors.

(d) Mega-images describe recurring patterns and are used frequently during times of war.

(e) Mega-images make good "sound bytes" on the evening news.

The power of these primal images to paint the enemy as bad and us as good becomes obvious. One of the ways of describing the value of looking at war rhetoric through the methodological eye of mega-image is the metaphor "lens".

Reduced to a single sentence Reagan's mega-image said; "The Sandanistas are communist agents who threaten, along with international terrorists, democracy, freedom and peace in our world."

Ivie (1987) writes: "I begin with the premise that metaphor is at the base of rhetorical invention. Elaborating a primary image into a well formed
argument produces a motive or interpretation of reality, with which the intended audience is invited to identify. In the most important uses of metaphor a term (or vehicle) from one domain of meaning acts upon a subject from another domain. The value of locating underlying master metaphors is in revealing their limits or untapped potential as sources of invention" (p. 167). He outlines five basic steps for identifying key metaphors.

(1) Familiarize oneself with the speaker's text and context. Attempt to create a sense of the complete experience before attending to its particulars by gathering a broad sample of speeches, counter speeches, audience reactions, then probing the material by consulting histories, theories and previous works on the subject.

(2) Mark selected texts to identify vehicles used by the speaker. Word processing equipment and computers make it easy to identify and file in context.

(3) Arrange major metaphors into subgroups with supporting clusters of words.

(4) Create a separate file for each metaphorical concept.

(5) Concept files are analyzed one-by-one for patterns of usage within the clusters.

Dramatistic Analysis

No matter how intense the face meaning of a metaphor, nor how many times it appears, the most important meaning may lie in the dialectical
relationship of these elements to one other. Kenneth Burke (1951) wrote that the "key term for the old rhetoric was persuasion and its stress was upon deliberate design. The key term for the new rhetoric would be identification." To paraphrase Burke, one who "identifies" with someone else becomes consubstantial with that person. People have common sensations, concepts, images, ideas, beliefs that make them consubstantial with each other (p. 204). Thus in the first place identification involves identity or a uniqueness, and consubstantiating involves substance or its essence. Such notions have powerful applications. A body of separated individuals can be united in spirit. In order to sanction war, a President can attempt to promote audience identification with the nation's mission or ideals. In an article on the fundamental assumptions of Burke's critical method Marie Nichols (1968) said: "Identification may take place in principle or through the whole range of properties and interests with which things get themselves connected. Persuasion involves communication by the signs of consubstantiality". This conceptual understanding of Burke's rationale is essential to understanding Burke's own "dramatistic pentad" and Ivie's use of Burke to describe his "victimage ritual." Insights gleaned through Burke's methodology allows us to get "inside" the rhetoric, inside the scramble of speech writers, polls, nonverbals, methods of appeal and identification. Burke tells us not simply what symbols do in communication but how they do it. A dramatistic approach allows us to relate mega-images and their reinforcing metaphors to the
exigencies of the rhetorical situation.

In assessing motive, Burke (1973) defined five elements, or a pentad of key terms: what happened (Act); where or when (Scene); who did it (Agent); how (Agency); and why (Purpose). These five elements of the pentad are connected to one another by varying internal relationships. One element is sometimes emphasized by another, juxtaposed by another, or even subsumed by another. Burke viewed all human conduct as drama and maintained that history could be viewed as a play. When describing this drama, people use the five elements defined by the pentad to emphasize their perceptions or to reflect their view of the situation.

Ling (1974) offered two roles for pentadic analysis. First, the pentad is a useful tool in content analysis, providing a method for determining how a speaker views the world. Second, pentadic analysis reveals what the speaker considers an appropriate response to the situation. One who sees the Agent as a victim of the Scene in a slum situation is likely to propose solutions that change the scene (new housing).

Out of all the statements and speeches given by Reagan three were selected because of the importance of the exigencies at that time and because the medium of prime time television allowed exposure of the persuasive message to the largest possible public audience.
Selection of Speeches

The early years of involvement were clandestine so there were few speeches on Nicaragua. The President’s only remarks came in response to questions from the press about the extent of United States’ involvement. Reagan gave the first speech in 1982 on Nicaragua to the Organization of American States in February where he was booed. Reagan conveyed nothing more either to Congress or the nation until April 27, 1983. The administration managed to implement its own policies via the CIA for three years, barely discussing the issue with the American people or Congress. That would soon change as leaks of CIA involvement emerged. The following chronology reveals the unleashing of a rhetorical war that would escalate and be relentless for the next four years:

1983

April 27  First Nationwide Speech
June 30  Cuban Expatriates
July 18  AFL-CIO
August 12  Radio to Nation

1984

January 20  Radio to Nation
March 30  Radio to Nation
April 13  Radio to Nation
May 9  First Nationwide TV
July 18  Outreach Private Group
July 26  Speech to Catholics
September 6  B’nai B’rith
1985

April 5       Radio to Nation
April 15     "Friends of the Americas"
April 16     Second Nationwide TV
April 19     Radio to Nation
June 14      Radio to Nation
December 20  Radio to Nation

1986

January 4    Radio to Nation
February 6   First Message to Congress
February 22  Radio to Nation
February 25  Second Message to Congress
March 3      Private Sector Supporters
March 5      American Jewish Organizations
March 8      Radio to Nation
March 11     Regional Press Representatives
March 15     Radio to Nation
March 16     Third Nationwide TV
March 19     Third Message to Congress
March 21     Private Sector Supporters
March 22     Radio to Nation
March 22     Heritage Foundation
March 22     Fourth Message to Congress
May 21       Private Republican Fund Raising Dinner
May 23       Fifth Message to Congress
June 9       Center for Strategic Studies
July 5       Radio to Nation
August 5     Knights of Columbus
October     Hasenfus Shot Down
November 15  Radio to Nation
November     Iran/Contra Scandal Starts to Unfold

1987

Reagan finally conceded defeat on Contra aid.

This study will take a detailed look at the three main television speeches to the nation, and significant shifts in the rhetoric found in the 44 other speeches to the public, Congress and to private network groups.
Review of Literature

Presidential Rhetoric

Prowar rhetoric in this study builds on the theoretical foundations laid down by earlier scholars of presidential rhetoric. For decades rhetorical scholarship focused on the President's constitutional and political power as chief executive. Presidential power sought through public opinion received little attention. Then 30 years ago Richard Neustadt (1960) published a benchmark volume Presidential Power: The Politics of Leadership which soon took its proper place alongside Corwin's The President: Office and Powers and Rossiter's The American Presidency in the bookcase of classics on presidential rhetoric. Neustadt's perspective sparked a number of studies exploring the concept of persuasion further, especially in Presidential Studies Quarterly and in a more recent book by George C. Edwards III, The Public Presidency: The Pursuit of Popular Support (1983). In the 1980's the nature of the presidency underwent a significant shift in function and emphasis from a constitutional administrative office to a rhetorical office. The shift in emphasis was due to:

1) modern activism of the presidency
2) television availability to the president
3) the modern presidential campaign (Ceasar, Windt, Ingold et al. 1981). Hart subsequently reemphasized the point that a president's success increasingly depends on the power to persuade and communicate (Hart 1984).

The Speech Communication Association established a task force in 1979 on presidential communication, "to examine presidential rhetoric as a means
through which a chief executive executes the powers of his office...". Sidney Blumenthal published *The Permanent Campaign* (1980) in which he argued that persuasion is central to governing and that campaigning techniques have now merged with methods of governing. Two major works surfaced in 1981, Chagal’s *The New Kingmakers* and Sabato’s *The Rise of Political Consultants* (1981). They examined the expert use of modern communication technologies behind presidential campaigning and rhetoric. They contended a transformation in the presidency in function and emphasis from a constitutional, administrative office to an executive rhetorical office.

Theodore Windt, Jr., (1984) surveyed and summarized progress in the field of presidential rhetoric. He performed an invaluable service for scholars of presidential rhetoric by listing the most pertinent critical studies bearing on presidential rhetoric from 1961-1984. Windt made two interesting observations about the field. First, *Presidential Studies Quarterly* was seldom screened by rhetorical scholars. He asserted "they (*Presidential Studies Quarterly*) have assumed the leadership from communications journals in publishing essays in this area of study." Second, Windt’s listing did not include campaign rhetoric, even though about half of the articles in the communication journals covered campaign rather than governing rhetoric. Windt listed the articles under the headings of inaugural addresses, crisis speeches, movement studies, genre studies, biographical studies and miscellaneous. Other significant gaps and imbalances also emerged. Half of the essays in speech
communication journals since the 1960's analyzed only single speeches. This left the field of presidential rhetoric wide open and called for further study. Windt concluded that presidential rhetoric has yet to be vigorously investigated. It should be noted that war rhetoric was not even mentioned as a topic worthy of serious study at that stage (Windt, 1984).

Windt highlighted other peculiar gaps in the literature. Kennedy, for example, whose rhetorical prowess is often celebrated, hardly warranted any analysis in the journals. No scholar studied the Bay of Pigs rhetoric, for example, or how Kennedy treated the Berlin crisis. Nothing appeared on how Nixon's staunch anti-communist rhetoric "opened" the door to China.

Windt concluded (p. 108-109) that several questions needed research in future studies of presidential rhetoric:

1) What role does the rhetorical nature of the presidency play in the office? Especially important in this regard is the question of how should a President persuade, given how partisan concerns may interfere with critical detachment? This thesis addresses that question with particular emphasis on whether Reagan's rhetoric furthered or hindered the democratic process.

2) What is the nature of presidential ethos? What expectations are aroused from the person in that office? What unique characteristics does Reagan, for example, bring to the White House? Windt asked "Are there persistent and typical rhetorical methods developed during his pre-presidential career that form a predictable form of presidential style?" This study takes a
detailed view of the rhetor Ronald Reagan, the "Great Communicator".

3) How and to what extent do the modern presidency and the media feed each other, or how do media and president influence one another to create the reality or unreality in which decisions are made? This thesis analyzes the role of the media in the rhetorical war throughout Reagan’s two terms of office.

4) What is the nature of contemporary political language and how does the creation of new phrases and words affect our perceptions of issues? By utilizing the concept of mega-images as a rhetorical lens and Burke’s dramatistic analysis method this thesis seeks to answer the question of how.

Foreign Policy Rhetoric

Wander (1984), in an article on foreign policy, said, "American foreign policy protects us against reality, obfuscating important matters by language like 'Defending the Free World,' 'protecting our National Security' and 'countering the communist menace,' thereby encouraging some of the most disturbing events in American history." Wander also stated that such rhetoric forms part of a ritual wherein government officials represent foreign policy to the people (p. 399). He suggested that a full understanding of the rhetoric of American foreign policy must take into account: (a) the ceremonial nature of the rhetoric, (b) its function in domestic politics as revealed by the main arguments used, (c) the facts behind the language (p. 352). Using Wander’s suggestions I will seek to define the ceremonial nature of the rhetoric, pay attention to the various audiences Reagan addressed and seek out the "other"
side of the story in search of the "facts" behind the language.

Depicting the nation as the birthplace of liberty chosen by God with a divine mission to spread this blessing automatically implied that a stand against the flag meant a stand against God. The story can only have two sides, the right and the wrong side; there can be no middle ground in this scenario and appeasement or negotiations with the Evil Empire betray a sign of surrender and restrict public debate. As Wander said, "How can one argue with God’s will?" (Wander, p. 344). Posing the issue as right or wrong produces a "rally 'round the flag" effect. It also means that the price paid for and consequences of war are abstractly termed (strategic hamlets, surgical strikes) and the human cost and dimension get lost in the diversion of our attention by the oversimplified metaphors of good and bad.

Wander added an interesting insight into foreign policy during times of crisis. "Nations" he said, "are personified in official statements." For example "they act morally and immorally, they use force, they violate one another’s rights." "The United States is the manifestation of Truth, Justice and Freedom," and an instrument for God’s purpose (p.353). America’s spiritual and moral superiority attributed virtues to the nation which found expression in foreign policy rhetoric. Wander (1984) called this "prophetic dualism" (p. 342). During periods of national crisis, piety is prominent and patriotism almost the law (p. 343). With God on America’s side, it is hard to argue otherwise, which tends to stifle public debate. "Because of this," Wander said, "foreign
policy rhetoric's connection with real issues may be overlooked" (p. 357).

War Rhetoric

A review of the literature suggests few conclusions about the basic structure of war rhetoric, particularly the vocabulary of motives in presidential justifications for war. Most studies have focussed on presidential war appeals analyzing the basic arguments, organizational patterns, delivery style and effects of the war appeals.

Deutsche, cited in Ivie (1972), defined a series of recurring images in war rhetoric as, (a) images of necessity (there will always be wars), (b) limited just wars, (c) war as the last resort, (d) war as obsolescent, (e) war as an historical necessity, (f) holy war, (g) war as failure of control (p. 9).

Other investigators have described particular American themes for war. Ritter and Andrews (1978) described the birth of an American ethos, the weaning of America from Britain by the patriotic forefathers denouncing British brutality. By virtue of Britain's moral bankruptcy America became the new home of Liberty, thus creating a new American ethos (p. 7).

Ritter and Andrews (1978) traced the origins of the American national identity showing how the original orators portrayed the British nation as bankrupt and America as the new home of liberty. Thus, America became the promised land, a rising empire and the home of liberty. The concepts of empire and liberty became virtually interchangeable in a nation reserved by God for His chosen people.
The historical development of the growing American empire is never separated from the notion that this new nation had exclusive rights on the meaning and practice of freedom. This "peculiar heritage" makes America unique among all nations, the justifier and final arbitrator of right and wrong. The "price" for God’s "chosen" means carrying the responsibilities for protecting freedom everywhere. This relationship between gift and responsibility with America as the birthplace of freedom in her first Revolution, extends to her standing as an example of freedom in the nineteenth century, continues as world champion of freedom in the twentieth century and as protector of the democratic world against communism’s "evil empire" during the cold war. That basic theme provided the justification for several imperialist wars.

John Dower (1986), a professor of Japanese Studies, provided a detailed study of how the imagery of savagery influenced warfare in the Pacific. He sought to demonstrate that stereotyped, racist thinking led to exterminationist policies that justified Hiroshima. He used the remarks of military and civilian leaders and the work of cartoonists, film makers, war correspondents, social scientists and song writers (p. 11). Dower observed the enemy was depicted as sub-human, inhuman and/or superhuman beings, through the images of monkey, ape, dog, rat, rattlesnake and cockroach. Such depictions softened the killing process through the metaphor of the hunt and the extermination of the vermin (p. 89). When underestimation turned to Western defeat and retreat
the sub-human "Jap" suddenly emerged as a superhuman that could be
defeated only by total annihilation.

Just as the beastly images contributed to the savagery of the fighting
and produced psychic numbing, they proved malleable enough after Americas
victory over Japan to foster an amicable postwar relationship. The treacherous
monkeymen were transformed into the clever, domesticated pet (p. 302).
Finally, Dower argued that the distorted perceptions of the enemy were
"archetypical images" rooted in centuries of Western stereotypes applied to
non-white races.

Robert L. Ivie has contributed several important articles to the study of
war rhetoric compared to other scholars. His work deepens our understanding
of a field barely covered in rhetorical studies and gives us a working/theoretical
framework around which to dissect war rhetoric. Ivie’s Ph.D thesis could be
summed up, in one phrase:

National images lie at the root of a state’s definition of crisis
situations and play a significant role in the complex process
leading to war" at the heart of this strategy is the metaphor
savagery which establishes the basic interpretive set of
assumptions. The image of savagery is constantly reintroduced
through decivilizing vehicles, thus drawing upon the archetypal

Soviets are described, for example, as "menace," "animals," "primitive,"
"machines," "criminals," "mentally disturbed," "ideologue" and "satanic" (p.
345). Thus, it is what we think the world is like, not what it is really like, that
influences our behavior. Ivie added that these perceptions create national images perpetuated in social structures such as the family and school as well as in recorded history. These images then become ingrained in the national consciousness and contribute to the way a nation approaches war.

Ivie's methodology, based on Burke's dramatism, locates recurring patterns in the definition of war situations. Important terms and important pentadic ratios are located in the hierarchy of motives. For each recurring pattern, Ivie identified significant clusters of "God-terms" and "devil-terms." This "synthesized vocabulary contains motives arranged in a definite hierarchy with 'rights' at the pinnacle as the primary God-term for Purpose, with 'law' and 'democracy' as secondary God-terms for Agency. Only through the agencies of law and democracy can rights such as freedom be made secure" (p. 340).

Presidents not only justify war through positive terms such as rights, democracy, law and civilization, they also seek to justify their positions by characterizing their adversaries in directly opposite negative terms such as tyrannical, lawless, and uncivilized. The strategy, according to Ivie, is to debunk the ideology of the enemy and to glorify American political philosophy as the only acceptable secular faith available for a decent nation to adopt. American presidents consistently perceive war situations as a challenge to American ideals and a moral crisis (p. 332).

Ivie concluded that each of the images of purpose, agency, agent, scene,
and act constitute a dangerously rigid stipulation in the American definition of the justifiable causes for war. This reductionist tendency toward a moralistic and idealistic definition of war directs attention away from the more objective determinations of crisis, causes and solutions, and severely limits America's potential for identification with other nations (p. 341). By America's own definition of nationhood they are the number one nation in the world viewed as God's chosen people. Superior fire power enforces this claim. With such an attitude it is hard to find friends among nations.


According to Ivie's writings, America's freedom was only threatened as long as forces of violence were allowed to pursue their wider patterns for aggressive purposes. The necessity for finding the enemy "guilty" required what Burke called the "victimage ritual" or, as Ivie put it, "people strongly committed to the idea of peace, simultaneously faced with the reality of war, must believe that the fault for the disruption of their ideal lies with the others. The victimage ritual offers a scapegoat drawing upon substitution as a primary source of symbol systems in order to create catharsis by scapegoat. In the case of Vietnam, aggression from the North became the major, and ultimately
the sole justification for fighting in Vietnam" (Ivie, 1972). In childlike terms, "he hit me first" or "he hit my brother first," so "I'm supposed to hit him back."

Force then became the principal symbol for hostile activity during the Johnson years, and the principal justification for the Vietnam war. In retrospect it became obvious that decisions as to what facts to select, what figures to choose and analogies to draw were based not on standards of clarity and truth, but on the anticipated persuasive impact that such a statement would have. What was said amounted to systematic attempts by the government to promote its own hard line on the issue at hand.

Ivie looked at "topoi" as a method of understanding savagery. Topoi, he said, were the "reservoir of ideas" or "core images" from which specific rhetorical statements could be generalized. They were conventionally accepted notions from which rhetoricians could generate a number of specific statements that served as premises, warrants, or points of identification. Thus using the topoi of savagery, the strategy was simply to construct the savage image indirectly through references to adversaries as coercive and irrational (Ivie, 1972). Ivie's insights provided much of the inspiration and method of "uncovering" throughout this thesis. An interesting question this thesis will seek to answer is whether the pattern of war persuasion identified by Ivie over centuries and described above underwent any modifications in Reagan's war against Nicaragua?
Other writings that have enhanced our understanding of war rhetoric in
general and informed this thesis in particular included: "The American Ideology:
Reflections of the Revolution in American Rhetoric by J. Andrews and K. Ritter
(1978), "They Chose the Sword: Appeals to War in Nineteenth Century
and Thompson (1974) revealed amazingly similar themes and images occurring
in rhetoric describing the enemy used by the Romans describing the Germans,
and white settlers in North America describing the Indians.

A major contribution to the thinking and methodology of this thesis came
from the insights of Larry Winn and Judith Hoover. Winn has written
extensively on Civil War rhetoric. In "The War Hawks' call to Arms: Appeals
for a Second War with Great Britain" (1972) and in "The Force Metaphor in
exigence as an organizing principle for the rhetoric and focussed on depiction
described by Osborn as vitally important in prowar rhetoric.

Hoover (1991) in a study of the failure of Reagan's rhetoric to secure
Contra aid used Wander's prophet dualism and technocratic realism to conclude
that the American experience in Vietnam necessitated a shift away from cold
war modes in foreign policy rhetoric.

**Historical Background**

By placing the conflict in Central America within the East/West geo-
strategic struggle Reagan's rhetorical emphasis screened out of the picture
certain objective historical facts. It was important to look behind the rhetoric for the other side of the story. Hufford (1985) wrote a critical article on the obfuscation of history in the Kissinger Commission Report which Reagan often cited in his speeches. As a Latin American historian he exposed several historical inaccuracies in Reagan’s and the Kissinger report’s claim.


Historical background is well documented in Bradford Burns’ At War in Nicaragua (1987). The book detailed the history of the area and the covert period of the CIA war. Burns was professor of Nicaraguan history as UCLA and, as such, added important historical data not easily found elsewhere. Leslie Cockburn, an investigative reporter for CBS who broke the news of the Iran-Contra scandal in four broadcast specials for CBS in June 1986, wrote Out of Control (1987). The book provides detailed documentation of the illegal arms pipeline, the Contra drug connection and the National Security Counsel and Oliver North’s coordination of the Contra war. The most comprehensive work I found on Nicaragua was Holly Sklar’s Washington’s War on Nicaragua
(1988). In 470 pages and over 1,500 footnotes Sklar provided the most detailed and carefully research history and background to the war that any scholar could hope for.

**Reagan the Great Communicator**

E. Gold (1988) sought to explicate Reagan's success as the Great Communicator. Gold highlights Reagan's use of narrative, repetition, themes, formulas, nostalgia and attacks. She stated, "by empirical standards he (Reagan) does not tell the truth, his effectiveness is grounded in shared values and feelings. Reagan spoke directly to our mythic perceptions of ourselves as Americans" (p. 171). In R. Hart's (1984) view, Reagan's verbal style communicates sentiments, not ideas (p. 215). His use of staging, timing, and personal flair offsets the intellectual problems created by his words alone. "Reagan's style," said Hart, "features trite expressions and common metaphors enabling Reagan to advance a radical agenda without sounding like an insurgent (p. 225).

W. Fisher (1982) argued that Romanticism is an imperative ingredient for an American hero. Also to be an American hero evokes the image of the American dream and is "the embodiment of this dream in a single person, most predominantly certain presidents" (p. 301). He concluded that Reagan possessed all the virtues of an American hero (p. 307).

**Role of the Media**

F. Corcoran (1986) by analyzing the twin processes of selection and
structuring showed how the media, especially television not only reproduced but defined "reality." He stated that they "actively give things meaning through their process of selecting and structuring, indicating a synchronization of government and media points of view" (p. 297). Several articles in the *Columbia Journalism Review* offered useful insights into the media’s coverage of Central America.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) developed cognitive theory with particular reference to metaphor. They claim "metaphor is not just a matter of language, on the contrary, human thought processes are largely metaphorical. Metaphors as linguistic expressions are possible precisely because there are metaphors in a person’s conceptual system."

Michael Osborn argued for a new rhetorical theory for metaphor (Osborn, 1976). He noted that classic Aristotelian theory of rhetoric placed emphasis on rhetoric as a rational structure, and became the study of the process of justification. Within the classical system, rhetoric found itself relegated to minor forms of expression, or served mainly to animate the rationale for a given proposition. Inevitably then, metaphor is relegated to a position of secondary importance. The new view of metaphor, Osborn argued, begins with a radically different view of language itself. Quoting Suzanne Langer he said a basic need unique to man is the need of symbolization, a need as basic as eating or moving about. In Osborn’s words, "We encounter the world through symbolic transformation. We do not experience as much as we reconstitute experience
through the symbolic forms we instinctively impose on raw sense data, which
in turn gives prominence to certain configurations and presumably extinguishes
others. Thus language becomes the means and mold by which experience is
given its human character and structure" (p. 5).

Osborn continued: "This view of symbolic language opens up a new and
prominent spot for metaphor and involves man in the creation of reality which
immediately implies variance of perception." Osborn cited the Patty Hearst trial
as an example. "The agon (or agony) for the jury was whether Patty Hearst
was a terrorist or a victim. "The struggle was not between arguments so much
as between depictions" (6). (emphasis mine). Strategic depiction then
resurrects metaphor to a primary place in the rhetorical drama. Osborn
described the structural introduction of archetypal metaphors as (1) appearing
in the introduction and then reverberating through the speech in minor
variations (cf Ivies decivilizing vehicles) or as (2) appearing in the conclusion
prepared for with minor variations leading up to it.

As a device of depiction, metaphor clearly stands unequaled in power,
"superimposing," as Osborn says, "its often radical transformations upon the
mind. Metaphor can surprise and arrest the mind." As a result, Osborn
showed the following:

Metaphor can yield an especially intense, vivid, and persistent
depiction, and a luminous presentation of a subject which
captivates the mind. Thus metaphor is both depiction and
something more than depiction. Not only does it organize and
influence perception, but it can also disturb the very patterns by
which we constitute reality. When these previous patterns have
political and societal importance (cf war rhetoric) then metaphor becomes, by its very nature, filled with revolutionary potential, destroying and creating, profoundly rearranging the landscape of our minds (p. 7).

Such profound insights carry exciting potential for students of war rhetoric who wish to create new metaphors, to turn metaphorical swords into plowshares. The challenge, however, is that it is much easier to rally around the flag than to burn it or even to question it. This impulse towards conformity of perception is precisely what is aroused in audiences when presidents depict threats to the American national identity.
Chapter 2

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

A brief overview of the historical antecedents that led to the confrontation with Nicaragua sheds some light on why the different sides in the drama responded the way they did. Unraveling an "objective" recounting of historical events proved challenging and occasionally quite difficult. History makes its impact on the present and the future by the way it is perceived and interpreted rhetorically. Great themes that shaped a peculiar national identity in the past are referred back to and built on repeatedly, especially by presidents, thus forming and transforming the American ethos.

In 1855 indigenous Miskito Indians occupied two thirds of Nicaragua’s geographical terrain. The remainder of the terrain consisted of settlements run by a local elite. In that year William Walker, a Tennessee mercenary, with tacit support from the United States government arrived in Nicaragua to fight for the local ruling class. The mission was so successful that he overcame his employers, declared himself president of Nicaragua, reestablished slavery and set out to conquer the rest of Central America. After losing to the combined armies of the Central American republics, he returned to a hero’s welcome in
After American President Theodore Roosevelt "took" Panama in 1903, Nicaraguan President José Zelaya insisted on building a second canal through Nicaragua linking the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. He ordered the execution of two American citizens caught placing mines in Nicaraguan waters. In response, Washington sent four hundred troops, forced Zelaya out of office and installed a government friendly to the United States (Hufford, p. 95).

Marines landed in Nicaragua in 1893, 1894, 1895, 1896, 1898, 1909 and 1912 to quell revolts against the American imposed government. In 1914 the local government signed a treaty which ceded perpetual rights to build a canal in Nicaragua only to the United States. From 1912 to 1926 the United States maintained a military garrison of one hundred marines, increased their numbers in 1926, and began training the infamous special security forces, the National Guard, under the direction of Anastasio Somoza (Hufford, p. 98).

During this same period the resistance grew under the leadership of Augusto Sandino. On June 16, 1927, planes undertook the first ever aerial bombardment of a civilian population in the bombing of Ocotal that took three hundred lives. This bombing marked the beginning of the first counterinsurgency war fought by United States troops. For the next five years Sandino gained ground with massive support among the Nicaraguan population, and gained hemispheric fame for his "David and Goliath" defense of Nicaraguan sovereignty (Hufford, p.99).
On February 21, 1934, at a meeting instigated by the United States, Somoza had Sandino and his top aides murdered. Sandino’s followers were brutally massacred and persecuted for the next several years. The Somoza family, deeply entrenched, would rule for forty-three years. When the Somozas were finally overthrown in 1979 they controlled 20% of the Nicaraguan economy, from sugar plantations and cattle farms to casinos and prostitution rings. The Somoza family also owned 30% of the nation’s arable land and Nicaragua’s twenty-six biggest companies. Only 2% of the population used potable water and only 28% of the capital city of Managua’s residents accessed sewage services. The National Guard had the highest number of American trained officers of any Central American army. The United States never wavered in its support of the dictator Somoza. Nicaragua supported America at the United Nations, formed the backbone of United States regional military strategy through the Central American Defense Council (CONDECA) and provided the training site for the C.I.A. invasion of Cuba in 1961 (Matthews, 1986).

In July, 1979, after two years of fighting had left 50,000 dead, or 2% of the population wiped out, a massive popular insurrection overthrew the Somoza dynasty. The insurrection was led by the front for the liberation of Nicaragua, later called the Sandinistas. Nicaragua’s three million people possess the intimate sense of history commonly found in small countries. Historically bred frustrations, angers and resentments as well as a national
sense of violation and intervention from outsiders left a raw nerve of mistrust towards United States intentions. Remembering that the United States intervened militarily over thirty times in Central America and over eleven times in Nicaragua, with over twenty years of extended occupation, much skepticism and fear of America’s real intent remained when Ronald Reagan came to office.

Nicaragua became a major foreign policy issue during the Reagan era. The 1980 Republican National Convention Platform (July 31, 1980) stated its opposition to friendly gestures by the Carter administration towards Nicaragua, saying, "We deplore the Marxist Sandinista takeover of Nicaragua... We oppose the Carter administration aid program for the government of Nicaragua... we will return to the fundamental principle of treating a friend as friend and enemies as enemies without apology." The stage was set for one of the most dramatic and interesting foreign policy debates in recent history.

The drama started to unfold with leaks from "intelligence sources" that "Salvadoran guerrillas received assistance from outside sources including Nicaragua" (Hufford, 1985). Ten days later in his inaugural speech Reagan set the tone for a new foreign policy, stating, "when action is required to preserve our national security, we will act" (Reagan, 1981). Within two weeks Reagan announced an aid cut-off as a result of Nicaragua’s participation in "arms trafficking to the guerrillas in El Salvador" (Washington Post, 1981). The United States followed up with pressure on lending institutions to deny
Nicaragua loans, and advised American companies to get out of Nicaragua. America increased its embassy staff in Nicaragua to 115, making it one of the largest in Latin America. Reagan charged his new Ambassador, John D. Negroponte, with directing the campaign against the Sandinistas, and sent 100 Pentagon advisors to Nicaragua.

Honduras remained one of America’s strongest allies in the area. Prior to 1980 there were 30 United States military personnel in Honduras. By the end of 1982, 350 permanent military advisors, several hundred Central Intelligence Agency personnel and over 2,000 American troops were stationed in Honduras. Military assistance to Honduras jumped from $4 million in 1980 to $30 million in 1982 (Time, 1982). In December of 1981 the C.I.A. informed various committees about the building of a highly trained commando force, including 500 Latins, to strike at targets in Nicaragua (Washington Post, May 8, 1983). Many of these "friendly forces" received training at camps in Florida, California and elsewhere in the United States. The leaders comprised former members of Samoza’s national guard and Cuban exiles with long histories of working for C.I.A. (Armstrong, 1985, p. 19). These beginnings constituted the birth of the Contras.

A multifaceted strategy to roll back the Nicaraguan revolution included psychological warfare, economic sanctions, destabilizing attacks, the militarization of Honduras and the influencing of American public opinion. The centerpiece for this strategy was a C.I.A.-controlled proxy war via the Contras.
Whether the initiatives and actions undertaken against the Sandinista government in the ensuing years was the work of the C.I.A. or the Contras proved difficult to decipher, such is the nature of clandestine wars.

The C.I.A. reportedly conducted more than 900 major clandestine operations around the world in the previous 20 years (Wise, 1982). Some of its most "accomplished" achievements include overthrowing the regime in Iran in 1953 and imposing the Shah’s three decades of brutal rule and ousting Guatemala’s President Arebenz in 1954, which ushered in 30 years of repressive military rule. When Reagan took office he found the power of the C.I.A. sharply reduced by revelations of its illegal activities.

Reagan set about reconstituting the C.I.A. as a potent foreign policy tool. His appointment of Wall Street millionaire William Casey as the C.I.A.’s new director signaled its new prominence. Together they ushered in the biggest expansion of covert activities and funding in the agency’s history (Wolf, 1987). Between 1981 and 1986 Reagan organized annual CIA budget increases of between 25% and 35%, far exceeding even the Pentagons increases. By 1984 Casey initiated over 50 covert operations world wide. He personally took charge of the Contra cause, and by 1984 had built the largest private army ever fielded in U.S. foreign policy history. By 1983 the Contras numbered an estimated 10,000 rebels (C.I.A. reports, 1983).

The origins of the Contras dates back to 1981 when the C.I.A. united bands of deposed National Guardsmen and exiles and put them under the
leadership of former Somoza military officials. By sponsoring a proxy war the Reagan administration attempted to avoid the politically unpopular alternative of a military invasion to topple the Sandinistas. They could also avoid a Bay of Pigs debacle by softening up Nicaragua from secure positions across the borders in Honduras and Costa Rica. A war of attrition would destabilize the economy, provoke restrictive internal measures by the Sandinistas and could create the conditions for an internal revolt.

The Contra war became part of the presidents larger foreign policy goal to roll back Soviet imperialism world wide. Anti-Communist rebels found enthusiastic American support in Afghanistan, Angola and elsewhere, but Central America was much closer to home. The Reagan Doctrine implied that regional conflicts with Soviet satellites would prove critical tests of American resolve. By multiplying the costs for establishing Third World socialist regimes, the policy of global counter revolution, rather than containment, would give Moscow a taste of its own medicine, thus creating a deterrent model for future revolutions. At its core the doctrine of rollback asserted that only by taking offensive action could the Soviet Union be stopped, going beyond the postwar goal of containment and proposing instead to shape world events by projecting American interests around the world instead of just reacting to Soviet behavior.

The President’s public embrace of a worldwide goal to rollback Communism constituted a signal triumph for the New Right, Neo-Conservatives and the Moral Majority. Many of their leading intellectuals such as Stefan
Possony, Robert Strausz-Hupe and James Burnham had long attacked traditional balance of power strategies as dangerous and irrelevant. Containment lacked the spiritual force necessary to defeat messianic Communism.

The United States defeat in Southeast Asia had proved devastating to the Right, making them determined to rebuild American power worldwide. Motivated by a popularly perceived weakness in American foreign policy during the Carter years, they regrouped behind the rising star of Ronald Reagan and portrayed the United States under Democrats as a "helpless giant." The humiliation of the American hostage crisis in Iran, coupled with the aggressive military thrust into Afghanistan by the Soviets, furthered this image. The President promised to restore American prestige abroad.

The Reagan doctrine reinforced links with the religious Right. Descriptions of America as a "righteous empire" and the Soviets as an "evil empire" blended well in the minds of those on the Religious Right. Jerry Falwell’s Moral Majority and the electronic crusades of Pat Robertson’s Christian Broadcasting Network raised tons of material support for the Contra cause, generally lumping together opponents as secular humanists engaged in Satanic conspiracy to undermine the Christian faith.

The image of Central America under attack from godless Communists formed a perfect platform for a united roll back attack. Jerry Falwell declared Nicaragua the "foremost testing ground for the defeat of atheistic
communism." Throughout the nation preachers in pulpits called for aid for the "freedom fighters."

Congressional restrictions on aid to the Contras, increasingly tougher resistance from a well trained and highly motivated Nicaraguan army and poor performance from the Contras on and off the battlefield, provided challenging rhetorical exigencies for President Reagan over the ensuing years. In the end the Reagan administration's effort to portray the Contras as a viable political force failed. The Contra insurgency proved incapable of sustaining itself among the population of Nicaragua. Placing the crisis solely within an East/West axis blinded Reagan to the regional and internal realities which gave rise to the situation in the first place. A foreign policy informed primarily by moral idealism proved a slippery slope.

With the preceding overview of history as background we turn to two other factors in the rhetorical drama, both of which were important in the rhetorical war. The vehicles of rhetor and medium deserve special attention before turning specifically to the speeches.

The "Great Communicator"

As early as 1982 polls showed the majority of voters "liked" Reagan. Many analysts find it bewildering trying to explain the extraordinary communication ability of such a seemingly ordinary man. If Reagan deserved the label "Great Communicator" then the President's failure to win support for
his favorite cause over two terms of office proved all the more remarkable. For
his other policies such as Star Wars, increased military industrial spending,
rapprochement with Gorbachev, support for the right wing government in El
Salvador and huge cut backs on social services spending, the rhetor proved
largely successful. Whether or not Reagan deserved the label of "Great
Communicator" for the Contras cause we can answer by focussing on the
President's roles fulfilled, images conveyed, and results obtained during the
period under study. In other words, what ingredients of Reagan's ethos
impacted the rhetorical drama?

Reagan as Conservative Spokesman

Conservative groups, politicians, think tanks, publications and religious
conservatives backed Reagan early in his political career and found in him a
national cheerleader. Reagan's ideological platform traced back to 1964 when
as co-chair of the California Citizens For Goldwater he delivered a popular 30
minute nationwide television appeal. Reagan called for a defense of "the
freedoms intended for us by the Founding Fathers." The Republican National
Committee published the text in a special pamphlet and William F. Buckley's
editorial in National Review described it as "probably the most successful
single-political broadcast since Mr. Nixon's Checkers speech in 1952." During
his candidacy for governor of California he delivered revamped versions of the
same speech 150 times in the next nine months. Reagan's obvious abilities as
an orator who voiced the principles and concerns of many conservatives placed him on the horizon as a new shining star in the Republican Party (Cited in Ritter, 1968).

"The Speech," as it was called, emerged as Reagan’s basic political platform. The origins of "The Speech" stem from years as host of G.E. Theater and from speaking engagements in the mid-sixties, in which he warned of Communist subversion in the United States. Reagan adapted "The Speech" for different audiences. When speaking to the Republican right wing he dwelt on the communist menace to America, and in televised speeches to the public he focussed more on domestic issues (Ritter, p. 54). Reagan relied heavily on ultra conservative publications for material, quotations and arguments, including Human Events, Robert Welch’s Blue Book and National Review (Gold, 1988).

The more nationally recognized he became the more Reagan downplayed the Soviet threat. Once elected, however, President Reagan turned the spotlight on the threat of Soviet domination again and made it into the cornerstone of his foreign policy rhetoric. Polarizing the East/West axis by depicting the "Evil Empire" allowed Reagan to stake out the Presidency for conservative causes. By design the program would rebuild American military might including the Strategic Defence Initiative, or SDI, and return America to the "greatest nation in the world" status.

In analyzing Reagan’s first inaugural address, Earnest Bormann noted: "Reagan and his speech writers employed the recurring and powerful fantasy
type of "restoration" to meet the needs of a conservative political and economic movement in the 1980’s" (Bormann, 1982). By returning to and reminding Americans of their heritage, the restoration theme provided a platform for stating that things were bad because America had wandered away from her basic ideals which made her great in the first place. With recurring reference to the Founding Fathers and the original American dream and by recalling American heroes who embodied those ideals, Reagan put forth a new agenda, wholly acceptable and pleasing to conservatives, without seeming to rock the boat. Building on what people believed in he simply blew on the old coals to get people fired up again.

Reagan won the support of conservatives in a broad coalition unseen before. The John Birch Society, the Ku Klux Klan, the Heritage Foundation and moderate Senator Howard Baker all considered Reagan their man for the times. Religious conservatives traditionally considered politics a worldly and dirty game, something an evangelical should stay out of. The eighties brought about their participation in politics. One of the catch phrases of the Reagan’s legacy was the depiction of the U.S.S.R. as the "evil empire," the perfect metaphor to win over a religious audience.

The metaphor first appeared when Reagan addressed the National Religious Broadcaster’s convention in January, 1983, and again two months later when he spoke to the National Association of Evangelicals (Reagan 1983b, p. 362). This depiction seemed almost natural since the United States
and its people were God’s chosen and blessed, and as the home of liberty had an obligation not only to stop the encroaching evil empire but also to push the devil back.

Reagan firmly believed and acted out strongly the notion that moral and military strength went hand in hand. He framed the international debate about nuclear war as part of an age old struggle between good and evil. The "Evil Empire" notion subsumed the problem and pointed clearly to the solution -- fight back, for God and freedom and our country. Such depiction puts the issue of the debate beyond rational assessment. Reagan’s mission appeared as the fulfillment of America’s new "manifest destiny." America could prevent the Evil Empire from penetrating the birthplaces of freedom with Star Wars defense technology. The tentacles of the Evil Empire should be severed at points of influence around the world such as Mozambique, Angola, Eritrea, El Salvador, Afghanistan, Grenada, and above all Central America. At Reagan’s first major press conference he defined the Soviet global mission as "world revolution and a one-world Socialist or Communist state," and claimed that "the only morality they recognize is what will further their cause, meaning they reserve unto themselves the right to commit any crime, to lie or to cheat" (Reagan, 1981).

The "Evil Empire" speech provided a launching pad used often in Reagan’s war rhetoric against Nicaragua. The speech was delivered before a meeting of the National Association of Evangelicals. Reagan boomed forth like
an Old Testament prophet demanding righteousness in the modern world. The speech is filled with fiery personal stories, biblical quotations and personal revelations creating a spiritual vision of America’s destiny in the Armageddon showdown with the Evil Empire. Reagan depicted the task as not really about increased military budgets or the CIA in Central America, but as a spiritual struggle for good or evil. The rhetoric thus transformed foreign policy from the secular to the spiritual realm.

Goodnight (1986) in a textual analysis of Reagan’s Evil Empire speech describes the speech as formatted in the form of a creed. (1) America was blessed by God. (2) The blessing is freedom. (3) Freedom is maintained by moral restraint. (4) Moral restraint is weakening. (5) The new moral majority will help bring America and its policies back to the paths of righteousness.” The form is biblical: Eden, the Fall, Sacrifice, Redemption (p. 297).

At the heart of the speech is a moving story about Pat Boone’s telling a young audience that he would rather see his daughter die now as Christian than for her to grow up under Communism. In Reagan’s vision this is the kind of "better dead than red" commitment necessary to fight the Evil Empire. The moving story leads immediately to a description of Communism as the "focus of evil in the modern world, an evil empire that suffers from an excess of desire" (Reagan, 1981). Like the devil, the Soviet intent is implacable, cannot be trusted, and compromises only encourage it. Goodnight commented that, "By placing the Soviet Union in the position of blame for the world’s problems,
the speech put administration critics in the uncomfortable position of having to defend a politically unpopular state." As former aide, Lyn Nofzinger said, "Anyone in the country who doesn’t think the Soviet Union is an evil empire, I want them to stand up and say so" (p. 402). In this eschatological division of the world into an eternal drama of good and evil it seemed almost natural to depict the Contras as founding father freedom soldiers with a mission supported by true Americans and God. On the other hand, as puppets of the Evil Empire, the Sandinistas committed genocide, spread terror and bullied their neighbors.

These beginnings laid the foundation for the Reagan revolution by insisting that America needed to be strong by strengthening her military might and restoring American values in Central America. In other words the depiction of the Nicaraguan conflict appeared within the context of a politically conservative view of the world. In Reagan’s own words to the conservative Political Action Conference, it was not a matter of "right versus left, but right versus wrong." By 1985 Reagan called the Contras the "Moral Equal of our Founding Fathers" (Boyd, 1985).

The combination of ideological and religiously conservative forces proved a potent weapon politically. Reagan gained the conservatives’ support on some of his favorite issues such as Star Wars and Central America while he gave strong support to some of their issues like school prayer, abortion and affirmative action.
Reagan as Romantic Hero

A Romantic strain runs through American history and society. From the Romantic era of the 1800’s to the current emphasis on Romantic literature, movies, soap operas, and music within the culture in general, romanticism is alive and well in America. Fisher (1982) describes the rugged individualist American hero as the practical demonstration of romantic democracy. Old and new heroes spring to mind. Davy Crockett, Daniel Boone, Thomas Edison and Martin Luther King, Jr., fit the heroic image right alongside John Wayne and Rambo. They all shared an idealistic vision of how the world should be and showed a willingness to sacrifice to make it that way. A romantic hero, Fisher writes, "besides being adventurous, must be an impassioned exponent of certain American ideals. The American hero evokes the image of the American dream and her manifest destiny. The American hero is the symbolic embodiment of this dream in a single person, most predominantly, in certain presidents" (Fisher, p. 301).

Fisher has argued that the cap of romantic democracy and presidential heroes fit Reagan well. He said, in fact, that "his election is proof that romanticism in American politics is not dead, for that is the essence of his rhetoric" (p. 302). The heroic aura surrounding Reagan’s image blended well with popular culture of the same time. The return of the "macho" image, the "Rambo style," occurred throughout society. Reagan took "heroic" stands on the issues, foreign or domestic. Reagan rode out of the screen as the Western
hero, the town marshal on his white horse. His overarching heroic view of America and her role in the world provided the context for his foreign policy program towards Central America.

Ritter adds that Reagan's fighting spirit image, so essential for heroes, gained strength from his acting background -- "The dark haired six foot one inch hero reminded his audience of the same handsome host of the television series Death Valley Days and his movie portrayal of the Notre Dame football hero, George Gipp." Reagan's "manly" way of dealing with the assassination attempt on his life greatly enhanced the "manly hero" image. The man and the mission were one (Ritter, p. 56).

Reagan the Orator

In the field of public oratory Reagan emerged as master. Reagan's physical stature, background in public speaking, and excellent speech writers combined to make him a giant in persuasion, and earned him the title of "Great Communicator." He knew from live audience experience that abstract arguments left people sitting on their hands whereas well timed stories and anecdotes caught attention and applause. Moreover, knowing the speech beforehand and working from three by five cards made his message more personable and persuasive.

During the same time that Reagan gained a name for himself in the political arena, television established itself as a medium present in almost every American household. Gold asserts that Reagan and television were ideally
suited for each other. Reagan stated, "As an actor Reagan learned to express emotion non-verbally before a camera, how to position his body and control his facial expressions.... Having spoken so much in front of live audiences, he could speak to the television camera as effectively as if the audience were still present" (Gold, 1988).

Preachers, politicians, salespeople, advertising agencies and others in the persuasion business have utilized Monroe’s Motivated Sequence of attention, problem, solution, visualization and action to structure their persuasive messages with proven success. Reagan used this strategy repeatedly in persuading his audiences to support the Contras.

The other dimension that Reagan brought to the rhetorical exigency was his ethos, or source credibility. The most powerful arguments, even if presented strategically, can still fall on deaf ears if the rhetor is not believable. Reagan did not have that problem, in fact his sincerity and believability proved to be some of his most endearing qualities. Source credibility is comprised of expertise, dynamism, charisma, and co-orientation. Reagan came across very well in all these dimensions. He understood the American psyche, touched the patriotic vein, and sparked life into some weary bones. Reagan’s ability to persuade people through narrative, repetition, themes, nostalgia, facts, value devices and attacks created an emotional unifying bond between himself and his audience. He engendered a sense of belonging and identification as few presidents have. That quality probably more than anything else earned Reagan
the label of "Great Communicator."

Window Dressing: The Role Of The Media.

The participation of the media in the rhetorical war against Nicaragua proved to be imperative for Reagan’s success or failure. News journalists and the media had considered Latin America a minor assignment for most of the century. Coverage of events in Latin America were assigned to a correspondent outposted in Mexico, Rio or most likely Miami. President Reagan’s determination to turn back Communism in Latin America heightened the media’s attention. By the mid-eighties a large influx of reporters came searching for a Pulitzer Prize in the steaming jungles of "coups," "catastrophes" and "Communism." Reagan accused the media of turning public opinion against him by portraying the area as another Vietnam, others accused the media of voicing and encouraging Reagan’s perception of Central America as a Communist hot spot. A study of the power of the media to support or disrupt a president’s position, especially in matters of war, calls for careful attention. Reagan declared the tiny island of Grenada, with a population of a few hundred thousand, a major threat to the United States. When independent media were forbidden access to the news surrounding the invasion then it became time to ask what role the media may play in presidential justifications for war.

The power of the dominant ideology to permeate the majority of
reporters is easy to understand, especially in the unknown world of Latin American politics. A revolutionary war is difficult for many residents to understand let alone the reporter who is suddenly dropped in from a foreign culture and asked to say something meaningful in 90 seconds for the evening news. Simple stereotypes such as "Communist-backed terrorists" abound because they explained "reality" in a way the American public understood.

The NBC special on Reagan’s "White Paper" on Central America began with the following introduction:

In El Salvador last summer the high school student on the left, 14 years old, was murdered, shot twice by security troops. After a century of largely military rule, young Guatemalan soldiers face a new challenge from left wing insurgents. In Nicaragua these days Marxist militia march to the rhythm of the Cuban beat. What makes them all part of the same story is...the Castro connection.

Reagan could not have written a better introduction for the news special. Such words depict the most important "reality" between these countries. The only story that counted, accordingly, was the global conflict between East and West or totalitarianism and democracy. The historical roots and relations to the United States became irrelevant. The "Castro Connection" showed a map of the Caribbean Basin with Fidel Castro’s face superimposed over it and animated concentric ripples radiating out from Cuba like circles in a pond (Hallin, p. 25).

Sometimes the press went beyond journalistic ethics. One photograph, identified by the photographer herself as people receiving free meat and milk, appeared six months later in the Washington Times, January 24, 1983, with
a different caption; "Nicaraguan citizens form lines outside government supermarkets awaiting food rations." Another photo showing Daniel Ortega and Sandinista leaders "celebrating in Moscow" turned out, according to the photographer, to have been taken in Nicaragua, not Moscow (p. 33).

American journalists who covered the Central American beat spent little time in Nicaragua, and then mostly in Managua, the capital, far away from the war zone, leaving unportrayed the single most important reality for most rural Nicaraguans, full scale war. This does not mean that 100% of the media followed the Reagan perception of the situation. Several journalists were killed trying to get the other side of the story behind the war. Anne-Marie O’Conner based for over three years in Honduras for UPI, offered rare insights into the war with her reporting. She wrote about the constant signs of war around her -- huge arm shipments arriving at Honduran ports, nationwide scandals, murders and infighting among Honduran military leaders over profits from the rebel supply business, the massive forced removal of 12,000 Honduran peasants from their homes in the war zone, a C.I.A. helicopter that crash-landed next to the largest shopping mall in the nation’s capital and a ban on anyone entering or leaving the 450 square mile area called the emergency zone (O’Conner, 1987).

The Contras themselves, she noted, did not want reporters wandering around camps in Honduras which, according to official sources, were suppose to be in Nicaragua. The Contras feared that any negative press about them in
the United States would reduce their chances of getting aid from Congress. Previous reports about human rights abuses and the dominating influence of Samoza politicians and National Guard Officers resulted in closed doors to reporters. The media could not get to the Contras themselves other than through official interviews set up by Honduran government officers. Thus the Honduran government played a role in manipulating the media.

Reluctant to publicize its role as host to the Americans, the Honduran government tried to suppress any news about American troops or Contras on their soil, except when such leaks served their interests. John Lantigua of UPI became the first foreign reporter to cover the Contra presence on a regular basis, but was expelled from Honduras in May, 1983, for "denigrating the image of Honduras" (p. 39). Alvarez, head of the Honduran military, forbade any mention by domestic reporters of Contra presence in Honduras. Alvarez found himself replaced in March, 1984, by the popular General Lopez. He leaked stories critical of the Contras to the press, catching American intelligence officials off guard. Anti Contra sentiment ran high in Honduras. Rodrigo Arevalo, Director of the largest radio station in the nation, aired a series of exposes revealing Contra atrocities and opposing their presence in Honduras. The day following the last in the series a car bomb exploded outside his house. The Honduran government warned the same day that local press had been infiltrated by Communists and terrorists. J. Palencia the only Honduran journalist who asked tough questions at official news conferences was soon
banned from all briefings. Even Saura Brooks, a Reagan supporter, reporting for Voice of America, was fired in September, 1986, for "being soft on the Sandinistas" (p. 40).

The American Embassy in Honduras staged media events to coincide with developments in Washington and sometimes these events backfired. After the leak of the C.I.A. "murder manual" the American Embassy in Honduras arranged for an American journalist to meet with a Nicaraguan teenager who claimed to have been kidnapped by Sandinista soldiers and sexually raped by them for eight months. The reporter, unfortunately remembered meeting the same girl in a hospital six months before where she was introduced by the Contras as the youngest fighter in their army. When the journalist mentioned the duplicity to the American Embassy official the girl's interview with the press at large the next day was simply cancelled with no comment (p. 40).

Martha Honey a reporter for the Times of London and the B.B.C. wrote a detailed expose' of C.I.A. media activities surrounding the Contra War. Her study revealed many instances of CIA manipulation and intimidation to ensure only anti-Sandinista stories emanated from Central America (Honey, 1987). Carlos Morales, a Costa Rican professor of journalism and former president of the Costa Rican journalists union, said that at least 12 journalists were on the CIA payroll. The payees included the editors of the top three newspapers who received monthly payments from the C.I.A.. Morales' former students told him their job was to get out stories or editorials attacking Nicaragua and
sympathetic to the Contras. The Costa Rican press became increasingly hostile to Nicaragua over the years (p. 31). According to Chamorro, the Contras press spokesman from 1981-1984, fifteen Honduran journalists and broadcasters were on the C.I.A. payroll.

The C.I.A. news network connections proved useful in distributing disinformation. They carried the story that gave the Contras credit for mining the harbors of Nicaragua, although they had nothing to do with it. Two months later after a Soviet ship struck one of the mines, according to Chamorro, the "same C.I.A. agent instructed us to deny that one of our mines had damaged the ship" (p. 32). In sum, the conformity of coverage with the official view indicated connections between the CIA, official sources of information and the ideological slant of the news. Such connections point to the enormous difficulty of sorting out fact from fiction when viewing the "world news tonight." Someone once said trying to find out what was going on in the world just by watching television was like trying to tell the time by only looking at the second hand. A few examples amply illustrated the point.

An issue close to the hearts of most Americans is drug trafficking. On March 16, 1986, in Reagan's last nationwide televised address he said: "I know every American parent concerned about the drug problem will be outraged to learn that top Nicaraguan government officials are deeply involved in drug trafficking" (Reagan, 1986). At that point the viewer saw a dark blurry black and white photo. "The man in the photo," Reagan explained, "was
loading cocaine onto a plane in Nicaragua." The President concluded, "There seems to be no crime to which the Sandinista’s will not stoop, this is an outlaw regime."

For two years the President used the drug smuggling theme to great effect. America, during that period had declared a war on drugs. By tapping into the same fear appeal Reagan pulled those who were concerned about drugs into the war against the Sandinistas. The Washington Times, owned by the Moonies broke the first story of the Sandinistas alleged drug connection. The report stated that "key members of Nicaragua’s Marxist military junta have been linked to cocaine smuggling in the United States" (July 17, 1984). Citing "unidentified" sources in Washington, the story went on to say that a "number of highly placed Nicaraguan government officials had actively participated in the drug smuggling operation, including Defense Minister Ortega and Interior minister Thomas Borge."

reported unquestioningly that "U.S. intelligence sources had obtained a photograph of Borge standing by the plane as the cocaine bound for the U.S. was being loaded." When Vaughan and ten others were indicted on July 27th neither Borge nor any Nicaraguan government members were mentioned in the court papers (Millman, p. 49). A few days later the D.E.A. released photographs taken by the pilot informant, the same photographs that Reagan used in his televised speech. None of the people in the picture wore uniforms and none of them were members of the Sandinista leadership, yet Reagan's unfounded claims surfaced several times in the major networks over the next year as if they were fact.

According to Richard Gregorie, the U.S. Attorney who conducted the case against the alleged drug smugglers, his investigation never revealed any links between Vesco and Vaughan or any member of the Sandinista leadership. He added that none of the reporters from the major media had called him to verify the facts. In fact the DEA issued several statements contending that the agency had "no information implicating the Minister of Interior or any other Nicaraguan officials" (p. 49).

The other story competing for media attention involved the Contras and drug smuggling, the story the administration did not want to get out. Associated Press (AP) eventually ran a story based on the investigations of reporters Robert Parry and Brian Barger. Parry won the George Polk award for his reporting on Central America. It was Barger who uncovered the C.I.A. "murder
manual" a year before. After speaking to Contra trainers and several law enforcement agents who confirmed the stories of major drug smuggling by the Contras, Parry and Barger asked their editors to send them to Central America to track down the story. The editors initially hesitated, so the reporters headed for Miami for more on the story.

In Miami the reporters spoke to Contras who confirmed that two Contra officials were charged in Costa Rica with drug dealings. Armed with more information, the reporters flew to Costa Rica where other sources identified a Miami based anti Castro group as the chief American link between Colombian cocaine lords and the Contras. Thinking they had a big story, Parry and Barger submitted their heavily researched 1500 word story, but it lay on the editor's desk unreleased. Months later in December, after working on the same story for nine months it seemed as if the editors would simply boycott the story. On December 16, 1985, an editor working overnight at the A.P.'s Spanish language desk found the Parry-Barger story on his computer terminal and, without checking to see if it had been cleared for publication translated the draft into Spanish and sent it out to Spanish language newspapers. After an initial flurry, and wide coverage in the Spanish press, three days later A.P. ran the English version of the same story. Only the Los Angeles Times, Newsday and the Philadelphia Inquirer carried the story, not the New York Times, Washington Post or the television networks. The following year when allegations surfaced again that Contra army leaders in Honduras were involved
in drug smuggling, Parry and Barger proposed a second trip to Honduras to follow up the story. Their editors denied the request because, according to Parry, neither the Times nor the Post had picked up the first story. He said, "We were told the story was over" (p. 51).

The role of the media in reflecting the administration’s position can be seen in the coverage of two important elections in 1984 in both El Salvador and Nicaragua. In El Salvador, an American client state, the elections took place with the help of the United States to demonstrate that its rulers were moving towards democracy. By contrast Nicaragua was under attack by the United States and called elections for a national mandate and to show it was an open democratic society. An unbiased media would have raised the same questions about both elections.

Covering El Salvador, the American media never mentioned that the FDR (the El Salvadoran resistance) had popular support. In El Salvador there were severe penalties for not voting, another detail that seemed unimportant. The background of over 700 civilian murders per month for the prior 30 months, mostly by Salvadoran security forces and death squads went unmentioned. FDR members were banned and excluded from the elections, yet the media never condemned the elections as meaningless. The murder of over 30 journalists critical of El Salvador since 1979 found no mention in the coverage. Eleven days before the elections the foreign press corps were marched into a morgue by the Salvadoran army to see the bodies of four Dutch journalists.
This horrifying episode, remarkably, never made it into the American press or media yet all of the above were prominently reported in European and Latin American media (Herman, 1984).

In a content frequency analysis of New York Times coverage Edward Herman compared the New York Times reporting of both elections (p. 9). Reports about the Salvadoran election showed an overwhelming reliance on United States (41%) and Salvadoran officials (39%). In 20 of the 28 articles official sources were the only sources of information. Although the majority of Salvadorans were peasants only two of the 263 identifiable sources (<1%) were peasants. The "rebels" were quoted less than 10% of the total quotations and then only about their disruption plans not about why they were banned from the process or why they thought free elections impossible in El Salvador.

Sources used by the New York Times covering the Nicaraguan elections showed a reverse trend. Those in opposition to the Sandinistas were used as primary sources 60% of the time, whereas Nicaraguan officials were referred to for only 8% of the New York Times coverage.

The study also found a dramatic dichotomy in the treatment of freedom of the press in the elections coverage. The subject is not mentioned once in 28 Times articles covering El Salvador. In contrast freedom of the press is dealt with in detail in 75% of the New York Times articles on Nicaragua. There is no mention of journalists killed in El Salvador, of how many newspapers the
government of El Salvador closed down and nothing about the fact that no elections and no opposition press existed under Somoza from 1936 through 1978 (p. 9).

It is also interesting to compare the media’s coverage of the United States elections with Nicaragua’s elections which coincided in 1984. Michael Parenti (1986) argued that by democratic measures Nicaragua’s 1984 elections were more democratic than the U.S. 1984 Presidential elections. He noted several criteria.

(A) Popular Participation.

A good measure of an open political system is the degree of popular participation. Voting studies in America showed a high degree of alienation from the political process. The turnout in the United States 1984 elections, for example was less than 53% of the eligible voters, the lowest in any western nation. The press described it as a landslide victory. In contrast the turnout was 75% in Nicaragua, described by the U.S. media as disappointing, despite the fact that voting was voluntary and occurred in the midst of an all out war.

(B) Range of Political Choice.

In Nicaragua several parties ran for election, their views freely aired on local media. In the United States there were basically two choices. Left wing parties had virtually no access to mass media, nor did right wing groups.

(C) Access to the Ballot.

Third party access to the ballot in the United States requires large
numbers of signatures and large sums of money. In Nicaragua the electoral laws favored the smaller parties who needed to present only two representatives from the country's nine regions. Each party received $321,000 regardless of size, equal time each day on radio and television, unlimited funds from private donors as well as free printing, paper, transportation and gasoline.

The conclusion that the elections were free, fair and open was reached by 460 official, international observers. None of the seven participating parties filed any charges of fraud and the Sandinistas won a higher percentage of the popular vote than did Reagan in his "landslide" victory (Parenti, p. 49). The U.S. media neglected to mention all of the above information. A vital ingredient in Reagan's rhetorical war was the depiction of the Contras as the "good guys." How the media handled competing stories depicting the Contras as the "bad guys" would make or break the administrations overall strategy to destabilize the Sandinista's.

The Associated Press, the Miami Herald and the San Francisco Examiner carried reports linking the Contra supply network to illegal gun-running and cocaine smuggling through Miami and San Francisco. The Miami Herald and Los Angeles Times also reported early in 1986 that millions of dollars of U.S. funds had been paid to a grocery store in Honduras as a front for paying bribes to Honduran Army officers (Boot, 1987). Reports that Contra forces had killed numerous Nicaraguan civilians followed. None of these reports however seemed to arouse much investigative zeal in the press corps as a whole. In
fact the media seemed to give Reagan the benefit of the doubt and were easily
drowned out by coverage of disinformation about Nicaraguan totalitarianism
and Sandinista drug smuggling (Boot, p. 29). Even blatantly false gaffes only
appeared on page 12 of the New York Times. For example, Reagan said at his
1986 August 12th press conference that "South Africa, unlike Nicaragua, had
never tried to stifle the opposition, press or religious dissidents or to impose its
government on surrounding countries" (p. 28).

In summary, the mass media of the United States are closely related to
the national power structure reflecting its biases and often serving its interests.
Noam Chomsky (cited in Herman, 1984) described five filters that influenced
the news: (1) corporate ownership of the media, (2) advertising as a primary
income source, (3) reliance on officials for information, (4) creation of flak by
right-wing groups, and (5) anti-Communism as a control mechanism. These
filters worked to assist Reagan in the United States media war against the
Sandinistas.
Ronald Reagan won a landslide victory over Jimmy Carter to become, by press accounts, "one of the most popular Presidents in recent years." The President's warm and friendly manner toward the public and the press extended the honeymoon normally accorded new presidents from months into years. Economic recovery returned in 1983 and Reagan’s popularity on the domestic front soared. Harris polls in early 1983 showed over 60% approval for his overall job rating. Reagan remained convinced that given a chance to make his case he could persuade the American people to see things his way.

In late 1982 and in March 1983 the Reagan administration ran into stiff congressional opposition to the covert war in Nicaragua. Further restrictions came with the passing of the Boland Amendment that forbade aid to the Contras and a drastic cut in military aid to El Salvador in March 1983. This seemed completely at odds with Reagan’s stance on what was happening in Central America and what needed to be done. To push its program through Congress, the Reagan administration launched a public campaign to build support for its policies in the region.
The popular revolution in Nicaragua served as a bone in the throat of the Reagan team before they took office. Reagan told a radio audience as far back as January 2, 1978, that "The Soviet Union underlies all the unrest that is going on in Central America" and that "Somoza has been getting bad press. They have never been known as a major violator of human rights" (Cockburn, 1984). In a March 1979 radio broadcast Reagan stated that "the Caribbean is rapidly becoming a Communist lake in what should be an American pond." He added: "The troubles in Nicaragua bear a Cuban label, most of the rebels are Cuban trained, Cuban armed and dedicated to creating another Communist country in this hemisphere" (Dugger, 1983).

Key Republican figures were asked in 1980 to draft policy guidelines for Reagan's Presidency. The report, called the Santa Fe report, and titled "a new Inter-American policy for the eighties," laid the political groundwork for the Reagan doctrine in Central America. Editors of the Santa Fe blueprint included Lewis Lambs, later ambassador to Costa Rica; Roger Fontaine, later National Security Council (NSC) advisor for Latin American affairs; Lt. General Gordon Summer, later special advisor to Reagan; David Jordan of the U.S. Strategic Institute, a right wing think tank; and Francis Bouchev President of the Council for Inter-American Security, who would take charge of anti-Communist propaganda later during the privatization of the war.

The Santa Fe report blasted the Carter administration for its "accommodation" with the Soviet Union. "War, not peace is the norm of
international affairs," it declared: "survival demands a new U.S. foreign policy. America must seize the initiative or perish." The Santa Fe document (cited in Sklar, 1988) states in reference to Central America: "America is everywhere in retreat." "Even the Caribbean, America's maritime crossroad and petroleum refining center, is becoming a Marxist-Leninist lake. Never before has the Republic been in such jeopardy from its exposed southern flank. Never before has American foreign policy so abused, abandoned and betrayed its allies to the South in Latin America." "Either a Pax Sovietica or a counter projection of American power is in the offing." "In war," it declared, "there is no substitute for victory...no foreign power, military bases or political allies will be allowed in the region" (pp. 272-274).

The political strategy clearly ruled out accommodation with the Sandinistas. Instead, the policy demanded a roll back of the revolution in Nicaragua and prevention of a revolution in El Salvador. To achieve this goal the administration devised a multi-faceted strategy that included economic sanctions, psychological warfare, the militarization of Honduras, the creation of counter revolutionary forces and the manipulation of American public opinion.

The Santa Fe political strategy was soon echoed in the 1980 Republican National Convention Platform (Cohn 1984). It stated, "We deplore the Marxist Sandinista takeover of Nicaragua, and the attempts to destabilize El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. We oppose the Carter administration aid program for
the government of Nicaragua.... We will return to the fundamental principle of treating a friend as a friend and self-proclaimed enemies as enemies without apologies." The friends were El Salvador, Honduras and Contras; the enemies would be the Soviet backed Sandinistas.

The centerpiece of Reagan’s strategy became the CIA sponsored proxy war. In the earlier years of the war the CIA took almost exclusive responsibility for strategy and tactics. By sponsoring a proxy war the administration thought it could avoid the politically unpopular alternative of a military invasion to topple the Sandinistas. A CIA analyst told a Washington Post reporter, that "there were always two tracks, the publicly stated CIA objective of interdicting weapons...and the overthrow of the Sandinista government." Policy makers believed they could avoid a "Bay of Pigs" debacle by softening up Nicaragua from inside and from secure positions across the border in Honduras. A war of attrition aimed at destabilizing the economy, wrecking the infrastructures of the nation, provoking harsh internal measures and demoralizing the population would lay the groundwork to further United States interests in the region.

One of the most extraordinary documents to emerge from this earlier period and one which received scant attention in the media, was the CIA’s blueprint for Nicaragua (Sklar, 1988). The original document disclosed in 1979, was reported in Newsweek on November 8, 1982, and only mentioned in passing thereafter. As the prime agent in the war against Nicaragua, the CIA’s blueprint provides a clear insight into the motives and methods used to pursue
American interests. Although the blueprint was first published in 1979 every single strategy suggested later became the program of the Reagan presidency. A metaphoric and pentadic analysis of the CIA’s blueprint appears in chapter five. The impact of this document on the whole war proved so far reaching it deserves viewing in full (See Appendix 1).

The next eight years saw a faithful execution of all of the recommendations contained in the blueprint with the CIA as the designer and orchestrator of the entire war. However, in spite of leaks and international publicity, this agency was never mentioned once in all 59,000 words Reagan spoke about U.S. and Nicaragua relations. This omission lead me to an initial conclusion that drawing attention away from the CIA’s involvement formed at least part of the rhetorical strategy.

Key Players in the Drama

Decisions affecting the future outcome of the war came from several parties throughout the war. Reagan tailored his rhetoric to different audiences over the years spanning the war. For instance, after 1984, private groups and international supporters became target audiences. At the opening stages just before and after the President’s first nationwide speech the key players in the drama appear as follows:

The CIA

The CIA’s role goes unmentioned but when asked at a press conference about the role of the CIA, "Are you not doing anything to overthrow the
government there?" the President replied, "No, because that would be violating the law" (Reagan 1983b).

**The Executive Branch, including the NSC**

Only later when more restrictions were placed on CIA involvement would the Executive Branch and the NSC take on a more forceful role.

**The Contras**

During this period the CIA recruited and trained the Contras. Tactics included acts of sabotage and hit and run invasions by thousands of Contra soldiers from Honduras. The CIA preferred to keep the composition of the Contras quiet since the composition of the Contras still looked far too much like the old hated National Guard. Reagan mentioned the Contras only obliquely in his first speech, although his words must have been an inspiration to the Contras who heard of his speech later.

**The Regional allies**

El Salvador and Honduras, in particular, must have taken courage from Reagan’s warm words of friendship. Words of praise were heaped on them in this first speech recommitting U.S. support to these much needed allies in the region.

**The American public and legislative branch**

Lack of congressional support for his programs in Nicaragua and El Salvador is what prompted Reagan to go public in an unprecedented joint
session of Congress. By appealing to the public Reagan felt he could put pressure on Congress to pass his programs.

The Enemy

The Nicaraguans would hear of Reagan’s words which would supposedly help create a climate of destabilization.

Rhetorical Drama Chart

A brief highlighting of major events specifically relevant to American-Nicaraguan relations places this speech in context.


The Administration released a "White Paper" alleging arms shipments to El Salvador. After an initial flurry of sympathetic press coverage, the White Paper turned out to be a major embarrassment with forged documents and nothing linking Russia or Nicaragua with the rebels in El Salvador (Foreign Policy, March 1982).

* By the end of 1981, the U.S. and Honduras held joint naval maneuvers in the Caribbean (New York Times, October 8, 1981).

* Press reports revealed CIA completion of recruiting and the training of

* By February, 1982, the U.S. Navy had stationed a destroyer equipped with electronic surveillance devices off the Pacific coast of Nicaragua, and a bomb exploded at Managua’s international airport marking the first act of sabotage by the Contras (New York Times, February 22 and 25 1982).


* The war unfolded dramatically inside Nicaragua. The Sandinistas declared a national state of emergency. In November, 1982, Newsweek reported that the CIA orchestrated 4,000 Contras who were involved in a U.S. supported insurgency. Several 1982 appointees to key posts in Central America were CIA employees and/or Vietnam War Veterans including Thomas Enders, Craig Johnson and John Negroponte (Washington Post, November 28, 1982).

National Security Council in early April 1983 two weeks before Reagan's first national speech to the nation. The document stated the primary U.S. goal in Central America as "not allowing the proliferation of Cuba model states which would pose a direct threat at or near our borders" (New York Times, April 7, 1983).

* Contra leaders met in Miami to discuss plans to overthrow the Sandinista government. They claimed over 5000 paramilitary troops in Honduras and expected to overthrow the Sandinista government by the end of 1983 (New York Times, December 7).

* In December, 1982, after repeated reports of widespread damage by Contra forces against Nicaragua, the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives passed an order restricting the U.S. from providing any aid to the Contras (New York Times, December 23, 1982). Just two months before Reagan's national speech the first "Big Pine" U.S.-Honduran joint military maneuvers were carried out in eastern Honduras less than ten miles from the Nicaraguan border, involving 4,000 Honduran troops and 1,600 U.S. military personnel (New York Times, February 3, 1983).

* March, 1983, marked the highest level of widespread attacks by the Contras in the North of Nicaragua.

* Just three weeks before Reagan's first television speech the United Nations considered the actions of the United States as an international and regional threat and debated the issue at the U.N. Security Council for a week.
Of the 55 nations that spoke only El Salvador and Honduras sided with the United States (New York Times, March 30, 1983).

* In March, 1983, for the first time foreign reporters were allowed into Contra camps in Honduras. Allowing press visits backfired when chief Contra commander said "we’re not going to stop the transport of arms and supplies to the Salvadoran guerrillas or the Guatemalan guerrillas until we cut the head off the Sandinistas (Washington Post, April 4, 1983). U.S. Ambassador to Honduras Negroponte and Honduran military general Alvarez met daily to discuss strategy and progress of the war (New York Times, March 3, 1983).

* Reagan’s public relations campaign on Nicaragua had a hard time getting off the ground, due in part to too many leaks, while his plans deteriorated in El Salvador. Reagan’s initial statements about the situation seemed alarmist to some and too complicated to understand to others. The Contras needed a major boost; Reagan sought that boost in military and economic aid to El Salvador, Honduras and the Contras.

* In the first meeting of the Contadora group, the leaders of Venezuela, Mexico, Colombia and Panama met and presented an initial peace plan, but the U.S. rejected it (New York Times, March 13, 1983). The House voted "to prohibit any aid, directly or indirectly to anti-Sandinista rebels unless approved by both houses of Congress" (New York Times, March 13, 1983).

The House vote was the last thing Reagan needed to proceed with his plans and it proved to be the last straw. The Covert war surfaced as Reagan
appealed directly to the public to win support for his program and to draw attention away from the CIA and the Contras’ activities.

* Between February and April, 1983, Reagan delivered six speeches on the U.S. commitment to Central America. In an unusual event President Reagan spoke to a joint session of Congress and the public on prime time television on April 27, 1983. Echoing the words of the Republican party’s platform statement that "we will treat self proclaimed enemies as enemies without apology, he defied world opinion and announced that the "government of Nicaragua had treated us as an enemy and they threaten Honduras not the reverse" (New York Times, April 28, 1983). The speech found favorable coverage in the media. A week after the speech 1,500 Contras crossed from Honduras into Nicaraguan territory backed by massive Honduran military fire power. Another Contra group, ARDE, opened up the southern front from Costa Rica for the first time, and the war escalated dramatically (New York Times, June 1, 1983). However by May 3rd the house voted against Reagan’s request and directed him instead, to "cut off covert funding to and prohibit by law any involvement with counter-revolutionary forces fighting the Nicaraguan government" (New York Times, May 4, 1983).

* The Harris poll of May suggested that Reagan’s results showed poorly. Opponents of Reagan’s policy outnumbered supporters by 2:1. Assistance to El Salvador shifted from 30% disapproval in April 1983 to a 70% disapproval after the speech in May 1983 (Leo Grande, 1984).
On July 8, 1983, Reagan called an NSC summit meeting of all officials in charge of Central American policy to develop a "new" strategy. The working paper said, "The situation in Central America is reaching critical point". Several steps were approved, among them:

- A concerted program to achieve domestic support for the new policy within ruling circles and the general population.
- Consolidation of the program of ongoing military maneuvers throughout the Caribbean basin and particularly in Honduras.
- Expanded long range development and security programs for Central American allies and deeper penetration of those societies by U.S. institutions.
- The establishment of a bipartisan commission to map out detailed proposals for the new long term strategy.
- A major expansion of the war against Nicaragua including the reorganizing of the Contras and the pursuit of a diplomatic strategy to isolate Nicaragua (New York Times, July 17, 1983).

Over the next several months the pieces of the policy unfolded. Reagan appointed the Kissinger commission on Central America in July 1983. Big Pine II, huge military maneuvers, came into full swing in August. The White House set up the office of public diplomacy to spearhead perception management programs and build popular support for the war effort. The White House also established the Central American outreach group to coordinate New Right private organizations.
By mid June 1983 the semi covert war had become overt. Reagan admitted for the first time publicly that the U.S. supported the Contras and on May 4th called them "freedom fighters" for the first time. Thereafter, the rhetoric became far more specific and war like as resources committed to the war escalated.

Main Arguments - Counter Evidence

Nicaragua poses major threat to United States security.

Accounts of Nicaraguan history, in Reagan’s justification, inevitably began in 1979. No mention occurred of U.S. backing for Somoza and a 150 year history of U.S. intervention in Nicaragua. By ignoring the history of the conflict Reagan also obfuscated the need to talk about the Somocista composition of the Contras. Nicaragua never once in its history sent troops to the United States or aimed a weapon in its direction. Since Nicaragua lacked both an air force and a navy capable of operating much beyond its own borders, Nicaragua clearly posed no direct threat to the United States. The rhetorical strategy of linking Nicaragua’s military to Soviet missile bases on Nicaraguan soil provided at least the illusion of the Sandinistas being a threat to United States security.

Nicaraguan leaders insisted that Nicaragua would never allow Soviet bases, stressed that Nicaragua’s non-aligned policy forbade it, and acknowledged that such bases would be all the justification America needed for a full invasion. No evidence ever emerged indicating the Soviet Union wanted
any bases in Nicaragua. The Sandinistas in all proposed treaties agreed to the banning of foreign bases, troops, advisers, and arms build up.

Reagan referred to the Managua airport being able to accommodate Soviet aircraft and to other signs of Nicaraguan dependency on Moscow. The airport was constructed under the Somoza regime with U.S. assistance (Sklar 1988). Historically, the Somoza government recognized Moscow in 1944. After the revolution Managua signed aid, trade and cultural agreements with the Soviet Union. They requested no military assistance at the time. Nicaragua first turned to the United States for military help. Only when America refused did Nicaragua look to Europe and to Russia for help. Russia had formed diplomatic and trade relations with almost every Latin American country and only started significant military aid to the Nicaraguan military in 1982 after major Contra activity (Burns 1987).

Traditionally, Moscow oriented Communist parties in Latin America refused to join guerilla movements. In Nicaragua they denounced the armed struggle and joined the cause very late. The Nicaraguan Communist Party (PSN) received only 1.3% of the votes in Nicaragua’s 1984 elections and its members held no important government positions (Newsweek December 4, 1984).

Nicaragua posed a threat to other nations in the region.

According to classified U.S. intelligence reports from late 1984, the military build up was "primarily defense oriented" (Wall Street Journal, April 3,
1985). Any offensive move required air power. Nicaragua's small air force had no supersonic fighters or bombers. Nicaragua had 36 helicopters, only effective for defense against the Contras.

No evidence ever supported accusations of attacks by Nicaragua into neighboring countries. U.S. General Paul Corman said, "They would have little to gain for the risks incurred. It would bring the region down on them." (testimony before the Senate Armed Services committee, February 23, 1984)

Reagan administration claims of Nicaragua's military capacity contrasted significantly with other U.S. government and independent sources. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>U.S. Department of Defense</th>
<th>Other Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Figures</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Troops 138,000</td>
<td>40,000 (i)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanks 150</td>
<td>70 (ii)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combat aircraft 45</td>
<td>12 Nicaragua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>59 El Salvador</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(i) Congressional Report</td>
<td>30 Honduras (iii)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii) N.Y.T. 11/8/84</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iii) Institute for Strategic Studies, London, 1984</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

None of the surrounding countries or the OAS ever launched complaints
to the OAS or the United Nations about Nicaragua destabilizing them or being a threat.

**Nicaragua tried to subvert El Salvador**

CIA analyst David MacMichael announced that there was no evidence of an arms flow to El Salvador and this was confirmed by a cable from the U.S. embassy in El Salvador to Washington (Washington Post, August 13, 1983). MacMichael would later be fired after saying that "The administration and the CIA has systematically misrepresented Nicaraguan involvement in the supply of arms to Salvadoran guerrillas to justify efforts to overthrow the Nicaraguan government (New York Times, June 11, 1984).

A U.S government study report stated, "Intelligence officials claim they can hear a toilet flush in Managua, yet they have not been able to produce a captured van, a downed airplane or any evidence of arms flowing to El Salvador." (U.S. government Jacobson Report, June 1984). A study commissioned by the State Department in 1984 revealed administration claims of Soviet arms shipments to be false. Even the conservative Wall Street Journal said the Sandinistas did not pose a serious military threat to neighboring countries (Wall Street Journal, April 1, 1985). The World Court specifically rejected claims and found no evidence that Nicaragua was exporting arms (Newsweek, April 23, 1984).

**Nicaragua broke promises to the OAS**

The "promises" to the Organization of American States, OAS was a
charge repeated many times over the ensuing years. It referred to a July 12, 1979, letter the Sandinistas sent to the OAS secretary general with its plan of transition to peace. The letter was not a formal agreement or commitment to the OAS and OAS officers never treated it as such. It was not a treaty of any kind. The letter indicated the Sandinista's intentions of, a) preventing extralegal punishment of national guardsmen, b) allowing Nicaraguans who so wished (including Somoza) to leave the country, and c) holding future elections (local 1980 and national 1984).

Since all of the above happened as stated, the focus on the nonexistent violations deflected attention away from U.S. violations of the nonintervention articles of the OAS charter to which America was bound by its own and international law. Perhaps that explains Reagan's failure to take any complaints about Nicaragua to the OAS.

Nicaragua proposed several peace initiatives over the years. On March 25, 1982, President Daniel Ortega called for direct talks with the U.S., but the offers were rejected as premature by the administration. The appeal was repeated in July and August 1982 with no answer from U.S. (Central American Historical Institute, Washington D.C., 1984 Update).

*America does not plan to the overthrow Nicaragua.*

The CIA training manual clearly discussed "overthrow" and the removal of the Sandinistas. The Contra leaders stated clearly that the United States wanted the overthrow of the Sandinistas (*Washington Post*, November 27,
Reagan accused Nicaragua of genocide.

As a rhetorical strategy to win support for the Contras the Miskito case provided a formidable tool which deserves special attention as a rhetorical strategy in war rhetoric. The issue arose in almost every speech and became one of the most "heartrending" reasons to support the cause. To come to the rescue of a native tribe has traditionally provided many a justification for colonial conquest. The same theme dominated South African war propaganda as justifications for military occupation. It provided a far more human face for the counter revolutionaries than the widely perceived Somozista image of the former National Guard leadership of the Contras.

In practice the CIA prioritized the strategic importance of co-opting indigenous people and using them militarily and politically as propaganda for war justifications. In recent years the CIA exercised the same strategy by supporting Jonas Savimbi's UNITA in Angola and the Hmong tribes in Laos. The CIA poured millions of dollars into Savimbi who admits to working with South Africa and the CIA to help South African troops invade Angola and who recently admitted to murdering many associates. Bush recently cut off aid to UNITA because horror stories about Savimbi's atrocities became too embarrassing. In Laos the U.S. built the Hmong Army led by Vang Pao, an opium dealer and former French mercenary.

Many of the CIA's main operatives who directed the Laos campaign
during the Vietnam war moved into the Nicaragua strategy. Examples included, Richard Secord, head of one of the key private U.S. groups who acquired weapons for the Contras. Others included Shackley CIA chief in Laos, Donald Gregg, Teliso Rodriguez, manager of the Contra supply operation in El Salvador, John Sinlaub, Oliver North and Eugene Hasenfus running paramilitary operations in Laos with the Hmong tribe and all key figures in the Iran - Contra scandal. (Sklar 101) The CIA recruited Steadman Fagoth who launched an anti Sandinista front claiming 38% of the land. Fagoth previously infiltrated the student movement as an informer for Somoza. Four Sandinistas and four Miskitos were killed when Sandinistas made their arrest of the "subversives." These four deaths would later be called the mass murders.

In January 1982 the Sandinistas relocated 8,500 Miskito Indians who were in the line of fire on the border between Honduras and Nicaragua. The Sandinistas burned the evacuated areas to deny cover to the Contra raiders from Honduras. (Sklar 103) When plans for a massive Miskito uprising failed news of "massacres" were "released" in a wide scattered media campaign. Only two sources of supporting evidence emerged, one was a photo of massacred Miskito Indians which turned out to be a three year old Red Cross photo of the Red Cross cleaning up the bodies of Somoza’s war victims (Ortiz, 1983) (Sklar 104). The second piece of evidence was an American public relations trip organized by, U.S. ambassador, Jean Kirkpatrick for Fagoth, the Miskito/Contra leader.
The Inter-American commission on human rights, International Red Cross, Americas Watch, a branch of the Helsinki Watch group, several journalists, the National Council of Churches (USA) and the American Indian Movement found no evidence of any massacres or murders. Such findings formed a sharp contrast with world wide denunciation of massive killings of the indigenous Indians in Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras (Ortiz, 1983).

Metaphoric Analysis

Mega Images and Supporting Metaphors

Classical rhetoric may be distinguished from contemporary rhetoric by the importance accorded to metaphor. Burke (1945) described metaphor in his earlier works as a minor or incidental form of rhetoric. Later, Burke (1973) wrote that metaphors provide the "cue for an unending line of data and generalizations." Osborn (1976) argued that metaphor is a device of depiction, "calling forth a distinct response sequence." "Metaphor," he said "has revolutionary potential to arrest the mind and yield an intense vivid and persistent depiction." At its most forceful metaphor became an image, "a luminous presentation of a subject which captivated the mind." It reconstructs "reality" and becomes a powerful tool of persuasion "profoundly rearranging the landscapes of our minds" (p. 7). Ivie (1986) contended that "metaphor is at the base of rhetorical invention. Elaborating a primary image into a well formed argument produces a motive, or interpretation of reality, with which the intended audience is invited to identify" (p. 8). Image was used by Burke and
Image interchangeably with metaphor, although image conveys a more lively visual picture in the mind than metaphor, which paints a more verbal picture.

Image carries its own hierarchy of persuasiveness. A reductionist tendency increases to the point where "one" metaphor/image seems to say it all, becoming the "mother" of all images. Contained within its meaning we find several clusters of other words and images that enforce the image or are "consubstantiated" by the image. These ultimate images I describe as mega-images. Such mega-images act with all their domain of meanings upon a term or metaphor from another field of meaning rearranging their meanings with persuasively powerful results. This can extend to the point where the enemy is "transformed" from innocent peasant into devil. The mega-images act just like a red filter attached to a color camera. Every other color besides red filters out of the real world. Burke defined master metaphors (mega images) as "terministic screens" whose value lies in their "untapped potential" as sources of invention. (Burke, 1973. 65,95)

Reagan constantly used mega-images to create an enemy and to hide the CIA's or the NSC network's war activities. Reagan ignored information coming from his own Embassy in Nicaragua. As one U.S. official stated, "Compared to the statements and actions that are coming out of Washington it seems they must be using our reports as toilet paper...we’ve pointed out the distortions time and time again and been totally ignored or told to shut up." Boston Globe (cited in Sklar, 1988) The gap between "reality" and "rhetoric" stretched the
transforming impact of such mega-images to the limit. It should be noted that
America's stated intentions and actions in Central America were viewed very
differently by the people of Nicaragua and the rest of the world.

Mega-images as rhetorical invention devices can be manipulated to
cover-up a host of realities in a war situation, such as the extent of the war,
key players involved, methods adopted, nature of enemy, threat to National
Security and preferred solutions. In Reagan's first nationwide television appeal
he depicted the Sandinistas as Communist puppets "imposing a dictatorship in
Nicaragua against the people," and he claimed that "violence was Nicaragua's
most important export to the world, threatening the security of the United
States."

After studying 150 years of war rhetoric, Ivie (1972) concluded that a
predictable pattern of motives for war existed in a hierarchy with "rights" at the
top of the pyramid as the primary god-term for purpose with "law" and
"democracy" as secondary god-terms for agency. Only through the agency of
"law" and "democracy" could "rights" be secured. In the speeches Ivie
analyzed, "rights" appeared 151 times, less in the twentieth century than the
nineteenth. The total count of "rights" in all of Reagan's speeches was only
38 and in the first television address "rights" appeared only once indirectly.
"Rights" vanished as the primary purpose term in Reagan's war rhetoric,
perhaps marking the end of an era.

"Freedom" became the primary purpose term. In the first speech
"freedom" appeared 45 times or was mentioned eleven times every thousand words used (4,100 words in first speech), compared to ten times every thousand words in all speeches (59,000 words). The term "rights" appeared 0.6 times every thousand words in all speeches and only 0.2 times every thousand words in the first speech. In the first speech "freedom" was used as the purpose term twenty of the 44 times mentioned. In a previous study of post World War II Presidential inaugural addresses, I found, using the pentadic analysis, that freedom was the dominant purpose theme in every speech. Freedom also emerged as an integral part of all other elements of the pentad. From Truman’s inaugural address of 1949 and the following ten, including Reagan’s inaugural speech of 1985, "freedom" appeared 91 times, much more often than any other term (Morton 1984).

In Reagan’s rhetoric democracy surfaced as the key god-term for counter agency. Freedom emerges by "supporting democracies" in El Salvador and Honduras, and by supporting the "democratic" resistance. The noble purpose of freedom consubstantiates the counter agents by labelling them freedom fighters. Counter agents were affirmed when fighting for freedom and denounced when acting violently against the American ideal. Peace arose only after freedom’s victory over tyrannical Communist terrorists. The "end" of peace justifies the means employed to achieve that peace.

The god-term mega-images of freedom, democracy and peace dovetailed well with the rhetorical exigencies of the 1980’s. Reagan stated "we will
support democracy, reform and human freedom, in response to decades of inequity." The persuasive power of these mega-images became more forceful when juxtaposed with their opposites. The struggle became one of us versus them, democracy versus Communism, freedom versus force, peace versus terrorist. Posed in such terms the either-or depiction called forth virtually only one choice.

In his discussion of decivilizing vehicles, Ivie (1974) declared that the strategy "is to dichotomize and polarize ideologies," "to debunk the ideology of the enemy and glorify American political philosophy as the only acceptable secular faith available for a decent human being" (p. 342). Philip Wander (1984) described the notion of America, God's chosen land, as "prophetic dualism" (p. 342). Because America possessed such moral superiority, a stand against America was a stand against what is good. This left only two choices in which there could be no middle ground. Judith Hoover (1991), writing about Wander's prophetic dualism noted that "Perhaps its greatest usefulness lies in its ability to stifle public debate" (p. 14). Repeated usage strengthened the impact of the "prophetic dualism" strategy.

By frequently using and strategically placing god mega-images with diametrically opposite devil "mega images, polarization occurred of both sides. Some have described polarization as a "rhetorical strategy" to build political constituencies (Raum and Measell 1974, King and Anderson 1971). Polarization creates a reality of opposites, right versus wrong. Lanigan's
(1970) study (cited in Hoover, 1991) showed that polarization "creates a perspective of reality based on value divisions that characterize one individual as good, right, lawful and rational, while his neighbor becomes evil, wrong, unlawful and irrational" (p. 9). The direction of persuasion forces the audience to take sides and almost imperceptibly we are drawn to take sides with the "good guys." As Hoover noted, "the tactics of image creation through "naming," "name-calling" and linking with obvious evils, are helpful in the process of uniting previously diverse groups into a cohesive whole" (p. 10). In Reagan's rhetorical exigency, for example, the diverse groups included Republicans, Democrats, the religious right, Jews, Catholics and the CIA.

The devil mega-images of "Communist," "force" and "terrorist" were juxtaposed with the American ideal to create the polarization. Reagan talked of "the line dividing the free world from the Communist bloc." (All quotes from Reagan's television address in this chapter, see Reagan 1983a) Contrasting made the images stand out. The "generosity and good faith of the Americans towards Nicaragua" was contrasted with the "Marxist/Leninist Sandinista's" who "treated us as an enemy." They "imposed a new dictatorship...seized control of most media," "have driven the Miskito Indians from their homelands burning their villages, destroying their crops," "... moved against...free labor unions," "...condoned mob action against the independent human rights commission." The polarization led almost logically to the conclusion, "after all these acts of repression, is it any wonder that opposition formed?" The blame
was clearly placed on the Communists... "Nicaragua, supported by weapons provided by the Communist bloc, represses its own people, refused to make peace and sponsors guerrilla war against El Salvador"... Sometimes the polarization becomes rhythmical. In Reagan's words, "I ask you, the Congress, to join me in a generous approach to the problems of "peace" and "poverty," "democracy" and "dictatorship"... "In response to Cuba and Nicaragua's deliberate use of force to spread tyranny, we will support the security of the regions threatened nations with a shield for democratization."

The overall frequency of the mega-images indicates another motive in the rhetorical strategy. In all of Reagan's speeches (59,000 words), Communist and the associative cluster words such as "soviet," "red," "marxist" appeared 24 times per 1,000 words as compared to 12 times per 1,000 words for the mega-image of democracy forming a ratio of 2:1 for Communist versus democratic. In the first television speech analyzed, Reagan used "Communist" 16 times per 1,000 words versus nine times per 1,000 words for "democracy." Again a similar ratio of 2:1 appeared, the same as found in the total speeches. In both instances Reagan focused on the Communist enemy twice as much as democratic alliances.

When comparing "force" versus "freedom" the ratio in all the speeches remained at the same ratio of 2:1 or 18 times per 1000 words for force versus 9 times per 1,000 words for freedom. The ratio was significantly heightened in the first television speech compared to the average for all speeches. Freedom
remained fairly consistent with the general speeches appearing 10 times per 1,000 words, but force rose dramatically to 43 times per 1,000 words to a ratio of 4:1. The emphasis pointed to the enemy’s agency of force in the general speeches and increased 131% in the first television speech. Force defined the enemy’s conduct, the enemy’s motives and determined the only legitimate response, to fight back. A similar pattern was displayed when comparing terrorist and peace. Terrorism was mentioned four times per 1,000 words compared to one time per 1,000 for peace, again displaying a ratio of 4:1.

Boulding’s (1959) words about national images seem applicable. "Those who determine a nation’s actions don’t respond to objective facts but to their "image" of the situation ie it’s what we think the world is like, not what it’s really like that determines our behavior" (p. 120). Reagan intersperses evil images with common sense notions and proofs so that the images were not merely mental pictures but appeared as literal truths. Thus, he claimed, Nicaragua "threatens the security of the United States by being as close to Miami as Miami is to Washington."

Identification and Victimage Ritual.

By sanctifying the ideals of freedom, democracy and peace, and then identifying America and her allies with those ideals, Reagan exonerated America of any guilt in the war by "devil-imaging" Americas adversaries as Communist terrorists who live by brutal force. This strategy also legitimized total victory
over such an evil foe. Kenneth Burke’s identification through consubstantiality process provides one key to understanding how the fusion/absolution process occurs. By uniting the speaker and audience through identification with commonly held "noble" attitudes, the speaker creates what Sanbonmatsu (1971) illuminatingly called the "zipper effect" (P. 37).

Identification results from such categories as nationality, class, age, occupation and sex. Burke (1973) classified the categories as (1) symbols of authority and value (references to God, family and law) (2) direct identification (nationality, religion etc.) (3) eulogisms and dyslogisms (positive or negative attitudes towards subject, e.g. terrorists) (4) images of transformation (images of life and death) (5) commitment ("we’ve promised it") (p. 73). Through this strategy of depiction the audience’s attitudes and beliefs became congruent or "zipped" together with the President’s purposes. Reagan’s first speech provides good examples of all five forms of identification.

*Symbols of authority and value.*

Quoting President Truman, Reagan claimed, "Every nation must choose between the will of the majority with free elections, guarantees of individual liberty, freedom of speech and religion and freedom from political oppression. The second way of life is based upon the will of the minority forcibly imposed upon the majority. It relies upon terror and oppression, a controlled press and radio, fixed elections and the suppression of personal freedoms" (Reagan, 1983a).
Direct identification.

How close Nicaragua's threat might be to the United States interests, geographically, strategically and globally was mentioned by Reagan and repeated as a threat to the nation. It is interesting to note that Reagan avoided direct identification with the contras at this stage. Only later would he identify with them as freedom fighters. Even though Contra forces operated for years, Reagan mentioned them indirectly as those who wanted democracy and fought against Somoza. The specific four point program that Reagan outlined only mentioned, "congressional approval for the full reprogramming of funds for key current economic and security programs so that the people of Central America can hold the line against externally supported aggression." Later he mentioned what the administration was asking for on behalf of freedom ...." In other words at this stage he directly identified only ongoing programs to stop Communist aggression on behalf of freedom. American aggression in any form did not exist at this stage. As CIA activities surfaced publicly Reagan sought to make the Contras into a visible and viable alternative, asking his audience to identify with the equivalent of the "founding fathers, "and wearing a button that said "I'm a contra too."

This earlier vague identification showed a weakness in Reagan's identification strategy and appears as a major reason why this speech was not very persuasive in terms of public opinion polls and his request for funding. The audience was asked to believe that a small semi unknown country
presented a major threat to the United States. They were asked to identify with vague programs rather than with a specific causes and heroes.

Eulogisms and dyslogisms.

Reagan effectively appealed to anti-Communist sentiment to the point that many in the press and Congress did not want to be seen as "soft on Communism," a widespread fear which Reagan used with effect. In his comparison of public opinion towards the wars in Korea and Vietnam, Mueller (1983) found public support based on two key factors: the public’s anti-Communism and its desire to support the policy of its leaders. Consistently, questions that included the key word "Communist" elicited higher levels of support for United States policy than similar questions which did not include such cues. Similarly questions about United States policies elicited higher levels when the questions appeared in terms of support for the government’s position. Both these strategies made a 25% to 35% difference in public opinion polls, forming a very dramatic and effective identification strategy.

Public opinion strongly opposed deployment of American troops to Central America but opposition dropped 25-30 points when such deployment was phased in terms of a "Communist takeover of the region" (Leo Grande, table 10). Support for the Contras shot up when posed in terms of "opposing the Marxist government in Nicaragua (Table 21). Reagan used this form of identification hundreds of times throughout his speeches. On the other side of the coin, identification by eulogisms, the audience is called to identify with
"freedom," "shields of democracy" (military assistance) and "peace," repeatedly throughout the text.

**Images of transformation.**

The contrasting images of life and death pull us persuasively and almost inevitably towards life. Relating a story of a woman threatened by the guerrillas in El Salvador (supported he alleges by the Nicaraguans), Reagan said: "You can kill me, you can kill my family, you can kill my neighbors but you can’t kill us all. I say in good conscience we can never turn our backs on that."

**Commitment.**

Appealing to the nation and Congress and individuals sense of integrity Reagan recalled America’s historical commitment to freedom, democracy and peace. He states that "There can be no question. The national security of all the Americas is at stake. If we cannot defend ourselves there, we cannot expect to prevail elsewhere. Our credibility would collapse, our alliances would crumble and the safety of our homeland would be put in jeopardy. We have a vital interest, a moral duty and a solemn responsibility. Who among us would wish to bear responsibility for failing to meet our shared obligation?" The above categories are the various modes of identification used to describe the vocabulary of motives in Reagan’s appeals to take a stand against Nicaragua and to cover-up the reality of CIA operations already undertaken in Central America.

A second function of prowar rhetoric according to Ivie (1980) is to
perform what he calls a "victimage ritual." Dissonance arises from the fact that Americans are strongly committed to the ideal of peace, yet at the same time find themselves having to justify participation in a war situation. The strategy is to resolve the dissonance. Various theories and experimental literature on the cognitive dynamics associated with attitude change, specifically "balance theories," refer to four strategies to resolve cognitive dissonance. One strategy is that receiving information not consistent with one's attitudes may lead to a search for other information which supports and does not disrupt the pre-existing balance (Hovland et al 1953). The other information, provided by the President himself in this case, is that the fault for the disruption of America's high ideal of peace lies with the "Evil Empire" and their Sandinista surrogates who threaten peace in the region and in America by exporting terrorist aggression.

Balance or "redemption" in Ivie's terms, comes through identifying another culprit or plausible scapegoat, who is to blame for putting peace loving people in such a position. Reagan's rhetoric staunchly portrays the Nicaraguans and their allies as demonic and bent on the brutal destruction of America and her friends in our own backyard. As Reagan says: "after all these acts of repression is it any wonder that opposition has formed." The savage description of the motives, the ends and the means chosen to achieve their evil goals, constantly portray an image of an enemy out of control, who must be stopped before peace has a chance of survival.
Dramatistic Analysis

Ivie (1972) sought the answers to two questions for his Ph.D. thesis: 1) What are the major features in the vocabulary of motives used by all American Presidents to justify a foreign war? 2) Are there consistencies among these vocabularies? The answers would help us better understand "symbol structures" as a critical variable in America's pro-war rhetoric. Ivie's method included a search for persuasive images from 1812 through the Vietnam war, using Burke's pentadic analysis as a tool to unravel recurring features. By use of Burke's identification strategies Ivie found that dynamics of the pentadic relationship became evident through identifying the recurring definitions of the war situation.

The common issues addressed in all presidential war Ivie outlined as: 1) recognition of an ideal, 2) depiction of a crisis, 3) blame for the crisis and 4) the solution to the crisis. Ivie (1972) found a consistency in the vocabulary of motives both in content and interrelationships which he synthesized into a composite vocabulary of motives. He found the motives in a definite hierarchy with "rights" at the top as the primary god-term for purpose and he found "law" and "democracy" as secondary god-terms for agency. Ivie concludes "Only through the agencies of "law" and "democracy" can "rights" be secured." Other pentadic terms he found substantiated by the primary purpose agency ratio and these terms appeared lower on the hierarchical ladder.

This study follows a very similar pattern of investigation to identify
images, motives and strategies in order to provide a continuum and a valid comparison with Ivie’s conclusions. Ivie’s methodology and conclusions formed a benchmark in prowar rhetorical study and appears unchallenged in the journals. The following dramatistical analyses unravels Reagan’s first television speech using Ivie’s outline.

Recognition of an ideal.

Ivie found the purpose term functioned most prominently in the justifications for war with “rights” as the key purpose term. In this first nationwide appeal I found “freedom” as the key purpose term and I found the pentadic element agency functioned most prominently in the justifications for war. In all Reagan’s speeches rights are seldom mentioned and then only in the vaguest sense. Furthermore, rights did not appear in Reagan’s first nationwide speech. This marked a clear break with 150 years of presidential prowar rhetoric. Freedom instead emerged as the predominant god-term for purpose. Freedom also showed up as “the” reason and as the ultimate justification for fighting.

The other significant shift in Reagan’s rhetoric compared to those studied by Ivie was a shift from purpose/agency ratio to agency as the primary element. Agency/purpose constituted the primary ratio. Other elements of the pentad were consubstantiated by their relationship to the primary devil-term of “force” as agency. Another devil-term “Communist” enhanced the image of force as the only agency the enemy knew. Reagan described the enemy’s primary
purpose, or its ideal in terms of "force". "Violence," he said, "has been Nicaragua’s most important export to the world."

The dominating devil-terms for the enemy arose with "force" as the primary agency term in the critical agency/purpose relationship. Closely portrayed as a supporting vehicle was the image of "terrorist." The enemy’s purpose was "sinister" and it "relied upon terror," "using force as agency" to "spread tyranny," and "ruthless" tactics like "sabotage," "mob action" and "internment camps" to achieve their evil purposes.

The message Reagan conveyed implied strongly that but for Moscow’s intentions in the region and Nicaragua’s acts of aggression in the area, America would not be part of the drama, certainly there was "no intention of overthrowing anyone." Only because of America’s primary commitment to defend freedom and to American and international law must this nation now act. In Reagan’s words, "We do not seek its overthrow. Our interest is to ensure that it does not infect its neighbors through the export of subversion and violence." (Note the dehumanizing label of "it" for infecting germ) "Our purpose in conformity with American and International law is to prevent the flow of arms (violence) to...." Like a good doctor America only sought "prevention" of the spread of the agency of violence [disease] by supporting the counter agency of democracy [cure].

"Freedom" appeared as the common thread in most elements of the pentad. As part of purpose America must "divide the free world from
Communism," and "we cannot turn our backs on freedom," and "we must support those fighting for freedom," and the consequence of remaining passive was the "collapse of freedom." As part of act the initiating act is Nicaragua's removal by force of basic freedoms and the Contras and America's response or counter act is the fight for and restoration of those freedoms. As part of scene the absence of freedom via force was what defines the scene in Nicaragua as opposed to the presence of freedoms in other neighboring scenes like El Salvador. As part of agent the Sandinistas are the freedom destroyers, and as counter agent, the Contras are the freedom fighters. As part of agency the apex of the hierarchy of motives, freedom as the ultimate purpose and goal justifies "resistance" whereas the enemy's purpose of subversion by violence guarantees the absence of freedom.

Thus "the ideal" in Reagan's depiction is a world including Central America where freedom reigns supreme, exercised by individuals and protected by governments. The presence of freedom "guarantees democracy" as in El Salvador, in contrast with Nicaragua where "no freedom, no democracy exist." "Democracy" is closely associated with the cluster of freedom images as the counter agency to enemy aggression and essential to any hope for "freedom."

Democracy dominates as counter agency appearing 37 times in the first speech, compared to "law," mentioned only twice. "Democracy" is a key god-term for counter agency and only by the inclusion of "democracy" can the primary purpose of freedom be achieved. Without one there can be no
other, again forming a critical agency/purpose ratio. It seems at times that "democracy" becomes the ideal, not surprising since with agency/purpose as the critical ratio, agency terms tend to become ends in themselves. Reagan asks to use our powers to "bolster democratic systems," to build a "shield for democratization" and to "give democratic reform time to take root."

The ideal agency/purpose ratio is enforced by various modes of identification. One of the modes is by weighted antithetical placement. Devil images are presented more graphically and frequently than god-terms. "Communist" is mentioned two times more than "democracy," "force" four times more than "freedom" and "terrorist" four times more then "peace." By directional placement the American ideal of "freedom," democracy" and "peace" find themselves under attack, outweighed and outnumbered by images of "Communist," "terrorists" using brutal "force." The enemy has no guiding principles other than identification with goals antithetical to those of America.

This terministic screen concretizes the acceptable order of things, and predetermines the role of agent and counter agent in the hierarchy of motives. Agents are good or bad by virtue of the ideals they choose as guiding principles and by the means they employ to reach those ends. Reagan by definition depicts the terrorists and the freedom fighters in the drama. Guatemala, El Salvador Honduras and the Contras, all identified by human rights organizations for serious human rights abuses are accorded sanctified status as "good agents" because the President claimed they identify with American ideals.
General Alverez the dictatorial chief of the Honduran army scoffed at death squad accusations in 1984 saying "Everything you do to destroy a marxist regime is moral" (Sklar 123). Anyone became sanctified as the counter agents through whom we can rectify the threat to the American ideal.

"Scene" assumes an interesting role in the vocabulary of motives as it relates to the ideal. As a function of the agency/purpose ratio this study found, as Ivie (1972) found in his comparisons, "no scenic imperative is recognized as potent enough to justify deviation from higher principles" (p. 64). "Freedom" colors contrasting scenes by its presence or absence. The "scene" in El Salvador is described in terms of freedom, the primary purpose term. El Salvador offered "free" elections under the threat of "brutal" force from the guerrillas. The people of El Salvador were "earning their "freedom" and deserve our support..." and "making every effort to guarantee... "free" labor unions, "freedom" of religion and a "free" press.

The scene in Nicaragua is overwhelmingly a violent totalitarian scene depicted in terms of the absence of "freedom." As Reagan says " It turned out to be just an exchange of one set of autocratic rulers for another," and the people still have no freedom." They crushed "freedom of speech" by seizing control of most of the media, and by denying religious "freedom" to the Roman Catholic Church. Scenic imperatives are subsumed by their relationship to the primary agency/purpose ratio.
Description of a Crisis

In summary, the perception of disharmony shows predominantly in agency terms, deviating from Ivie’s conclusions that the crisis is consistently perceived in purpose terms. The crisis is sometimes depicted in purpose terms but not with the same weight and frequency as agency, forming a critical agency/purpose ratio to describe the crisis. The act becomes the explosion of violence in the region and the crisis arose from the resultant destruction of freedom and democracy that accompanies such an act. A crisis arises not only for the region but for the United States as well. Beyond strategic and economic threats the crisis threatens the very future of the ideals "freedom" and "democracy." Clearly in Reagan’s mind, right and wrong seemed at stake and the expansion of "the most Evil Empire the world has ever known" would have to be rolled back. The verbal power of "violent Communist terrorists" bent on destroying everyone’s freedom proved powerful by itself. When conveyed through the medium of television the persuasive effect magnified.

The media boosted agency as the primary mode of description of the crises. Full-color, gory "photos" of massacres with the hammer and sickle logo on one side of the screen and stars and stripes on the other and with Castro superimposed on the map of Central America made a vivid depiction. Then the color red bled over the map on CBS’s prime time news confirming the visual image of the crisis of Soviet aggression in our backyard which presented a national crisis for America. The agency of aggression dominated as the
description of the crisis and as the reason why something should be done.

Focus on agency was ideally suited to the medium of television with visuals and sound bites. Both the public and journalists rely heavily on stock images and standard formulas to comprehend the news and to package it in such a way that can be conveyed in 90 seconds. A revolutionary war was confusing enough to those who have lived there all their lives. Journalists plunged into strange worlds and asked to report something meaningful in one minute seize upon simplistic colorful images, stereotypes and officials angles with photos already supplied. They intended to present "reality" in a way the public will understand, but the effect is often to subordinate the reality of another society to the "images" of the American world view. The Nicaraguans described the crises in terms of more than a century of American military intervention, decades of exploitation under the brutal domination of American imposed dictator Somoza and regional realities of poverty, illiteracy and disease. In Reagan’s speeches and in the American media such scenic imperatives were screened out and consubstantiated by the more "acceptable" explanation of the crisis in familiar cold war terminology. Americans, far from being confronted with a new "reality" simply saw their stereotypical assumptions mirrored back to them.

In purpose terms Reagan called the unprecedented joint session of Congress and requested time on national television "in order to prevent a crisis," because the United States’ strategic, hemispheric and international
interests and security seemed in jeopardy and America's credibility at risk. In an overstatement of the crisis Reagan declared, "there can be no question, the national security of all the Americas is at stake in Central America. If we cannot defend ourselves there, we cannot expect to prevail elsewhere. Our credibility would collapse, our alliances would crumble and the safety of our homeland would be put in jeopardy."

The crisis arose from "Communist aggression in our hemisphere." Two agencies described how the crisis arose. a) By proximity, dramatic comparisons of distances detailed how close the subversion is. b) By the presence in the Caribbean of Soviet, Cuban, Libyan, Grenadan and Nicaraguan "Marxist Leninist bands who believe war is an instrument of politics." The agency of force dominated descriptions of the crisis. The destruction of freedoms in the region described the nature of the crisis.

In El Salvador "freedom" and "democracy" were "taking root" and a crisis developed when "guerilla bands ruthlessly attacked, destroying facilities," "depriving them of food" and "trying to defeat democracy." In Nicaragua a crisis developed when they, "treated us as an enemy;" "rejected our peace efforts;" "broken its promises;" "ousted others;" "imposed a new dictatorship;" "refused to hold elections;" "seized control;" "denied rights;" "mocked the Pope;" "drove the Miskito Indians from their homelands burning their villages," "destroying their crops," "forcing them into internment camps" and "helped Cuba and the Soviets to destabilize our hemisphere." Reagan insists "violence"
had been Nicaragua's most important export to the world," "trying to bring
down the elected government in El Salvador" by "directing guerilla attacks from
Managua." Nicaragua’s huge military build-up, accomplished with Soviet
weaponry and advisors from Cuba, East Germany, Libya and the PLO, had one
"sinister goal: to destabilize the entire region, from the Panama Canal to
Mexico." This massive image of the enemy spreading chaos by violence and
advancing on America was reinforced with drum beat repetitiveness reinforcing
the critical agency/purpose ratio.

Blame for the crisis.

Reagan persistently held the enemy agents responsible for creating the
crisis that confronted America. The "evil empire" had many faces and found
itself accused on numerous fronts. Communism threatened the world as "the
most aggressive empire the modern world has seen," and through their puppet
clients like Cuba, Nicaragua, the guerrillas in El Salvador and Grenada, they
threatened our hemisphere. The enemy agents choice of force as the primary
means of furthering their purpose formed the basis of blame for the crisis,
consistent with other ratios of the pentad.

This study concludes with Ivie (1972) that hostile governments
themselves are assessed ultimate responsibility for crisis producing actions,
motivated by the ends they affirm, the methods they employ or the
environmental pressures to which they succumb. Ivie concluded, "any foreign
agent who does not accept American ideals is automatically assessed with the
responsibility for the crisis" (p. 68).

In a unique and interesting twist the United States as counter agent is assessed with part of the blame, sometimes by inference and sometimes directly. Reagan and the Republicans strongly denounced the Carter administration’s policy of accommodation. "Concerted propaganda" was blamed for many Americans "finding it hard to believe that we have a stake in problems involving those countries." In El Salvador "we’ve only provided enough money to train one Salvadoran soldier out of ten, fewer than the number of guerrillas that are trained by Nicaragua and Cuba." Nicaragua had 2,000 military advisors and thousands of Soviet, Cuban, East German and other advisors while America watched "over a million Cubans who fled Castro’s Caribbean utopia." As Reagan said, "must we, by default, leave the people of El Salvador to flee their homes?...I don’t believe that there’s a majority in the Congress or the country that counsels passivity, resignation and defeatism in the face of this challenge to our freedom and security in our own hemisphere...while the people of Central America are delivered to totalitarianism. In other words we have only our passivity to blame for the worsening crises so far, and we are responsible for what will happen if we do not act now."

Reagan warned, "If we cannot respond to a threat near our own borders why should Europeans and Asians believe that we’re seriously concerned about threats to them. If the Soviets can assume that nothing short of an actual
attack on the United States will provoke an American response, which ally, which friend will trust us." Congress shares both the "power" and "the responsibility for our foreign policy" and if they do not join Reagan's "bold" approach to "prevent Communist victory" then they too share the blame for the crisis. Reagan concluded, in purpose terms with a question, "who among us would wish to bear responsibility for failing to meet our shared obligation?"

Scenic imperatives were invoked as part of the blame by a description of the strategic importance of the Caribbean to the United States in World War II and to the Soviet Union today.

**Solution to the crisis.**

Ivie's study concluded that "war is recommended as a solution after peaceful methods have failed to prevent the disharmony." Nowhere in this first speech did Reagan recommend war as a solution. In fact he specifically avoided such talk. He made no mention of previous United States intervention in the region, or of joint military maneuvers with Honduras, or of the CIA already launching war or of the Contras acts of war. In fact, Reagan renounced war as a solution to the crisis by stating "we do not seek the overthrow of the Nicaraguan government." Indeed he attributed warlike activities exclusively to the enemy agent.

Reagan's recommendations for a solution to the crisis sounded almost pacifistic. As a counter-act to the enemy's acts of aggression he called for an "approach to sustain the independence and "freedom" of the countries of
Central America. To achieve these goals he suggested four programs as a counter agency to the enemy's agency of aggression. They included: a) "support for democracy, reform and human freedom," by "bolstering democratic systems," calling for "free and fair elections" and "work at human rights problems." b) support for economic development in the area, to enhance health care, agriculture and industry, c) support for the security of the regions threatened nations as a shield for democratization, d) support for dialogue and negotiations. All of this would "help the people of Central America hold the line against externally-supported aggression." Reagan downsized the appeal by describing the request as less than one tenth of what Americans spent this year on coin operated video games.

There could be two reasons for minimizing the request. In the first place Americans were wary of the possibility of another Vietnam. Talk of war could have rekindled such fears. Secondly a general appeal to anti-Communist sentiment may have been sufficient to secure the funds. No one wanted to be seen as "soft" on Communism. The disagreement with the Democrats was over the means chosen to achieve the agreed upon goals. "To begin with," said Senator Dodd replying on behalf of the Democrats to Reagan's speech, "we believe the administration fundamentally misunderstands the causes of conflict in Central America." He said, "If Central America were not racked with poverty there would be no revolution." "The United States should use all its power and influence to work for negotiated political settlement through the
Contadora process in Central America." "No one in this Congress or in this country is under the delusion that the Sandinista government is a model democracy or a force for stability, but the insurgents we have supported are remnants of the old Somoza regime...the Sandinistas may not be winners, but right now we are backing sure losers" (New York Times, April 28, 1983). The Democrats agreed with Reagan on the agent and agency but gave priority to scenic imperatives as the primary cause of the crisis. They chose the Contadora nations as counter agents rather than the Contras, whom they identified as "sure losers."

Reactions and Conclusions

The media generally reported Reagan’s speech claims as fact. The accusations of a Soviet sponsored military build up in Nicaragua flowed unchallenged in spite of United States intelligence reports admitting that Soviet arm shipments to Nicaragua turned sharply upward only after the Reagan administration launched the Contra war. Basically the media did not challenge the notion that Nicaragua posed a threat to the United States and none of the major media pointed out the fact that the administration produced no evidence that Nicaragua subverted any other countries in the region. Even when "evidence" or statistics were used by Reagan they could have been balanced by easily available and credible statistics showing that in fact the Nicaraguan military was smaller than their neighbors or that Reagan’s own military analysts doubted whether Nicaragua could or would ever invade them (Hersgaard,

Public opinion polls provided the first indication that the rhetoric had failed. A Gallup poll conducted in April before the speech showed that 44% of all respondents agreed that the United States should help the government of El Salvador while 47% thought the United States should stay out. On May 9, 1983 shortly after the speech Reagan lost ground with only 15% of the public approving help and 69% preferring to stay out. Harris polls showed a disapproval rating of Reagan’s Central American policies of about 60% from January 1982 to May 1983 (LeoGrande, 1984).

In reply to an April, 1983 ABC and Washington Post question of whether the causes of the unrest in Central America were Cuba, Nicaragua and the Soviet Union or instead poverty 50% of respondents blamed poverty and 29% the USSR and Cuba. In May after the speech the ratio increased to 57% blaming poverty and 22% the USSR and Cuba (Leo Grande. Table, 20). As for those favoring U.S. involvement with anti-Sandinista activity the shift moved from 62% opposed in April, 1983, to 78% opposed in May, 1983. Those in favor moved up slightly from 10% to 13% (Leo Grande Table 21). Over the next ten months, during which the question of U.S. involvement against Nicaragua would be raised, responses were highly consistent in opposition to
Reagan’s policy, generally in the mid fifties to the low 60% range.

The final blow to the President’s plan came in May, 1983, following the mining of Nicaragua’s harbors. The legislative branch refused the funding request, set a complete cut-off on all funding September of that year and sought to curtail United States military and other activity in the area. Reagan’s war against Nicaragua would continue for years to come but on the rhetorical front he had clearly lost the first big round in the war. The covert war could be kept secret no longer and the rhetoric did not address the realities of the situation. Reagan’s vague approach tried to cover-up too much.

My findings at this stage indicate a distinctive break with Ivie’s enduring themes, with his uniform vocabulary of motives and the pentadic ratios of purpose/agency.
Chapter 4

THE NOT SO SECRET WAR

Rhetorical Exigencies Surrounding Appeal.

President’s Ethos at the Time

Many similarities existed between the rhetorical situation facing Reagan at the time of both speeches. A full year had passed since the last appeal. Similar elements in the rhetorical drama that coincided included: a) Reagan’s popularity remained high. With the economy recovering in late 1983, Reagan’s job approval rating went up from 50% in 1982 to the mid fifties through 1983 and by May, 1984, his overall job rating peaked in the 60% range. Disapproval ratings stayed at around 38-39% throughout the year. b) Opposition to the war and support for the Contras remained at the same level as the previous year with only 25% supporting Contra aid. A steady 60% opposed support in spite of the heightened anti-Nicaraguan campaign by the White House. c) Legislatively, Congress rejected all of Reagan’s program requests. d) Media coverage remained friendly, reporting the official version of developments in a sympathetic manner. e) Reagan’s appeals remained consistent, using the same arguments and examples. His second television speech was almost a rewrite of the one a year before.
A number of exigencies in the rhetorical situation changed and the failure of Reagan’s rhetoric to address and adjust to the changes may explain why the administration failed to persuade the public or congressional support in favor of their programs. The changed situation included: a) A hostile international climate faced the United States. At the United Nations, in the European community, at the World Court and amongst the organization of American States, the United States found itself increasingly condemned and attacked for its policies in Central America. b) The covert war had since become overt. Within a month of Reagan’s last speech, he acknowledged supporting the Contras and called them “freedom fighters” for the first time. CIA chief Casey admitted backing the rebels and predicted victory within a year (Taubman, 1983).

By November 1983 the New York Times announced a “network of former United States intelligence and military personnel supplying increasingly advanced aircraft, weapons and paramilitary support to American sponsored rebels in Nicaragua (Gerth, 1983). Major joint military exercises took place on the border of Honduras and Nicaragua. A massive private network of support for the Contras organized out of the White House was up and running. The attacks against Nicaraguan strategic targets had increased dramatically launching what the Pentagon termed a policy of low-intensity warfare on many fronts. c) The mining of Nicaragua’s harbors by the CIA and the ensuing unanimous vote by the world court found America guilty which raised a number
of questions about Reagan breaking American and international law. The most interesting feature to note about Reagan’s second television speech is that it does not correct any of the strategic gaps discussed in the first speech.

**Key Players in the Drama**

Since April 1983, a number of changes surfaced amongst the key players in the drama. The CIA’s role, now revealed publicly, turned out deeper than anyone knew before. The executive branch took on more direction, control and coordination of the Contra supply network. The existence and extent of Contra activities were broadcast loudly and the Contras themselves were profiled as freedom fighters.

The international community proved vital to the United States after previous exposes. Other constituencies, like regional powers, the public and the Congress were just as crucial as the year before. By White House and intelligence calculations, the Sandinistas should have collapsed by December 1983, however, they proved stubbornly successful and showed no sign of "crying uncle."

**Rhetorical Drama Chart**

* Reagan would deliver at least ten addresses on Central America between both television speeches. He addressed private support groups like the Cuban expatriates in Miami, the AFL-CIO, Veterans of Foreign Wars, National Religious Broadcasters and the United Jewish Association; the rest
were radio addresses to the nation. The same themes surfaced over and over again. For example, the Soviets used Cuba and Nicaragua to destabilize our hemisphere. The Sandinista government sought to export revolution to their neighbors, the Sandinistas broke their promises to the OAS and The United States broke no laws and did not want to overthrow the Sandinista government. The President repeated charges of internal repression and domination by Communist interests.

Another pattern repeated in the first and second speech linked developments and guerrilla activity in El Salvador with those in Nicaragua. The connection disavowed by several credible sources also confused people who did not have much understanding of events in Central America to begin with. Clouded perceptions of the U.S. supported government in El Salvador, with a history of dictators and army run death squads, then resisted by guerrillas that we opposed proved difficult to simplify. In Nicaragua the U.S. trained and funded the guerrillas who were trying to overthrow that government. The fact that the U.S had diplomatic relations with Nicaragua added to the confusion. A good example of the confusion was seen in an interesting exchange between Reagan and Lou Cannon of the Washington Post in 1983. Cannon asked why the United States was not openly supporting the Contras "rather than giving aid through covert activity." The President replied, "Because we want to keep on obeying the laws of our country which we are obeying [laughter]...the only objection that we have to them is they're not minding their own business"
* The President told the expatriot Cuban community in Miami that "what occurred during the last decade when the Soviets raced ahead and we stood still was wrong"..."We must not permit dictators to ram Communism down the throats of innocent people in one country after another" (Reagan, 1983e). In reply to a question from James Gerstenzang of Associated Press about the impropriety of the CIA’s involvement with attacks on a Nicaraguan oil depot, Reagan replied: "I think covert actions have been a part of government as long as there’s been government" (Reagan, 1983g). Speaking to the nation in March 1984 Reagan summed up his main themes; "Nicaragua is a communist dictatorship armed to the teeth, tied to Cuba and the Soviet Union, which oppresses its people and threatens its neighbors, and is likely to produce millions of refugees many of whom would flee to the United States" (Reagan, 1984a).

* According to the *New York Times*, toward the end of 1983 the CIA decided that economic, industrial and transportation targets would be a more effective way of hurting the Sandinistas. Airports, railroads, and oil depots were prime targets accounting for losses of more than $380 million by the end of 1983  (*New York Times*, October 16, 1983).

* United States military and paramilitary activity escalated during this period. Besides CIA covert activity other branches involved included Special Forces, Army Engineers, Air Force units, Navy Seal teams, Green Berets and

* Big Pine II military maneuvers from August 1983 to February 1984 included practice bombing runs over Nicaragua, a massive amphibious landing near Puerto Castilla, and field training exercises on the Honduran/Nicaraguan border. The operations involved 5,500 U.S. troops, Navy tactical air crews, two aircraft carriers with battle group escorts and several thousand Honduran troops (New York Times, August 17 & 21, 1983).


* On October 25, 1983, in the midst of heightened tensions and Big Pine II maneuvers, the United States invaded Grenada and overthrew the existing government there. The following week the United States vetoed a unanimous

* In February and March 1984, Italian made mines were strategically placed in Nicaraguan harbors by speedboats, operated by U.S. Navy Seal divers operating from a CIA mother ship stationed just outside Nicaragua’s 12 mile limit. The mines damaged ten vessels. Several foreign freighters refused to enter Nicaraguan harbors. The world swiftly condemned U.S. actions. Even Barry Goldwater, chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee said, "It is an act of war. I don’t see how we are going to explain it." Reagan said it was "much ado about nothing." Nicaragua took its case to the World Court and won, unanimously. The United States refused to accept the jurisdiction of the World Court over Latin America, further isolating itself from the international community (Newsweek, April 23, 1984). Reagan’s programs for counter-revolution in Central America were not moving forward as planned; in fact, he found them under attack on a number of fronts, so he decided to try his persuasive speaking skills again and go public with his appeals on national television.

**Main Arguments - Counter Evidence**

Reagan repeated his main arguments again, adding very little to the arguments of the previous year and repeated often in the interim speeches he made. The recurring themes by now were all too familiar. Soviet expansion threatened America with subversion by surrogate forces. Nicaragua threatened
its neighbors, was spreading anarchy, broke its "promises" to the OAS and practiced genocide against Miskito Indians.

Some new twists on the arguments included lengthy claims that the United States did not support Somoza and that Reagan had tried to show friendship toward the Sandinistas in the first two years. All three claims, as well as Reagan's account of how the Sandinistas came to power, flew in the face of history (Sklar, p. 7-49).

One point that received major emphasis was Reagan's claim that the United States supported the Contadora peace process. This commitment to peace appeared more and more as public opinion polls and America's allies feared military escalation in the area, perceiving Reagan as "trigger happy." Reagan reiterated again that the aid he requested was 3:1 nonmilitary.

Congressional reports and other studies revealed the reverse. By 1984 Congress heard reports of over 5,000 Contra/CIA attacks against Nicaragua. According to one U.S. official a larger surveillance operation functioned against Nicaragua than against the Soviet Union (New York Times, April 22, 1983). Big Pine II constituted the largest and longest military maneuver ever conducted by the U.S., in what Newsweek called "gunboat" diplomacy (August 1, 1983). A leaked National Security Council memo stated "We have trumped the latest effort to rush signature of a Contadora agreement...we have effectively blocked Contadora group efforts (New York Times, June 23, 1983). Former U.S. ambassador John Fench, fired from his post in Honduras, openly stated "I
thought we wanted pressures so we could negotiate. I accepted something that wasn’t true. Our goal is something different. It’s a military goal” (Washington Post, February 3, 1987).

Metaphoric Analysis

Mega-Images and Supporting Metaphors.

The same defining mega-images identified in the first and all other speeches surfaced with the same consistency, frequency and purpose. More than ever the purpose was to create a vivid depiction of the evil enemy and to cloak CIA and other military activities, drawing attention away from the mining of Nicaragua’s harbors, Big Pine II and other acts of aggression.

An analysis of this speech found "rights" mentioned only twice and freedom again surfaced as the primary purpose term, mentioned 30 times or six times every thousand words. Mirroring the first speech "freedom" was used as the purpose term a majority of the times. Democracy appeared as the key god term for the counter agency against the enemy’s agency of "force." In Reagan’s words "The issue is our effort to promote democracy in the face of Nicaraguan and Cuban aggression aided and abetted by the Soviet Union" (Reagan, 1984. All quotations in this section are from this speech). Reagan assured his audience that "where democracy flourishes human rights and peace are more secure." The Contras arose sanctified by their consubstantiation with the noble purpose of "freedom" by naming them freedom fighters.
Peace arose when freedom was saved. In Reagan’s words, "we defend against aggression to preserve freedom and peace." The Bipartisan Commission, which Reagan quoted, recommended "support for democratic development...to bring about the long sought dream of peace to this troubled region so close to home."

Polarization again served Reagan’s rhetorical strategy by placing god mega-images with diametrically opposite devil mega-images. Reagan claimed the United States "do not start wars. We will never be the aggressor." This peace loving image of America contrasted starkly with "the Sandinistas who are not content to brutalize their own land. They seek to export their terror to every other country in the region." Later Reagan claimed "we attempted to show friendship to the Sandinistas and provided economic aid to Nicaragua...they kept on exporting terrorism."

The overall frequency analysis of the second speech disclosed the dominance again of the devil mega-images over the god mega-images. (see appendix 3 for comparison charts of all speeches) In the first speech devil mega-images of force, communist and terrorist appeared three times more frequently than god mega-images freedom democracy and peace. In the second speech the ratio was higher 3.6 to 1. Force appeared 4:1 versus freedom, the same ratio as the first speech. Communist appeared 4:1 versus democracy, double the ratio in the first speech, and terrorist 2:1 versus peace compared to 4:1 in the first speech.
Freedom and force did not appear with the same frequency as in the 1983 speech. Freedom’s frequency in the 1983 speech emerged 11 times per 1,000 words and only six times per 1,000 in the 1984 speech. Likewise, force emerged 43 times per 1,000 words in 1983 compared to 26 times per 1,000 in the 1984 speech. The ratio between the two remained constant at 4:1.

The most significant shift in ratios occurred with the communist/democracy ratio. Reagan toned down slightly the emphasis on force versus freedom compared to the first speech, but significantly raised the ratio of communist to democracy from 16 times per 1,000 words to 34 times per 1,000 in the second speech seeking to tap into the anti-communist sentiment in his audience. Thus, the enemy definition broadened from predominantly one of force, to communist/force, determining the enemy’s conduct and motives legitimizing the response to roll back such aggressions. The terrorist/peace ratio of 2:1 confirmed the hierarchy.

The strategy of interspersing evil images with common sense notions and proofs repeated in the second speech again. For example, the notion that "our doorstep has become the stage for a bold attempt by the Soviet Union, Cuba and Nicaragua to install communism by force throughout the hemisphere," was immediately followed by a factual recounting that "half of our shipping tonnage and imported oil passes through Caribbean shipping lanes, and nearly half of all our foreign trade passes through the Panama Canal and Caribbean waters, America’s economy and well being are at stake." He went on to say "Cuban
supported aggression has forced more than 400,000 men, women and children to flee their homes." Later he added "the Sandinistas have become Cuba's Cubans. There were 165 Cuban personnel in Nicaragua in 1979. Today that force has grown to 10,000."

Identification and Victimage Ritual

Reflecting the same pattern found in the 1983 speech, identification constituted a major part of the rhetorical strategy with plenty of examples of all five forms of identification.

Symbols of authority and value.

Quoting President Kennedy's phrase that "we're in the midst of a long twilight struggle to defend freedom in the world" he went on to say "Kennedy warned against the threat of communist penetration in our hemisphere...and the primary obligation's which are to the security of our nation. The House and Senate supported him overwhelmingly by passing a law calling on the United States to prevent Cuba from extending its aggressive or subversive activities to any part of this hemisphere." The implication of identifying with Kennedy's sentiments and actions is that we should now go and do likewise.

Direct Identification.

Reagan's calls for direct identification seemed more pronounced in this speech compared to a year before. "The simple questions is," he said, "will we support freedom in this hemisphere or not? Will we defend our vital interests in this hemisphere or not? Will we stop the spread of Communism in this
hemisphere or not?" He also identified with particular religious constituents by declaring that "The Sandinistas engaged in anti-Semitic acts against the Jewish community and they persecuted the Catholic church."

**Eulogisms and Dyslogisms.**

Dyslogistically Reagan doubled his appeal to anti-Communism 34 times per 1,000 words compared to 16 times in the 1983 speech. Terrorism appears more often this speech, six times per 1,000 compared to four times previously. Eulogistically the audience cannot help but want to identify with, "the people of Central America who want democracy and freedom...they want hope for a better future."

**(4) Images of Transformation.**

Reagan talked movingly about "Young Salvadoran soldiers in the field facing terrorists and guerrillas with the clips in their rifles the only ammunition they have. The lack of evacuation helicopters for the wounded and the lack of medical supplies...has resulted in one out of the three wounded dying. This is no way to support friends." Elsewhere Reagan noted "We’ve provided just enough aid to avoid outright disaster, but not enough to resolve the crisis, so El Salvador is being left to slowly bleed to death."

**(5) Commitment.**

Reagan used this form of identification very well in the following passage. "If the Communists can start a war against the people of El Salvador, its friends are surely justified in defending themselves by blocking the flow of
arms. If the Soviet Union can aid and abet subversion in our hemisphere, then the United States has a legal right and a moral duty to help resist it. It would be profoundly immoral to let peace loving friends depending on our help be overwhelmed by brute force if we have any capacity to prevent it."

These categories cover the modes of identification used to describe the vocabulary of motives in Reagan’s 1984 speech and mirror very closely the same pattern found in his 1983 nationwide speech. The lack of clear identification with the Contras was one weakness identified in the first speech and reoccurred in this speech. The identity of the Contras surfaced several times in the preceding year between both speeches. Everyone knew the Contras were the forces assembled against the Sandinistas that the United States supported. The character and viability of the Contras remained the unanswered question. The Sandinistas received bad press in the United States over the years but so too had the Contras. The Democrats never saw them as winners and far too many reports surfaced depicting the Contras as terrorists.

Reagan could have set the record straight by a detailed history of their accomplishments and denials of accusations of atrocities. Instead he barely mentioned them in passing again saying only that "thousands who fought with the Sandinistas have taken up arms against them and are now called Contras. They were the freedom fighters." The announcement that the Contras were freedom fighters turned out as an interesting rhetorical twist but such labelling proved insufficient for full identification. The noble cause needed human
heroes that Americans could identify with and no such picture emerged at this stage. Thus the rhetoric did not fit the rhetorical exigencies of the time and failed to mobilize the support Reagan requested.

The overall strategic goal of the Reagan administration during the entire war with Nicaragua was the overthrow of the Sandinista government with whom the United States officially had diplomatic relations. This fundamental strategic contradiction presented several rhetorical mountains to climb. The problems included an audience wary of another Vietnam, unconvinced that a poor country like Nicaragua with only three million people posed any military threat to the United States.

The rhetorical scene also included the fact that only the right wing political elements in America supported the Contras. Most people in Congress and the public perceived them as crooks and torturers as did the rest of the world. During the entire war period until mid 1984 the United States declared no war and officially sent no troops to war against Nicaragua. Therefore, Reagan could not ask his audience to identify with existing war activities against Nicaragua and ask for "support for the troops on the front." This reality of semi-covert, covert war presented a peculiar rhetorical challenge for Reagan’s identification strategy.

By comparison, going to war against Saddam Hussein presented President Bush with a far easier rhetorical task than Reagan faced against Nicaragua. In Bush’s case the enemy’s face proved easier to demonize and the
cause easier to rally 'round. As Hoover (1981) stated "our concurrent support for the government of Nicaragua's neighbor, El Salvador, also fighting off armed rebellion among its own citizens, further jumbled Americans' views of Central America. Add to these charges and counter charges regarding the use of death squads by and against all four groups of government and rebel forces, and you have a challenging rhetorical situation for the leader of yet a third country who has a vision of what the region should be." What Reagan sought support for was a third party and a distant cause. It emerged as imperative to identify not only the enemy agent clearly, a task Reagan enjoyed fair success at, but a heroic and noble counter agent who would put a stop to all this bullying. It is precisely that identification that Reagan failed to make. In terms of victimage ritual there was an exact repeat of the demonic nature of the Sandinistas who must be stopped and since they operate in our own backyard we would be guilty for not helping our friends.

Dramatistic Analysis

Since the two speeches bore such resemblance the dramatistic analysis of the two revealed almost identical ratios and motives. A very brief analysis of the 1984 speech will prove sufficient for conclusions.

Recognition of an Ideal

Although "freedom" still surfaced as the key purpose term, "democracy" substituted for freedom on several occasions as a key purpose term. Reagan announced that "the issue is our effort to promote democracy." Later, he
added, "It is in our national interest...to protect the lives of our neighbors so that they may live in peace and "democracy." "Communist subversion is not an irreversible tide," Reagan proclaimed, "and where democracy flourishes human rights and peace are more secure." Reagan requested support for "the National Bipartisan Commission plan for democracy."

"Freedom" as the primary purpose term still endured. "The tide of the future can be a freedom tide" said Reagan. The first question he asked was, "will we support freedom in this hemisphere or not?" Reagan warned that "our world is shrinking. We cannot pretend otherwise if we wish to protect our freedom." He also stated that, "We maintain our strength in order to deter and defend against aggression and to preserve freedom."

The distinctive ratio of agency to purpose found in all Reagan’s speeches and the first speech in particular was not as distinctive in this speech. More weight was attributed to the purpose term on this occasion switching at various stages in the speech from an agency/purpose ratio to a purpose/agency ratio. Approximately 40% of the total speech was devoted to rhetoric about agency and 35% to purpose rhetoric. In the first speech the percentages disclosed 57% for agency and 35% for purpose rhetoric. The agency/purpose ratio of force versus freedom maintained, but Communist appeared linked to force twice as much as in the first speech. In other words, Reagan still described the enemy’s primary purpose, or their ideal in terms of "force" but, more specifically, a Communist force. Thus, he declared, "This Communist
subversion poses the threat that a hundred million people from Panama to the open border of our South could come under the control of pro-Soviet regimes." Also he said, "the Sandinista rule is a Communist reign of terror."

In similar vein with the first speech the ideal would be a hemisphere where freedom and democracy reign free of Communist aggression. Moreover, it was only the extent and degree of violence exploding on our doorstep that drew America into the situation in the first place.

"Freedom" once more appeared as a common element in most of the pentad. The initial hope of America Reagan says in purpose terms, "was that Nicaragua would install liberty and freedom for their people. The truth is they haven’t." Reagan recalls Truman’s words that "the free peoples of the world look to us for support in maintaining their freedoms. If we falter...." Freedom arises as part of act when "internal repression denied the right to dissent and freedom of the press and freedom of assembly became virtually non-existent." As counter act "the Contras, the freedom fighters have offered to lay down their weapons and take part in democratic elections." The absence of freedom again defined the scene in Nicaragua as opposed to its presence in neighboring countries. The same pattern of democracy dominated as counter/agency. Law was not even mentioned in this speech, (obfuscating the issue of whether the United States violated any laws by the war). In sum the American ideal of freedom democracy and peace found itself under attack by bullying communists.
Description of a Crisis

The perception of disharmony originated primarily in agency terms, the same as in the first speech. It was the brutal aggression of Communism that started, expanded and threatened the very security of the free world. In sum the agency of force dominated descriptions of the nature of the crisis.

Blame for the Crisis

The enemy agent appeared in various guises again, Moscow, Cuba, Sandinistas, the PLO, Libya and all had one thing in common, "war against the Americans." Some of the blame was again reserved for Americans who doubt or "who are isolationist who wish to do nothing." "It’s up to all of us, the administration, you as citizens and your representatives in Congress. The people of Central America can succeed if we provide the assistance I have proposed." Scenic imperatives imparted part of the blame by reiteration of the strategic importance of the Caribbean and the pending flood of refugees.

Solution to the Crisis

Reagan failed to call for war as a solution to the crisis reiterating instead Americas’ peaceful intentions. He said "We do not start wars. We will never be the aggressor." The CIA’s acts of war in the mining of the harbors caused a major international uproar yet found no mention in the speech. Reagan’s requests for a solution to the crisis included support for the "Bipartisan Commission’s recommendations for increased commitment of resources over the next five years."
Reactions and Conclusions

Journalistic objectivity all but vanished during this period as the media reported unproven assertions. The media served as stenographer to the White House, reflecting and reinforcing the assumptions and world view of the administration. Torres' (1989) PhD thesis reported a content analysis of evening network news of Central America. One of her conclusions, validated by this study, is that "By President Reagan's third year the networks had bought into the administration's East/West theories about the conflict in Central America, playing an active role in supporting and promoting White House theories. This was especially true when the Reagan Administration's media messages were based solely on allegations, not hard facts, which was often the case." In another PhD thesis Dickson (1989) found that "despite significant differences between the coverage of Nicaragua by the Washington Post and the Washington Times both relied chiefly on U.S. government sources for information and both contained considerably more negative Sandinista policy statements than negative U.S. policy statements."

The polls before and after the speech showed no swing in favor of the President's appeals. Opponents of Reagan's policy continued to outnumber supporters by 2:1 and those who rated Reagan's performance on Central America as poor outnumbered those who rated it as excellent by five or six to one. In fact Harris polls throughout 1984 and 1985 found Reagan's positive ratings on Nicaragua fluctuated between 30% and 41% and his negative
ratings between 52% and 66% (LeoGrande, 1987). The stability of these results is rather striking. Despite repeated campaigns by the administration to swing public opinion its way the profile of public opposition remained virtually the same. The amount of money requested in 1984 was much higher than before but people still opposed economic assistance to Central America regardless of the amount. The Harris survey in 1984 added authority to the request by stating it was the "recommendation of the National Bipartisan Commission chaired by former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger." The public remained unmoved and opposed the request by the same margins as before (LeoGrande, p. 10).

Another question repeated over the years asked people whether our involvement in Nicaragua opened the United States to the charge that it was "interfering in the internal affairs of a small country." In 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984 huge majorities of 65%, 70%, 70%, and 66% respectfully agreed (LeoGrande, p. 24). Another figure that remained virtually unchanged was whether the U.S. should provide aid to the Contras. Opposition from August 1983 to June 1985 remained around 60%.

The following month Reagan’s request failed to passed Congress again, posing a major public relations setback. The issue seemed too controversial for public debate at that stage and the White House strategy turned to getting the President elected for a second term and to building the groundwork for other ways to fight the Sandinistas. In other words Reagan lost round two of the
verbal fight and many of the rhetorical problems and failures of the previous year still remained to be resolved. The third stage, all out war, would prove to be the ultimate launching pad or burial ground of the Reagan doctrine vis-a-vis Central America.
Chapter 5

ALL OUT WAR

In the following two years major events shaped the rhetorical exigency that Reagan faced before delivering his third and last major public appeal on national television in 1986.

Rhetorical Exigencies Surrounding the Appeal

President’s Ethos at the Time

The political landscape in America underwent several changes that affected the Contra cause. Reagan continued to enjoy popular support and the economy revived. The President won a landslide victory over Walter Mondale and found widespread support and praise in the media. Newsweek ran a special edition at the end of November 1984. The opening piece titled "America: Reagan Country," claimed "it was the night that Ronald Wilson Reagan became Mr. America." In a revealing campaign strategy memo the Newsweek article stated "It was the conscious intent of Reagan’s managers to run him as a kind of a national icon." The memo advised, "paint Ronald Reagan as the personification of all that is right with, or heroized by, America. Leave Mondale in a position where an attack on Reagan is tantamount to an attack on America’s idealized image of itself, where a vote against Reagan is, in some
After Congress voted against aid to the Contras, President Reagan approved a fallback program run out of the National Security Council by Oliver North and John Poindexter to insure continued support for the Contras. The CIA manual with assassination instructions became public knowledge during the Presidential campaign although it never became a major media issue. The Nicaraguans held their first national elections, called a sham by President Reagan and scantily covered in the American media. Coinciding with the elections the White House released a story that captivated the press for weeks but which later turned out to be complete fabrication, that MIG 21 jet fighters were on their way to Nicaragua.

The privatization of the war moved into top gear. General Singlaub brokered arms from third world countries as well as material and financial aid through a huge network of private organizations (see appendix 4). The White House hired professional public relations firms to produce Contra support materials, to arrange speaking tours and media appearances for Contra spokespeople. The propaganda war escalated through the office of Public Diplomacy which spent millions of dollars on hundreds of propaganda efforts over the next two years. During 1985 the Contras suffered severe defeats and heavy losses in Nicaragua and an increasingly embarrassing reputation for drug smuggling and brutality.

Key Players in the Drama
The key players remained virtually the same as before with two significant shifts of importance: (a) The Contras became the focus of an unprecedented public relations campaign. The strategy it seemed was to demonize the Sandinistas and glorify the "freedom fighters." (b) A massive network of private organizations was mobilized at the highest levels to channel support to the Contras. Most of the speeches Reagan delivered in this two year period were to these private groups.

Rhetorical Drama Chart

In 1986 President Reagan appealed for more aid to the Contras than ever before (over $100 million), and succeeded, much to the surprise of the professional politicians. The student of war rhetoric might be tempted to seek explanations by looking at the content and rhetorical strategies used in the Presidents March 1986 television address and compare them to his two previous appeals that failed. While significant differences did appear in the rhetoric they could not explain the dramatic shift in persuasion. By placing the rhetorical event in the context of other developments it is easy to understand the shift. For example, the President rendered more speeches on support to the Contras in the first six months of 1986 before the House/Senate vote than in all the years 1981 to 1986 added together. The speeches given in the first six months of 1986 included: six radio addresses to the nation on Contra aid, an unprecedented five special addresses to Congress as well as speeches to regional press representatives and private support groups. The major
developments between speeches were as follows:

* The first drama that could have derailed the White House surfaced in October 1984. The issue was a training manual produced by the CIA and used to train Contra insurgents. The manual advocated neutralizing officials, told how to justify shooting civilians and gave procedures for conducting public executions. Reagan at first said it was an editing mistake that would be investigated and CIA director Casey defended the manual. Later the President said "it was much ado about nothing." Prominent adverse publicity followed the expose' overseas (New York Times, October 22, 1984).

* Perhaps no event proved more of a setback internationally for the Reagan doctrine than the national elections held in Nicaragua two days before the American Presidential elections. Before the elections Reagan declared them a "Soviet style sham" and after the elections he said "the Sandinista government is a government that seized power out of the barrel of a gun, its never been chosen by the people."

The United States did everything it could to disrupt and discredit the elections. Contra attacks on polling stations increased, dozens of workers at voter registration offices were kidnapped and 38 election officials were killed by the Contras. Opposition candidates were pressured and bribed by the United States to withdraw. The La Prensa newspaper and Contra leaders called for a boycott of the elections. Daily broadcasts on several opposition radio stations and on Voice of America called on Nicaraguans to stay away from the
voting polls. The Sandinistas won 67% of the vote with a 75% turnout, constituting by all accounts an overwhelming victory under the circumstances (New York Times, October 21, 1984, November 15, 1984, February 12, 1985, Sklar, 200).

The international and Latin American observers unanimously endorsed the elections. The Administration successfully diverted attention from the elections with another story about Nicaragua. As reported by CBS Evening News of November 6, and picked up by the major media for weeks afterwards, Soviet MIG jet fighters were spotted by U.S. spy satellite surveillance aboard the Soviet freighter Bakuriani on its way to Nicaragua. Such a move posed a serious threat to American national security. The Administration warned it would destroy the MIG’s and sent battleships to station off the coast of Nicaragua. By November 9, 1984 United States officials acknowledged (after exposes by foreign journalists) that there were no jet fighters aboard the Soviet freighter (New York Times, November 10, 1984).

* In 1985 a private aid network sprang up to fill the vacuum left by the congressional aid ban. Tegueila Galpa the capital of Honduras, became "little Miami." Dozens of mercenary groups, CIA personnel, gun or drug smugglers and United States right wing organizations could be found there at any time. The private aid network also served as a smokescreen to conceal Department of Defense’s routing weapons via other countries. According to Newsweek, South Africa provided 20 military trainers stationed in Honduras, three
Lockheed aircraft, donated $72 million in aid and shipped 200 tons of weapons. The South Africans donated $20 million to the Contra cause. Smaller contributions came from Taiwan and South Korea (Sklar, p. 235-237).

The State Department coordinated an all out propaganda effort under the auspices of the Office of Public Diplomacy (OPD). According to the director, Reich, the OPD worked "to destroy positive images of Nicaragua and cultivate negative images, discredit administration critics and reverse public and congressional opposition" (Sklar, p. 245). The OPD accused the media, critical of the Contras, of biased reporting. They leaked numerous "classified" stories sent official "information" booklets to 239 editors and arranged 1,500 anti Sandinista speaking engagements in 1985. OPD contracted with International Business Communications (IBC) to conduct public relations work on behalf of the Contras. IBC was formed by Miller, former director of broadcast services for the 1980 Reagan campaign. The United States government paid IBC $441,000 in 1985 and 1986 to prepare briefing books, newspaper op-eds, arrange interviews or speaking tours for Contra leaders and to prepare a computerized mailing list of some 3,300 groups and individuals in strategic positions able to influence congressional votes. As a Reagan media strategist Miller told the Los Angeles Times reporter "first impressions are lasting impressions." Citing Grenada as a perfect example, he said, "there were still people who think the place was crawling with Cubans" (Sklar, p.247).

* The rhetorical war for the role of peacemaker reached new heights in
1986. The President mentioned the United States efforts to make peace at almost every speech, blaming the Sandinistas for the breakdowns in negotiations. On September 7, 1984, the Contadora nations presented their peace proposal. Basically the proposal called for the removal of all foreign military personnel from the region, border supervision to protect the sovereignty of each nation, democratic pluralism and verification of compliance. The United States originally responded favorably, but to their surprise Nicaragua accepted the draft in its entirety without modification. The Sandinistas agreed to expel all Cuban and Soviet advisors, to halt all imports of armaments, to reduce the size of its army and to enter into dialogue with the Contras. As Time magazine put it, "The Sandinistas caught Washington off balance by its unconditional acceptance." Washington applied intense pressure on El Salvador, Guatemala and Costa Rica to reject the plan which Honduras did with a counter proposal that permitted U.S. military exercises in Central America and modified the restrictions on foreign military advisors. The peace plan floundered and the war intensified.

One year later the Contadora group presented another treaty that permitted the United States to keep its bases and conduct military exercises in Honduras but Nicaragua insisted on an end of foreign aid to the Contras. The Contadora group endorsed the request and sent a delegation in January and February 1986 to Secretary of State George Schultz to express their opposition to further Contra aid. Schultz turned down their request. Reagan refused to
meet with the Contadora foreign ministers and met instead with the Contra leaders that week (Burns, p. 171). Shortly after the snubbing of the Contadora peace delegation Larry Speakes, White House spokesperson, when asked if the administration aim was to overthrow the Sandinistas, replied, "Yes, to be absolutely frank" (Los Angeles Times, February 19, 1986). Thus, the Contadora process endorsed by the OAS, the United Nations and even the Democratic Party, was rejected by the Reagan administration.

Main Arguments - Counter Evidence

The majority of President Reagan’s justifications have been analyzed in previous chapters. The new arguments that appeared in this speech included the following:

(A) The Sandinistas are terrorists.

Although the accusation was not new the intensity and frequency of the allegations indicated a heightened emphasis. Conceivably, a grave charge of this nature could serve as a pretext for bombing or even intervention. Senators Tom Harkin and John Kerry released a study in 1985 listing 77 instances in which the administration had lied to Congress about Nicaragua; many of them included lies about Sandinista terrorism links (New York Times, April 19, 1985). Contrary to Reagan’s accusations the PLO and Red Brigade had no representatives in Nicaragua. When contacted about the charge neither the White House or the State Department could provide any proof. The Italian government denied any knowledge of Red Brigade presence in Nicaragua.
Columbia, Guatemala, El Salvador, Costa Rica and even Honduras denied the presence of Nicaraguan fighters or weapons in their countries (Burns, p. 39).

**B. The Sandinistas smuggled drugs into the U.S.**

The linkage of the Sandinistas with terrorism and drug smuggling accusations represented a new front in the rhetorical war against the Sandinistas. Perhaps the lingering image of drug smuggling terrorists tipped the balance in favor of the vote to send aid to the Contras. The rhetorical strategy proved even more interesting when viewed as a war effort to divert attention away from the fact that the Contras were the real drug smuggling terrorists in the drama.

The central focus of the drug smuggling charge raised in Reagan’s 1986 television speech is a "secretly taken" picture showing a Sandinista leader offloading cocaine from a plane in Nicaragua. The administration repeatedly used the incident as evidence of drug dealings, although allegations of fraud came from several sources. The *New Yorker* and other media summed up the other side of the story: "On drug smuggling charges the President’s own Drug Enforcement Administration has been on record all year long saying that no evidence has been developed to implicate Nicaragua in drug trafficking" (*New Yorker*, March 31, 1986).

Concurrently Reagan dismissed any Contra drug connections as "Communist propaganda." The first big story released by Barger and Parry ran on December 17, 1985. Seth Rosenfeld ran a series of articles in March about
the biggest cocaine ring in the Bay Area when Rodriguez was convicted for financing the Contras with drug money (San Francisco Examiner, March 16 & 17 & 18, 1985). Rodriguez was convicted on sixty counts of laundering narcotics money in December, 1985. He admitted in testimony to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that in the mid-seventies he had laundered $30-$40 million from the CIA to Somoza. He had also paid $200,000 each to the Cuban burglars jailed for their part in the Watergate break in. He told the committee how he had laundered $10 million from the Columbian cocaine cartel to the freedom fighters at the behest of the CIA (Cockburn, p. 154). Cockburn’s book details a whole network of officials in the United States government involved with a number of drug smugglers trading drugs for money or guns shipped to the Contras.

Metaphoric Analysis

Mega-Images and Supporting Metaphors

The demonizing of the Sandinistas reached an all time high during this period. The devil mega-images recurred with increased frequency and intensity in this final nationwide appeal. The images functioned again to highlight the diabolical enemy threatening the security of the United States and to draw attention away from the administration and the Contras’ activities.

In the 1986 final appeal, the devil imaging label of "Communist" remained key, mentioned slightly more than before, 39 times per 1,000 words
compared to 34 per 1,000 in the previous speech two years before. The importance of the devil mega-images "terrorist" and "force" increased the most. "Terrorist" appeared ten times per 1,000 words compared to six times per 1,000 words in the previous speech (see appendix 3) representing a 66% increase. Likewise "force" increased from 26 times per 1,000 to a dramatic 43 times per 1,000 representing an 66% increase. The high frequency of "force" with a word like "Communist" stands out dramatically when compared to the frequency of other common words in all of Reagan’s speeches (59,000). For example, the word "enemy" arose .02 times per 1,000 words, "important" emerges .03 per 1,000 words, "world" one in 1,000 times and "who" three times per 1,000 words. Thus, a frequency of 43 times per 1,000 words indicates a very heavy emphasis.

Another significant shift in emphasis from previous speeches is that the god terms were reduced in emphasis. "Freedom" for example appeared nine times per 1,000 in all of Reagan’s speeches, 11 times in the first television address, six times in the second and only five times per 1,000 on the last speech. "Democracy" dropped from nine times to four times per 1,000, representing a 55% drop and "peace" fell from three times to one time per 1,000 denoting a 66% drop.

The effect of the shifts in emphasis was an increase in devil to god image ratio’s (see appendix 3). Thus the force/freedom ratio moved up from 4:1 to 8:1. The Communist/Democracy ratio jumped from 4:1 to 10:1 and the
terrorist/peace ratio from 2:1 to 10:1. The shift originated from the increased emphasis on demonizing the enemy. The diminishing of noble god-terms reflects a strategic de-emphasis of purpose terms and a bringing into focus of the nature of the counter agent the Contras, as freedom fighters.

"Rights" appeared only once as "human-rights" in this speech in reference to what the Sandinistas originally promised. The absence of "rights" in purpose or any other terms confirms my earlier hypothesis that "rights" vanished as the primary purpose term in Reagan’s war rhetoric, perhaps marking the end of an era. "Freedom" remained consistently the primary purpose term, although purpose terms appear less in this speech than both the others. "It must be our policy" said Reagan, "to support people struggling to preserve their freedom." "We saved freedom in Greece, we can save freedom in Nicaragua today." Later he declared, "the Soviets and Sandinistas must not be permitted to crush freedom in Central America."

"Democracy" emerged as the central god mega-image or term for counter agency. The people of El Salvador voted decisively for "democracy." The only way Nicaragua could be saved was by supporting the "democratic resistance" (the counter agents), a phrase repeated five times in this speech. By repeatedly labeling the Contras "freedom fighters," seven times in the speech, the democratic resistance was consubstantiated to the noble purpose of "freedom." Agents were affirmed by fighting for "freedom" and denounced when using "force" to upset the American ideal.
By intensifying the devil images of Nicaragua, polarization became more intense than ever. Through this strategy of depiction the audiences attitudes and beliefs became congruent or "zipped" together with the President’s purposes. Examples included the following:

Symbols of Authority and Value.

The President’s opening sentence called forth this form of identification as he stated, "I must speak to you tonight about a mounting danger that threatens the security of the United States." "The question is," Reagan claimed, "will we turn our backs and ignore the malignancy in Managua until it spreads and becomes a mortal threat to the entire New World?" Later Reagan went on to say, "If we fail there will be no evading responsibility, history will hold us accountable. This is not some narrow partisan issue, it is a national security issue, on which we must act, not as Republicans or Democrats, but as Americans" (All references in this section from Reagan, 1986).

Direct Identification.

Reagan used direct appeals for identification with Catholics, Jews and evangelicals. "The Sandinistas," he noted, "have deprived the people of the right to assemble or to worship freely." "They have launched assaults against ethnic and religious groups. The capital’s only synagogue was desecrated and fire-bombed and the entire Jewish community forced to flee Nicaragua. Protestant Bible meetings have been broken up. The Catholic church has been
The President no longer avoided direct identification with the Contras, rather the Contras are portrayed often in glorious heroic terms as the only hope for reversing the Communist terrorist tide. In answer to a question from the press following the television appeal Reagan said, "I guess in a way they are counter-revolutionary, and God bless them for being that way. I guess that makes them Contras and so it makes me a Contra too." Reagan appeared in public wearing a button saying "I'm a Contra" (Sklar, p. 217). The implication seemed clear: "If I can be a Contra, so can you." The strategy of portraying the Contras as America's chosen heroes contrasted sharply with previous speeches avoiding the mistakes of vagueness in the past.

The audience was pulled in the direction of supporting the "freedom fighters struggling to bring democracy to their country and eliminate this Communist menace at its source." "With their blood and courage the freedom fighters of Nicaragua have pinned down the Sandinista army and bought the people of Central America precious time. In helping to thwart the Sandinistas and their Soviet mentors, the resistance has contributed directly to the security of the United States," They were the primary agents now in stopping Sandinista terror, Soviet expansion and contributed directly to the security of the United States. Who could be against them? All they asked for was assistance to "deal with Russian tanks and gunships." They were "heroes who had fought the Somoza dictatorship, then took to the hills and like the French
resistance that fought the Nazis, began fighting the Soviet bloc Communists and their Nicaraguan collaborators." Thus the face of the Contras appeared from obscurity as heroes completely in tune with the American ideal, in fact fighting on our behalf against America’s greatest enemy and threat. That made the cause much more identifiable and easier to support.

Eulogisms and Dyslogisms.

Anti-Communism and anti-terrorist sentiment formed the basis for much of Reagan’s appeal in the final speech. By clustering together Communist, brutal force and links to international terrorism, it made any pro Sandinista sentiments appear subversive or at least anti-American. It is difficult to imagine a more demonic image of the Sandinistas than descriptions of them as "malignant," surrounded and linked to "international terrorists from the PLO to Italy’s Red Brigades." The Sandinista’s brutality was conveyed by horrific descriptions of pastors tied to trees having their "throats bayonetted and ears cut off." The Sandinistas were to blame for "the murder of four U.S. marines," for being "involved in the international drug trade" and for being supported by Castro, Moscow, Arafat, Qadhafi and the Ayatollah Khomeini.

In contrast, through identification by eulogisms Americans were asked to support freedom, Democracy and the peaceful intentions of the administration and the Contras. "The freedom fighters seek a political solution," said Reagan, "They are willing to lay down their arms and negotiate to restore the original goals of the revolution, a democracy in which the people
of Nicaragua choose their own government."

**Images of Transformation.**

Examples included the fact that Nicaragua posed a "mortal threat;" it is a "malignancy" that kills. The "freedom fighters supplies are running short and they are virtually defenseless against the helicopter gunships Moscow has sent to Managua." Congress will be remembered as "that body of men and women that either stopped the Communists before it was too late, or did not."

**Commitment.**

Once again Reagan announced that America had an historic commitment to support the cause of freedom and democracy plus a responsibility to protect the security of the region and prevent a "beachhead" on our Southern flank. Reagan ended his appeal with the words "We still have time to do what must be done so history will say of us: We had the vision, the courage and good sense to come together and act - Republicans and Democrats - when the price was not too high and the risks were not too great. We left America safe, we left America secure, we left America free."

These categories served Reagan's rhetorical strategy well as modes of identification to take a stand against the Sandinista's and to support the freedom fighters. The strategy also served to divert attention away from direct United States involvement in the war and the growing accusations of Contra human rights abuses.

The rhetoric continued to perform what Ivie called victimage ritual
through identifying the terrorists as scapegoats whose demonic behavior threatened the region's security and even our children's lives with drugs. All of this fully justified aid to the freedom fighters.

**Dramatistic Analysis**

*Recognition of an Ideal*

In this final speech I found "freedom" appearing as the key purpose term though less frequently mentioned, and agency of force functioned prominently as the primary pentadic element in the justifications for war. The shift to agency/purpose ratio emerged stronger than ever. In this speech agency depiction occupied 205 lines and purpose only 130 lines. In the second speech agency and purpose were equally balanced. Other elements of the pentad were consubstantiated by their relationship to the primary devil term force as agency. The frequency of "force" (43 per 1,000 words) almost doubled from the previous to the present speech. The overriding image was one of the enemy trampling over everyone in sight and reach with bullying force.

The ideal surfaces as the antithesis of the scene where brutal force reigned. Instead of the region riddled with a "malignancy" that posed a "mortal threat" freedom and democracy and peace would be present. The ideal became the restoration of the original goals of the revolution, a democracy.

As part of purpose, freedom was what the freedom fighters sought to restore in Nicaragua and the region. e.g."Free elections," "freedom of
assembly" and "freedom to worship" in a "free Nicaragua." Reagan assured his audience that with a "bipartisan spirit we can save freedom in Nicaragua."

The initiating act was Nicaragua's "revoking of civil liberties" and depriving people of their freedom to speak, write, assemble and the crushing of freedom in Central America. The absence of freedom represented the scene replaced by totalitarian force. The agents destroying freedom were the Sandinistas. The counter agents were the freedom fighters and the United States supporting them. Freedom permeated the counter/agency as the means by which the democratic resistance would achieve its ends. In other words the god term "democracy" was closely linked with the counter agency by labelling the Contras as the "democratic resistance."

**Description of a Crisis**

The crisis was depicted in purpose terms, since "for our own security the United States must deny the Soviet Union a beachhead in North America" and "will we permit the Soviet Union to put a second Cuba a second Libya right on the doorstep of the United States?" The majority of the rhetoric, however, described the crisis in agency(force terms. The Sandinistas "threaten the security of the United States." They "subvert and topple their democratic neighbors." They were in a position to "threaten the Panama Canal, move against Mexico and are fighting America at its doorstep." They "threaten us and the entire New World." They have "targeted their neighbors with an army and a militia of 120,000 men backed by 3,000 Cuba military advisors and
Soviet supplied tanks. The list seemed endless. The Sandinistas "capture," "revoke," "deprive," "assault," "desecrate," "firebomb," "raid," "use mob violence," "machine guns," "beat in the streets," "tie to a tree," "stuck in the forehead," "stabbed in the neck" and "cut off ears." The heavy emphasis on the agency of force reinforced the critical agency/purpose ratio and repeated the earlier patterns that the destruction of freedoms in Nicaragua and the region described the nature of the crisis.

**Blame for the Crisis**

The Sandinistas shared the blame with the Soviet Union and the international terrorist network. The emphasis on terrorist links dominated in this speech more than in the others. Broadening the scope of horror connections to include the PLO, Italy’s Red Brigade, Colonel Qadhafi, radicals, and Ayatollah Komeini made it easier for Reagan to conclude, "There seems to be no crime to which the Sandinistas will not stoop, this is an outlaw regime." By choosing to side with the Soviet Union, collaborating with international terrorists and using brutal force to further their purpose the Sandinistas were held responsible for creating the crisis that confronted America.

**Solution to the Crisis**

This was the first time that Reagan was clear and specific about the solution to the crisis. The solution was to fight back while time permitted. The "freedom fighters" were pinning down the enemy’s onslaught. The "freedom
fighters" are "bringing democracy to their country," were "able to bring pressure to bear on those who seized power" and were only "asking for support to save their own country from Communism." In an unprecedented and tactically wise move, Reagan called for active participation in the solution to the crisis. He appealed to the audience to "get in touch with your Representative and Senators and urge them to vote yes to help the freedom fighters and to help prevent a Communist takeover in Central America." He also invited the 99th Congress of the United States to be part of the solution to the crisis and be "remembered as that body of men and women" who stopped Communism "before it was too late."

Reactions and Conclusions

Just prior to and immediately following the speech the President went on an all out attack to plead for Contra support in every possible forum. In a radio address to the nation on Saturday, the night before the nationwide television speech, Reagan warned of "millions of refugees flooding across our borders", "if we fail to give the freedom fighters what they need to liberate their country." On April 22 the week following the television address the President declared a "national emergency to deal with the threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States constituted by the actions and policies of the government of Nicaragua" (Reagan, 1986).

Speaking to the Heritage Foundation April 22, 1986, Reagan extended
the terrorist label by including the Baader-Meinhof gang, the Basque and the Tupamaros (Reagan, 1986b). To a Republican fund raising dinner Reagan asked in patriotic terms, "can we turn our backs on our brothers and sisters to the South and still remain worthy of our own forefathers?"

At the end of May a massive telemarketing lobbying campaign organized by Oliver North targeted swing Congressional votes. Reagan brought President Azcona of Honduras to lobby on Capital Hill and on May 23 made a final all out appeal in a special message to Congress. By a narrow margin the House voted, at the end of June, to grant the aid to the Contras, giving Reagan his only victory on this issue in both terms of office.

Public opinion polls indicated virtually no changes in winning over a significant segment of the public. Approval for the $100 million aid package stayed at 35% throughout March. In April it stayed at 33% (LeoGrande, table 27). Opposition remained at around 60%. On the question of whether the public agreed with Congress or Reagan on aid to the Contras, in June 1985, 34% agreed with Reagan and 59% opposed. A year later, on March 6, 1986, 34% agreed and 59% opposed. By March 25, 1986, approval went up slightly to 42% and disagreement fell slightly to 53% indicating some success. On the question of whether Nicaragua posed a threat to the United States just before the speech on March 6 the polls indicated 27% agreed with Reagan and 43% said no. On March 24, 32% said yes Nicaragua posed a threat and 37% said no threat, indicating a slight victory for Reagan.
The media’s role in support of Reagan’s policies started to show some changes. An April 29th issue of *Newsweek*, for example, showed grisly color photos of a Contra executing a prisoner of war by cutting his throat. Such stories were “simply overwhelmed by numerous unsubstantiated counter claims by the administration” said Vicki Barker of UPI.

Tell the same lie often enough and people believe it. You can have the power of Dan Rather, you can get perfect documentation that the Contras are using terror tactics and it simply doesn’t matter because Reagan and his people say twenty times a day the Contras are freedom fighters and that becomes news (Hersgaard, p. 188).

The climate in Washington did not encourage headlines that Reagan had no right to harass and execute war against Nicaragua. The Democrats joined in with the Sandinista bashing and the White House strategy was to build on that sentiment to the point where support for the Contras became the only alternative. The aim, as one Reagan official explained, was “to slowly demonize the Sandinista government in order to turn it into a real enemy and threat in the minds of the American people, thereby, eroding their resistance to U.S. support for the Contras and, perhaps, to a future U.S. military intervention in the region” (Hersgaard, p. 310). Administration accusations of being soft on Communism frightened fence-sitting Democrats into supporting aid to the Contras; the measure narrowly passed.

October 5, 1986, opened a new chapter in the Contra war. The Reagan administration spent years conducting all out Covert and illegal war against Nicaragua. During that period there was an all out effort to hide the role of the
CIA, the NSC and the White House in the conduct of the war. The new chapter in the war opened with the shooting down of a CIA, C123 cargo plane, loaded with arms for the Contras.

Oscar Arias became the new President of Costa Rica in May, 1986, winning on an anti-Contra platform promising to remain neutral and to close down any foreign military bases in Costa Rica. The U.S. government was furious, threatened all kinds of retaliation but in the end moved operations to El Salvador. El Salvador was where the plane loaded up and took off from before it was shot down. Eugene Hasenfus was the sole survivor and the first American POW in the war on Nicaragua. The Nicaraguan government displayed ID cards and other documents taken from the wreckage indicating that Cooper and Sawyer, the other two in the plane, were attached to the U.S. military in El Salvador. Official denials faded in the face of growing evidence of U.S. government involvement. Hasenfus, convicted on November 15th on charges of terrorism, was pardoned and freed a month later by the Nicaraguan government. The Hasenfus shoot-down triggered new enquiries by Congress.

On November 25, 1986, the Lebanese magazine Al-Shiraa broke the story about the arms for hostages deal (Sklar, p. 321-326). Reagan would never speak on Contra support again. The cat was out of the bag. Silence and denial took the place of hyperbole and the long standing rhetorical war was over.

Reagan’s rhetorical strategy in his third and final television speech proved consistent with previous speeches in terms of the dominant agency/purpose
ratio. The dominance of devil mega-images over god mega-images served as
teministic screens to glorify the Contras as heroes and to draw the attention
away from the realities of the war and U.S. involvement. In spite of a
Herculean effort backed with huge resources and a great communicator as
spokesperson the screens proved insufficient and eventually the truth came
through during the Iran Contra revelations. The demonizing of the Sandinistas
through identification strategies using the devil mega-images of brutal
Communist terrorists succeeded to the degree that it was popular to be anti-
Sandinista. The strategy to turn the Contras into peaceful democratic freedom
fighters came too late and the veil proved too thin to cover their true ugliness.
Finally, the truth about Reagan’s motivations and actions emerged, revealing
a trail of deceit and lies. By 1986 over 50% of the population believed Reagan
was lying about Nicaragua (LeoGrande, table 32). The rhetorical war with
Nicaragua was over and Reagan, the United States, as well as freedom,
democracy and peace had lost.
Chapter 6

BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY

The Missing Speeches

Two documents surfaced as vitally important in the rhetorical war, the first was the CIA’s blueprint (reprinted in the appendix 1). The CIA strategy laid out in 1979 was faithfully executed over the next decade. A pentadic analysis of the United States government’s secret plans for Nicaragua uncovered certain valuable insights. The act in the plan was "clandestine intervention" to "destabilize the revolutionary leadership in Nicaragua." By contrast in all of Reagan’s speeches the initiative or act was the Sandinistas terrorizing of their people and their neighbors. The purpose of the CIA plan was to "split the Sandinista leadership"..."create an emotive international cause"...and "falsely paint them as allied with Cuban and Soviet interests. The goal would be to return to the divisions of the past." By contrast in Reagan’s rhetoric the purpose was the defense of freedom and democracy, not mentioned once in the actual CIA blueprint. The agents in the blueprint plan were the CIA, the National Security Council and the private network of CIA sympathizers in business, media, diplomatic and military circles. Only one indirect reference to the Contras occurs in the CIA blueprint: "operations can be undertaken to induce defectors and create refugees who can then be
exploited."

In the CIA’s strategic plan the agency of force dominated the ratios as virtually the only means of achieving the desired results. The agencies of destabilization or force included "falsified documents," "strikes promoted by the CIA," "fostering tensions and disagreements," "cut off "relief and reconstruction aid," "acts of violence such as bombings and assassinations," "military forces in El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala...to provoke border incidents," and "joint intervention."

A metaphoric analysis of the blueprint revealed further key insights. The god mega-images of "freedom" were virtually absent. "Democracy" appeared only one time per 1,000 words and "peace" not at all. By contrast the devil mega-image of "force" appeared an amazing 75 times per 1,000 words. "Communist" appeared 18 times per 1,000 words and "terrorist" three times. The force to freedom ratio of 75:1 summarizes in a nutshell the Reagan administration’s motives for war (See appendix 3).

The other document that deserves analysis was called the "Central America Peace Accord" (See appendix 2). This document finalized in 1986 endorsed by Nicaragua, the Central American states, the OAS and the international community; contained the "other" side’s blueprint for the resolution of the crisis. A pentadic analysis of the document revealed a primary agency/purpose with "democracy" as the focal purpose term, closely interrelated with "freedom" and "peace." Thus, the purpose was to "carry out
steps for national reconciliation towards a political process of a democratic nature based on justice, freedom and democracy."

The agents were the governments of Central America who would act as mediators." By contrast the agents in Reagan's rhetoric were the Contras. The agencies proposed to achieve the goals included, "amnesty," ... "cease-fire," ... "democratization," ... "free elections," ... "national reconciliation process," ... "a democratic pluralistic and participatory process which will include right to self-determination, right of association, free speech, freedom of movement and free elections." The plan included cessation of all aid to "insurgent groups" which the United States refused to comply with. Force was denied as a valid agency in the Contadora plan.

A metaphoric analysis of the document revealed how antithetical the goals of the CIA and Reagan were when compared to those of the Central American States. The devil mega-image of "force" surfaced only seven times and then usually as a description of what needed to cease. The devil mega-images of "communist" and "terrorist" never appeared once in the document. The god mega-images emerged with very high frequency. For example "freedom" occurred 11 times per 1,000 words, as high as in any of Reagan's speeches. "Democracy" occurred 25 times per 1,000 words, much higher than in any speech and "peace" 18 times per 1,000 words also a record high (see appendix 3). The ratios of god and devil terms in the CIA document surfaced as 32:1 devil images over god images. In the Contadora document the ratio
was a reverse 9:1 god images over devil images, summing up the "enemies" motives.

Summary and Conclusions

Ivie's thesis found a relatively uniform vocabulary of motives for war throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, with rights as the primary god term for purpose and with law and democracy as the secondary terms for agency. I found consistently throughout both of President Reagan's terms of office a dramatic break with Ivie's conclusions. I discovered freedom as the primary god term for purpose and rights virtually nonexistent. More importantly I found a reversal of the primary pentadic ratio from purpose/agency to a critical agency/purpose ratio. All other elements of the pentad were substantiated by their degree of conformity with the primary agency/purpose ratio. Scenic imperatives for example were relegated to obscurity by the presence or absence of Communist aggression. Agents were glorified if they opposed the agency of brutal force and demonized if they were part of it. The act always emerged as force against freedom.

Because the war against the Sandinistas unfolded as a war by proxy rather than a direct "us" versus "them" war, and since the United States never really openly admitted to trying to overthrow the Nicaraguan government, it became useful to extend the pentadic terms to include agents/counter agents, act/counter act and agency/counter agency. Peace featured as the least utilized of the god mega-images in Reagan's rhetoric probably because the
primary motive of the Reagan administration was the roll back of Communist aggression in the hemisphere by overthrowing the Sandinistas. Thus, while obligatory tribute was paid to the peace process, the main function of the term in the rhetoric was to depict peace as something the Sandinistas constantly rejected.

Reagan tapped into the anti-Communist sentiment, popular at the time, with some degree of success by pounding away at the alleged surrogate Communist image. He also used fear appeals by constant depictions of terrorism attributed to the Sandinistas. He avoided Vietnam syndrome fears by conducting a covert war and by turning the Contras into "our boys on the front." He used all of his persuasive skills as Great Communicator and all the propaganda resources of his administration to push his program forward. Nevertheless, he failed and the question remains why?

My conclusion is that in the end the rhetoric simply did not fit the reality. The Sandinistas were not the Communist demons he portrayed them to be and the Contras were not the godly freedom fighters he portrayed them to be. Virtually the entire world believed the reality and not Reagan's rhetoric.

Several observations need to be made to tie the loose ends together:

(1) A number of activities occurred in the United States that seemed alien to the Bill of Rights yet were driven by the same anti-Sandinista sentiment. As of January, 1988, the Center for Constitutional Rights recorded
over 90 burglaries and break-ins of offices sympathetic to the Sandinista cause. In most cases only membership lists, donor files and names of Central American refugees were rifled. Some of the organizations included Old Cambridge Baptist Church, Central American Historical Institute, Calvary United Methodist Church Washington, D.C., Wheadon Methodist Church in Evanston Illinois, United Church of Santa Fe, St. Williams Catholic Church in Louisville, Kentucky and University Baptist Church in Seattle, Washington (Sklar, p. 353).

FBI operative Frank Varelli testified before the House Judiciary Subcommittee in February, 1987, about how he infiltrated the Dallas chapter of CISPES (Committee in Solidarity with the people of El Salvador). He reported on 690 individuals opposed to the administration’s Central American policy. He conduced several break-ins at homes of several CISPES members. He was instructed to plant guns on CISPES members to make the organization appear violent, but he refused. The FBI used wire taps, informers and photographic surveillance to investigate, among others, Amnesty International, American Federation of Teachers, American Civil Liberties Union, Clergy and Laity Concerned, Friends Peace Committee, Mary Knoll Sisters, National Association of Women Religious, New Jewish Agenda, Oxfam, Peace Links, Southern Christian Leadership Conference, United Auto Workers and the U.S. Catholic conference. The massive FBI investigation led to no indictments or arrests and can only be interpreted as harassment.

How all of this fits into Reagan’s rhetorical war against Nicaragua is
simple. The Reagan administration fought the war by any means necessary and it took considerable courage for Congressional Representatives or journalists or citizens to stand up and say it was wrong.

(2) When focussing on the Reagan administrations doctrine and strategy towards Nicaragua it was easy to lose sight of how massive the opposition to such policies was. The other nations of the world almost unanimously condemned Reagan’s policies; the World Court found the United States guilty of violating international law; European allies repeatedly criticized the U.S. stance and the OAS and the Contadora nations condemned America’s activities. Even America’s client states abandoned her towards the end, with only Honduras supporting the 1986 Contra aid request. An April 1986 survey in Honduras revealed that 90% of the population did not want the Contras on Honduran territory. In Costa Rica 91% opposed the Contras, leading to Arias’ election as President in 1986 (Robinson et al, p. 333).

While Ortega visited Uruguay in 1985 tens of thousands poured into the streets to greet him. He received similar ovations in Mexico and Brazil. Nicaragua enjoyed free trade with every state in the OAS. Canada applauded the World Court decision against the United States, and supported the Contadora peace process. In 1986 Canada contributed over $50 million in direct aid to Nicaragua and imported $43 million worth of goods from Nicaragua (Burns, p. 115). Public opinion polls over the years in the United States showed consistently that the people rejected Reagan’s policies.
Some Final Thoughts

Throughout this study the search for meanings provided through an analysis of the mega-images proved the most helpful and insightful. The war unfolded in the political, legal, psychological, economic and military arena. In every arena the justifications for covert and overt actions were staged in terms of the mega-images. In a classical David and Goliath scenario, questions surfaced again and again— who were the real terrorists, who used force and terrorism, and who was crushing democracy and peace?

What, then, were the lasting images left from the war with Nicaragua? "Image is everything," says Andre Agassi, on behalf of Cannon Cameras as he taps into the popular image vein that rules the political scene in this mass communication era. Image is the road to dominance in this era.

The war may have been an image/public relations game for the Reagan strategists, but for the people of Nicaragua it was brutal war with devastating consequences. Some 30,000 Nicaraguans died in the war to overthrow Somoza and over 50,000 in the Contra war. One in three killed were children. Proportionately, that would be over three million Americans. The economic loss in terms of dams, bridges, oil depots, crops, power stations, etc., amounted to $1.3 billion between 1981-1985. The comparable figure for the United States would be $1 trillion (Hufford 1985, Robinson and Norsworthy 1987). Education and health services were hit particularly hard. Between 1981 and 1985 the Contras attacked and closed 359 schools, killing 149 teachers. Fifty
health centers were destroyed depriving 250,000 people of health care (Robinson Et al, p. 153).

The Contra war took place against an historical backdrop with a long history of intervening to make or unmake Latin American governments. The very antithesis to democracy freedom and peace is bullying a small country because they do things differently. Millions of people in Central and Latin America are still trying to improve their lives and control their own destinies. For generations they resisted European, American or Soviet intervention. In Nicaragua it will take years to undo the damage done to them by the U.S. Americans will not all agree on the new Nicaragua but with the cold war no longer around to serve as a pretext for destabilization again, I hope the future will see Americans as neighbors and not as landlords.

The diversion of profits from the sale of arms to Iran was criminal but no less so than the conduct of the illegal war. There is something very undemocratic about the fact that the overwhelming majority of Americans did not want the war and yet could do virtually nothing to stop it. The press bears part of the blame for not having the courage to follow through and seriously challenge a popular president. The T.V networks in particular were simply not independent enough of White House sources to pursue many of the clues that presented themselves along the way. It was also remarkable to find no mention of this major rhetorical war in any of the communication journals over
all these years.

It is imperative, in my opinion, that rhetorical scholars be watchdogs of conscience. It is our task to speak the truth and expose not only the rhetorical strategies used to convey a message but to investigate the validity of the claim, especially when lives are at stake. That is why I looked at the historical background surrounding the issues, the role of the media and the rhetorical drama charts. Only by searching through 59,000 words and doing all the background research did I discover the enormity of the gap between the rhetoric and the reality. I concluded that Reagan’s rhetorical war against Nicaragua was essentially one big lie, and I am reminded of Goebbels words: "The important thing is to tell a big lie and keep telling it. A lie, when it is repeatedly said is transformed into the truth" (cited in Robinson Et al, p. 55).
APPENDIX 1

CIA Blueprint for Nicaragua
October 1979

During the months ahead the C.I.A. will have to prepare contingency plans for clandestine intervention for consideration by the National Security Council. If the revolutionary leadership in Nicaragua embarks on radical programs deemed inconsistent with perceived U.S. interests, the options are likely to include elements of the destabilization programs already applied in the 1970’s in Chile, Angola, Portugal and Jamaica.

The immediate political goal would be to split the Sandinista leadership, create an emotive international "cause," and isolate leading radicals, falsely painting them as allied with Cuban and Soviet interests while against traditional Western, liberal values. Money and propaganda support for "moderates" and others responsive to American wishes would serve to enhance the local and international stature of leaders opposed to radical policies. Propaganda through local and international media, falsified documents and other provocations, and exploitation of historical differences within the sandinista movement can contribute to splitting the political leadership. The goal would be to weaken the revolution by fomenting new disagreements or a return to the divisions of the past. With a sharp line drawn between radicals, Communists, etc., and "moderates," efforts can be made to align international groups and other countries against the one and in favor of the other.

Strikes in key unions promoted through CIA-backed local and international unions can impede reconstruction and create a climate of tension. Tensions and disagreements can also be fostered between the Nicaraguan government and those that supported the revolution against Somoza.

As the "cause" is established, mainly through propaganda promoting simplistic, black-and-white impressions, efforts can be made to foment popular disillusion with the revolution and radical policies. One obvious lever is restriction of relief and reconstruction aid, but conservative elements in the Catholic Church have been effective political weapons in other countries. Here also, association of radicals with Cuba and the Soviet Union through media operations can contribute.

Possible key issues in the "cause" would be an international clamoring for "free" elections and opposition political organizing. "Return to barracks" is another, as is "betrayal of the revolution" through the "substitution of one
dictatorship for another." The neighborhood defense committees would be denounced as a political apparatus. In any election campaign, the CIA could make huge sums available to its favored candidates and parties.

A climate of tension, fear and uncertainty can also contribute to capital flight, worsened economic conditions, and an exodus of professionals and others of a frightened middle class. Operations can be undertaken to induce defectors and create refugees who can then be exploited through international media operations. Acts of violence such as bombings and assassinations would also contribute to the desired psychological climate. Perhaps the military forces of El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala—probably the CIA’s closest allies in the region—could be strengthened in order to provoke border incidents and additional tension.

Eventually, if the scenario continued, the CIA could seek to provoke "moderates" in the political and military leadership to oust radicals from positions of power. If this were unrealistic, impossible or failed, U.S. diplomatic efforts could seek joint intervention through reviving the Inter-American Peace Force proposal rejected by the Organization of American States on the eve of the Sandinista victory in July.

The CIA would not be the only U.S. government agency involved in intervention in Nicaragua, and participation by non-governmental organizations would be needed. U.S. representatives on international and commercial lending institutions, as well as the Export-Import Bank, would have instructions to impede credits. U.S. diplomats and military officers, in addition to the CIA, would try to influence leaders of other countries. U.S. businessmen engaged in Nicaragua would delay investments and other job-producing operations. And American media organizations would be important participants in propaganda campaigns...

From a distance, one cannot know whether the CIA could find or create the "moderate" opposition that will serve the U.S. government’s interests. But the CIA surely knows that in its pursuit of American policy goals, it has many potential allies in Nicaragua besides supporters of the old regime. As traditional, non-Somoza interests are affected by revolutionary programs, the CIA may discover a fertile field in which to plant the seeds of counter-revolution.
APPENDIX 2

CENTRAL AMERICA PEACE ACCORD
National Reconciliation

Dialogue

To urgently carry out, in those cases where deep divisions have resulted within society, steps for national reconciliation which would allow for popular participation with full guarantees in authentic political processes of a democratic nature based on justice, freedom and democracy... For this purpose, the corresponding Governments will initiate a dialogue with all unarmed internal political opposition groups and with those who have availed themselves of the amnesty.

Amnesty

In each Central American country, except those where the International Commission of Verification and Follow-Up determined that such a measure is not necessary, an Amnesty decree will be issued containing all the provisions for the guarantee of the inviolability of life; as well as freedom in all its forms, property and the security of the persons to whom these decrees apply. Simultaneous with the issuing of the amnesty decree by the Government, the irregular forces of the respective country will place in freedom all persons in their power.

National Reconciliation Commission

In order to verify the compliance with the commitments... concerning amnesty, cease-fire, democratization and free elections, a National Reconciliation Commission will be established whose duties will be to verify the actual carrying out in practice of the national reconciliation process, as well as the full exercise of all civil and political rights of Central American citizens guaranteed in this document. The National Reconciliation Commission will be comprised of a delegate and an alternate delegate from the executive branch; a bishop delegate and an alternate bishop delegate recommended by the Episcopal Conference, and chosen by the Government from a list of three candidates... The same procedure will be used to select a delegate and alternate delegate from the legally registered political opposition parties...

In addition, each Central American Government will choose an outstanding citizen, outside of public office and not pertaining to the party in power, and his respective alternate, to be part of this commission...
Exhortation for the Cessation of Hostilities

...The Government of [those states currently fighting irregular or insurgent groups] commit themselves to undertake all the necessary steps for achieving an effective cease-fire within the constitutional framework.

Democratization

The Governments commit themselves to promote an authentic democratic, pluralist and participatory process that includes the promotion of social justice, respect for human rights, [state] sovereignty, the territorial integrity of states and the right of all nations to freely determine, without outside interference of any kind, its economic, political, and social model; and to carry out in a verifiable manner those measures leading to the establishment, or in their instances, the improvement of representative and pluralist democratic systems which would provide guarantees for the organization of political parties, effective popular participation in the decision making process, and to ensure free access to different currents of opinion, to honest electoral processes and newspapers based on the full exercise of citizens’ rights...

Complete political pluralism should be manifest. In this regard, political groupings shall have broad access to communications media, full exercise of the right of association and the right to manifest publicly the exercise of their right to free speech, be it oral, written or televised, as well as freedom of movement by members of political parties in order to proselytize. Likewise, those Governments...which have in effect a state of exception, siege, or emergency [law], shall terminate that state and re-establish the full exercise of all constitutional guarantees.

Free Elections

Once the conditions inherent to every democracy are established, free, pluralist and honest elections shall be held as a joint expression of the Central American states to seek reconciliation and lasting peace for its peoples. Elections will be held for a Central American parliament, whose founding was proposed in the Esquipulas Declaration of May 25, 1986...

These elections will take place simultaneously in all the countries throughout Central America in the first half of 1988, on a date mutually agreed to by Presidents of the Central American states...

After the elections for the Central American parliament have been held, equally free and democratic elections shall be held with international observers and the same guarantees in each country, to name popular representatives to municipalities, congresses and legislative assemblies and the presidencies of the republics. These elections will be held according to the proposed calendars and within the current political Constitutions.
Cessation of Assistance to Irregular Forces or Insurrectionist Movements

The Governments of the five Central American states shall request the Governments of the region, and the extra-regional governments which openly or covertly provide military, logistical, financial, propagandistic aid in [the form of] manpower, armaments, munitions and equipment to irregular forces or insurrectionist movements to cease this aid, as an indispensable element for achieving a stable and lasting peace in the region.

The above does not include assistance for repatriation, or in lieu thereof, the reassigning of assistance necessary for those persons having belonged to these groups or forces to become reintegrated into normal life. Likewise, the irregular forces or insurgent groups who operate in Central America will be asked to abstain, in yearnings for a true Latin American spirit, from receiving such assistance...

The Non-Use of Territory to Invade Other States

The five countries...reaffirm their commitment to prevent the use of their own territory and neither render or permit military or logistical support to persons, organizations, or groups attempting to destabilize the governments of the Central American countries.

Negotiations on Matters Relating to Security, Verification, Control and Limitation of Armaments

The Governments of the Central American states, with the participation of the Contadora group in exercise of its role as mediator, will continue negotiations on the points still pending in the Contadora Treaty Proposal for Peace and Cooperation in Central America concerning security, verification and control.

In addition, these negotiations will entail measures for the disarmament of the irregular forces who are willing to accept the amnesty decrees.

Refugees and Displaced Persons

The Governments...commit themselves to give urgent attention to the groups of refugees and displaced persons brought about through the regional crisis, through protection and assistance, particularly in areas of education, health, work and security, and whenever voluntary and individually expressed, to facilitate in the repatriation, resettlement and relocation [of these persons]. They also commit themselves to request assistance for Central American refugees and displaced persons from the international community...
Cooperation, Democracy and Freedom
for Peace and Development

In the climate of freedom guaranteed by democracy, the Central American countries will adopt agreements permitting for the intensification of development in order to achieve more egalitarian and poverty-free societies. Consolidation of democracy presupposes the creation of a system of economic and social justice and well-being. To achieve these objectives the Governments will jointly seek special economic support from the international community.

International Verification and Follow-Up

International Verification and Follow-Up Commission

An international verification and follow-up commission will be established comprised of the Secretary Generals of the Organization of American States and the United Nations or their representatives, as well as the Foreign Ministers of Central America, of the Contadora Group and the Support Group...

Calendar for the Implementation of Agreements

Within a period of 15 days from the signing of this document, the Foreign Ministers of Central America will meet as the Executive Committee to regulate, promote and make feasible compliance with the agreements pertaining to Amnesty, Cease-Fire, Democratization, Cessation of Assistance to Irregular Forces or Insurrectionist Movements, and the Non-Use of Territory to Invade Other States, will enter into force simultaneously and publicly as defined herein.

After 150 days, the five Central American Presidents will meet and receive a report from the International Commission of Verification and Follow-Up and they will make the pertinent decisions.

Final Provisions

The points included in this document form part of a harmonious and indivisible whole. The signing of [the document] incurs an obligation, accepted in good faith, to simultaneously comply with the agreement in the established periods...
### APPENDIX 3

**Mega-Image Frequency Chart**

Word Frequency Per Thousand

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speech</th>
<th>Freedom</th>
<th>Democracy</th>
<th>Peace</th>
<th>Force</th>
<th>Communist</th>
<th>Terrorist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALL OTHERS</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIA DOC</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONTADORA 11</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Ratios of Mega-Images

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SPEECH</th>
<th>FORCE/FREEDOM</th>
<th>COMMUNIST/DEMOCRACY</th>
<th>TERRORIST/PEACE</th>
<th>DEVIL/PEACE</th>
<th>GOD AVG.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>4:1</td>
<td>2:1</td>
<td>4:1</td>
<td>3:1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>4:1</td>
<td>2:1</td>
<td>2:1</td>
<td>3:1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>8:1</td>
<td>10:1</td>
<td>10:1</td>
<td>10:1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ALL SPEECHES</strong></td>
<td><strong>2:1</strong></td>
<td><strong>2:1</strong></td>
<td><strong>1:1</strong></td>
<td><strong>1:1</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIA DOC</td>
<td>75:1</td>
<td>18:1</td>
<td>3:0</td>
<td>3:0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CON’DORA</td>
<td>1:2</td>
<td>0:25</td>
<td>0:18</td>
<td>1:9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 4

The "Private" Network

The Domestic Contra Aid Network: A Pictorial View
References


