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Avery Romano

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Republicanism and Reagan: The Seedlings to Trump's Presidency

By

Avery Romano

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Ronald Reagan and the Iran contra is the thirty page topic of choice here because Ronald Reagan is the face of modern day Republicanism. He went about his presidency beautifully and with ease. Presidents before him, John F. Kennedy and the Bay of Pigs in Cuba, Carter and the hostage crisis, Nixon and Watergate; one had his brains shot out, the other was chewed up and spat out by the American public and the presidency and the next was called a crook, publicly mortified and impeached. All of these presidential scandals are equal in crookedness and unethical behavior, the standout difference being Reagan made it out unscathed.

While thinking of Reagan, what comes to mind are the young seedlings of mass incarceration, the government leaking crack in to disadvantaged and minority and primarily black neighborhoods (this may or may not be true) and the result of a massive wage gap between white and black folks. All of this was done behind a handsome puppet with a nice smile called Ronald. His plan to get the United States out of one of its worst recessions post president Ford era, it was called Reaganomics. This entailed tax cuts and funneling money to big business, a massive decrease in spending on social services, increase of military spending and deregulation of domestic markets¹; vice president Jeb Bush suggested calling it voodoo economics² before Reaganomics took off—a rather problematic way to fix economic decline. As a result, tax revenues went up, marginal tax rates went down, inflation decreased and employment rates went up, Reagan was a hero and this was one of many of his heroic acts as president. As well as standing up to Russia as he called it an “evil empire” and managed to organize a disarmament deal with Russia, and the Berlin wall being torn down as he stood up to Mikhail Gorbachev. These big historical moments are what gave him the glittering illusion modern day Americans and boomers often fall for.

¹ “Reaganomics.” 2019. Investopedia. 2019. <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/r/reaganomics.asp>.

² Ibid.

It has been argued he was solely the embodiment of the Republican party—used to accomplish conservative missions within an eight year time span. Judging by the variety of government representation he had, going from Democrat to Republican, it is known that his wife Nancy was behind much of his political career and was reaping the benefits and fame of it all. She had previously been looked at by the public as arrogant, which she was able to turn around and cover up with her efforts in starting up a drug abuse awareness movement, giving it a platform and also conveniently launching the War on Drugs. Her *Just Say No* movement was a hit. Nancy was also accused of making glamorous updates to the interior of the White House, as she soon would be living there, similarly to what this entire essay is about, the woman raised private funds to do so—perhaps President Reagan was inspired by his Hollywood blacklisted wife.

It would not be out of sorts to suggest that much of what Reagan did in his presidency has had long term negative effects that became more prevalent at the turn of the 20th century and into the 21st century. Back to the well-played assassination attempt, April of 1981, shortly after the assassination attempt, the headline of the times would be, *Read President Reagan's Best Jokes About Being Shot*, with his picture below, fisting the air. He used his assassination attempt to his advantage, put on a smile and gained approval ratings rapidly. Most important to Reagan's crooked and successful presidency was his social skills, rhetoric while speaking and undeniable charm. Post assassination the bullet landed an inch from his heart, Reagan was said to have woken up from his very long and complicated surgery and looked up at his surgeons with a smile and said, "Please tell me you're Republicans."³ His entire attitude towards the assassination attempt was incredibly endearing to the public actually. To his wife he said, "honey I forgot to

³ "Read President Reagan's Best Jokes About Being Shot." n.d. Time. Accessed November 16, 2020. <https://time.com/3752477/reagan-assassination-reaction/>.

duck,”⁴ and to his daughter said, “the attempted assassination ruined one of my best suits.”⁵ Watching a documentary series on this exact topic with my father, I clearly remember him looking at me laughing and said, “I mean come on ! How could you not like him Ave ?” Well, he did lay a thick and sticky foundation for severe racial injustice to flourish in the United States that would last decades, paired well with Clinton’s *Three Strikes* you’re out bill. Reagan took out massive amounts of money from programs meant to support disadvantaged folks suffering the repercussions of social issues and added fuel to the fire in the Middle East that carried out to 2001 and years past, but sure dad ! No, I am not suggesting that Roland Reagan did 9/11, I am pretty sure that was George W. Bush, but I am sure Reagan did not help the situation.

As the United States presidency appears to be increasingly corrupted, it is losing respect and value to many American’s today. The Republican party in particular has damaged reputation and this can be traced back to Richard Nixon, Watergate and his impeachment. Its reputation was also heavily scarred in the 1980’s during Ronald Reagan’s presidency despite Reagan often being celebrated as the shining light of the Republican party, Reagan’s presidency trumpeted the notion that “greed is good,” and became notorious for engaging in extra legal maneuvering such as the Iran-Contra affair. This legacy of corrupt presidencies has carried out into the present and to Donald Trump and his presidency.

It appears Reagan got away with all of this while maintaining a great overall reputation and becoming the face of modern day Republicanism paired with the inspiring story of saving the United States using his Reaganomics. He had an incredible cover-up story and series of speeches. His cover-up primarily fell down on to Henry Kissinger—wait no that was Watergate not Irangate; Robert McFarlane, John Poindexter and Oliver North were the targets and hit men

⁴ “Read President Reagan’s Best Jokes About Being Shot.” n.d. Time. Accessed November 16, 2020. <https://time.com/3752477/reagan-assassination-reaction/>.

⁵ Ibid.

of this massive operation. McFarlane and Poindexter were Reagan's National Security Advisors and North was the National Security Council head man. Interestingly, Robert McFarlane, one of the publicly known faces of the Iran Contra scandal next to Oliver North, was an ex-Marine who got in to the National Security Council with Henry Kissinger, Nixon's military assistant and right hand man through Watergate. McFarlane would be charged for four misdemeanor counts of withholding information from Congress. McFarlane pleaded guilty to all four as he was cooperative to the investigation.⁶ He was sentenced to two years of probation, \$20,000 in fines and 200 hours of community service.⁷ Poindexter was indicted with seven felonies, found guilty of two false statements, guilty of conspiracy and originally given six months of prison but the court of appeals vacated his conviction as his immunized testimony could have influenced witnesses, dismissing Poindexter's case.

Oliver North was the least fortunate of the three. Indicted to twelve counts, one being conspiracy and also making false statements. Court would rule conviction of three charges—accepting gratuity, aiding in the obstruction of Congress, and destroying documents. Originally he was given three years in prison, \$150,000 in fines and 1,200 hours of community service.⁸ His final sentencing was vacated and the judge dismissed the case and North would not get any prison time. Later he would go on to run for U.S. Senate in Virginia. As for Reagan, the reasons for not prosecuting him were simply that there was no proof of Reagan's authorization or knowledge of the arms sale or knowledge of North's control over the Contra sales networking. And as for Vice President Bush—no evidence of violation of law.

⁶ "Understanding the Iran-Contra Affairs - The Legal Aftermath." Accessed November 16, 2020. https://www.brown.edu/Research/Understanding_the_Iran_Contra_Affair/prosecutions.php.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

Just as there was concrete evidence to Watergate to lead the U.S. Senate and the Chief of Justice of the United States to find Nixon guilty, there was evidence to Reagan's wrong doing in the Iran Contra scandal as well. The outcomes were vastly different however. There are a few options here as to how Reagan successfully got away with the Iran Contra Scandal. One being his charm, the second being big money and power being involved and lastly there being a damn good coverup story and hit man to pair very nicely with it. Additionally, Reagan used his unfortunately poor memory and the time in the Operating Room for a surgery as reasons as to why his mind was fogged. This lack of recollection would allow for him to change the story three times and get away with it each time, additionally he was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease after he left office, which would bring up his approval ratings post presidency again as American's sympathized with this—he probably couldn't help it ! I would suggest otherwise.

If Reagan and his team honored the oath they took before testifying and were truthful in court, certainly they would have been able to get an honest and well documented version of what really happened and distribute the blame far more accurately amongst the Reagan team, unfortunately honesty is not a fundamental value and the white house was corrupt, and still is. Since documents were destroyed this would make the process all the more complicated, however I am certain it would have been possible despite Reagan's supposedly poor memory and purposeful lack of documentation. Leading to very little punishment or prison time across the board to all members involved in the scandal, this court ruled conclusion seems brushed over and inconclusive. This is meant to clear up the imprecise and loosely looked upon Iran Contra Scandal. Focusing on the actual scandal itself and the ins and outs of it which leads to the belief that Reagan got off far too easily, therefore leading me to the cover-up and stylistic language used by Reagan in speeches to pull off the Iran Contra scandal comfortably.

To give a brief introduction to the Iran Contra scandal before going in to great detail, Britannica would call it a,

1980's U.S. political scandal in which the National Security Council (NSC) became involved in secret weapons transactions and other activities that either were prohibited by the U.S. Congress or violated the stated public policy of the government.⁹

In the early 1980's both Nicaragua and Iran were experiencing government reformations.

Nicaragua is not the main focus of this essay, despite the juicy ties it offers between the U.S. and cocaine and hot gossip it offers, I do not have the luxury of adding another 30 pages—this essay will be focusing on the side of it involving Iran.

It may be confusing as to how the hostage crisis and the Iran Contra Scandal are intertwined, as they are two separate issues in two separate countries. To end any confusion, Iran was in close connection to Lebanon, where the hostages were taken by the Shi'ite terrorists, as they were very loyal to Iran, Reagan went through the Iranians to get to the Lebanese terrorists. In Iran, the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, Islamic fundamentalists were in the midst of an overthrow against the Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi who would have been considered a more Western influenced organization. This is where Robert McFarlane comes in, as it was his idea to go through Iran, in an arms sale of missiles for the American hostages safe return to American soil.

Additionally to Iran's government Reformation period, they were also undergoing a war with Iraq, the arms sold to Iran for hostages were conveniently used against Iraq in war putting the Reagan administration in a bad position. Whether or not Reagan knew that he was actually selling arms for a war in the Middle East or if he genuinely just wanted the American hostages back remains unknown. Either way it was incredibly irresponsible on his part and his doing;

⁹ Matthews, Roland. 2019. "Iran-Contra Affair | Summary." In *Encyclopædia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Iran-Contra-Affair>.

which he did sincerely apologize on national television for in the end.. does that make it ok ? No ! Why ? Because selling arms to the Middle East resulting in funneling money through third party countries and to the contras was in direct violation of laws made before Reagan did it. In fact these laws were put in place so Reagan would not do jus that, as the Democrats predicted exactly what he was up to—no good. Greater detail on laws made against funneling money through a third party country will be given later on.

Iranians during the hostage crisis in the end of Carter’s term in office had agreed to release hostages at the price of arms sales keeping in mind that the Reagan administration would be powerless until January 20th of that year, 1981. The Iranians had plans to make this deal with Reagan’s Republican administration over Carter’s “lame duck” administration. ¹⁰ The Carter administration warned Iranians of William Casey, Reagan’s Director of Central Intelligence from 1981-87 hinting that he would not be promising to making a deal. However, November of 1980 Carter would respond to the Iranians sharply that an arms sale would be a violation of the embargo that the United States had imposed on Iran and would be harmful to US interests. ¹¹ Iran made one last effort to make a deal with the Carter Administration before Reagan would be taking office in December of 1980 that began with the Iranians suggesting the United States should, deposit \$9.6 billion in Iranian assets, plus interest...deposit \$10 billion as security against return to Iran, all concluding to be about a \$24 billion dollar misunderstanding through the eyes of the Carter administration.

In January of 1981 Reagan would strike a deal with the Iranians that would cost the United States on average \$300,000 per day per hostage. Along with this the Iranians knew that they had also struck a new arms relationship with the Americans new Republican

¹⁰ Sick, Gary. *October Surprise : America's Hostages in Iran and the Election of Ronald Reagan*. 1st ed. New York : Toronto: Times Books ; Random House, 1991. (179)

¹¹ Ibid.

administration.¹² “There is no doubt that the Iranians timed the hostage release to coincide with Reagan’s inauguration.”¹³ The United States and Iran both signed the hostage release agreement on January 19th, interestingly this was in the works for Carter and if Iran had not last minute change to the agreement, Carter would have received credit. Instead these arrangements were put on pause and Reagan would begin his term in office with the rewarding freedom of the hostages. Reagan while at a luncheon at the Capitol would not only announce his presidency but also that the hostages were now free.¹⁴ Iran’s intentional delay to the deal was perhaps their last laugh at Carter’s failed presidency. Reagan would conclude this success that he would make in to a cover-up each time the scandal part of the deal was brought up a “ransom sought by barbarians,”¹⁵ essentially referring to the Iranians as barbaric; very bold. Along with that he would make clear that his foreign policy team’s mission would be to end terrorism. Reagan was proving to be the stronger and smarter president over Carter.

Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khomeini’s close adviser and head of state of Iran, Bani Sadr was a witness to the decision made that Carter would not be given the success of freeing the hostages while weakening Saddam Hussein, two birds one stone. Through delaying the agreement Carter was obviously made to look like a fool and Hussein of Iraq would have to continue the war against Iran, which the country did not have the equipment for as the Soviets were no longer supplying them, making Hussein vulnerable. By May of 1981 Hussein would be forced to declare peace with Iran on Iran’s terms.

¹² Sick, Gary. *October Surprise : America's Hostages in Iran and the Election of Ronald Reagan*. 1st ed. New York : Toronto: Times Books ; Random House, 1991. (190)

¹³ Ibid. (193)

¹⁴ Ibid (195)

¹⁵ Times, Steven R. Weisman Special To the New York. 1980. “Reagan Calls Iran’s New Demands A ‘Ransom’ Sought by ‘Barbarians’; Contrast With Present Approach Reagan Says Demands Are ‘Ransom’ of ‘Barbarians’ Reagan Aide Warns Iranians Brzezinski Assesses Haig (Published 1980).” *The New York Times*, December 29, 1980, sec. Archives. <https://www.nytimes.com/1980/12/29/archives/reagan-calls-irans-new-demands-a-ransom-sought-by-barbarians.html>.

Excitingly, there is more illegality to all of this. Private funds being diverted to the Contras by McFarlane and North, who were given loose instruction to do so by Ronald Reagan himself. Additionally the funds came from wealthy conservatives for falsely perceived organizations made to make rich folks feel they were giving generously to a good cause. This was not gaining momentum as public knowledge until November of 1986 and the final Commission Report would be released in February of 1987.

The Boland Amendment was named and sponsored by democrat Representative Edward P. Boland. Boland I passed in 1983, and Boland II in 1984; these amendments were put in act to keep the US from impinging on Nicaragua as Reagan made it one of his first tasks to stop the Sandinista communist movement. Congress decided it was a mess the states should not become wrapped up in and passed the Boland Amendment 411-0.¹⁶ October 3rd 1984 Boland II passed:

No appropriations or funds made available pursuant to this joint resolution to the Central Intelligence Agency, the Department of Defense, or any other agency or entity of the United States involved in intelligence activities may be obligated or expended for the purpose or which would have the effect of supporting, directly or indirectly, military or paramilitary operations in Nicaragua by any nation, group, organization, movement or individual.¹⁷

This Act more specifically prohibited the use of funds to Central Intelligence or the Department of Defense; this was contradictory to the Reagan administration's commitment to going through with the Contra Scandal.¹⁸ Due to this commitment, the administration got around Boland I first because the CIA claimed that their reasoning was not related to anticommunist efforts in Nicaragua. Secondly, working through the National Security Council instead of the CIA or

¹⁶ Times, Steven R. Weisman Special To the New York. 1980. "Reagan Calls Iran's New Demands A 'Ransom' Sought by 'Barbarians'; Contrast With Present Approach Reagan Says Demands Are 'Ransom' of 'Barbarians' Reagan Aide Warns Iranians Brzezinski Assesses Haig (Published 1980)." *The New York Times*, December 29, 1980, sec. Archives. <https://www.nytimes.com/1980/12/29/archives/reagan-calls-irans-new-demands-a-ransom-sought-by-barbarians.html>.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Draper, Theodore. *A Very Thin Line : The Iran-Contra Affairs*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1991. (30-38)

Defense Department worked as a loophole. Thirdly, through using *private* or *third country* funds. Representative Dick Cheney called Boland I and II the *killer amendment* as it was used to force the contras to *lay down their arms*.¹⁹

The Boland amendment made it so money would have to be handled privately and third country, McFarlane had organized a deal with Saudi Arabia in June of 1984 who was supporting the Reagan administration's anti-communist movement. Saudi ambassador Prince Bandar discussed with McFarlane that he would make a contribution of \$1 million monthly for the rest of the year in effort to keep the body and soul of the contra alive. McFarlane claims he told Reagan and Bush about this massive contribution, both pleased with the news; Reagan's response was to keep it quiet.

Reagan believed that the Iranians looking to make this deal were genuinely trying to overthrow the government, believing they were anti-terrorist moderates, Reagan told McFarlane to explore it further.²⁰ Reagan went through with the deal and the Iran-Israel deal turned out to be a bust, the Iranians received their TOW missiles and the US got one hostage back instead of four.²¹ It was then clear to the Reagan administration that Iran had one goal which was to get arms from the US to then use against Iraq and would break deals to do so. Another factor that led the Iranians to breaking the deal for hostages was that the hostages were not being kept in Iran, they were in Lebanon making it harder to Iran to follow through. Additionally, it was very possible that the Iranians knew if they handed over all four hostages their leverage on the US for arms would be gone.

The head of NSC, Robert McFarlane and his main staff member or *action officer*, Oliver North were put to the task of handling the Iran Contra Scandal for the White House. Reagan,

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

with Vice president Bush and chief of staff James Baker present, phrased it to the NSC as holding together the *body and soul* of the contras at all costs.²² McFarlane and North were told they would need to do propaganda work and get ahold of money and lots of it to fund the contras while being reminded that they were immune to the Boland amendment as they were the NSC. McFarlane's expertise was in military and despite feeling doubtful of the president's request to interfere in Nicaragua and Iran, he felt backed in to a corner with no other option,

Succinctly put, where I went wrong was not having the guts to stand up and tell the President that. To tell you the truth probably the reason I didn't is because if I had done that, Bill Casey... would have said I was some kind of commie. ²³

Unfortunately for McFarlane, the Iran contra was made his responsibility and his purpose was to do as the president said. North had a similar background to McFarlane's minus the experience in politics.

North was quick to become involved in the Iran contra. He was first getting media attention in September of 1985 for meeting with Israelis in London. In late November of 1985, North met with Poindexter who would meet with Reagan to discuss another arms for hostages trade, Israeli sources say that North spoke with them and said that the US would go through with another arms for hostages trade for the price of more American arms for the Israelis, meanwhile North and Poindexter were also discussing getting back on good terms with the Iranians.

November 20th, North sent Poindexter a message in regards to the arms for hostages exchange.

It would appear that North knew or was told that President Reagan had been informed of the Israeli transport of missiles and had "mentally" covered it with a finding or that the question of a finding had been raised in some quarters and that it had been answered by a reference to a possible later "mental finding" by the president.²⁴

²² Draper, Theodore. *A Very Thin Line : The Iran-Contra Affairs*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1991. (167-171)

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Draper, Theodore. *A Very Thin Line : The Iran-Contra Affairs*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1991. (178-182)

The Intelligence Oversight Act of 1980 states that if the president is aware of a *finding*, the president is required to report it to the CIA in a “timely fashion”²⁵ and this must be reported before the operation has occurred. Now that Reagan was a holder of this finding as well, frantically in effort to erase this finding, Reagan labeled it a “mental finding.”²⁶ General Counsel Sporkin’s job was to determine the legality of what is proposed and to protect the President from anything illegal or illegitimate in the legality. Sporkin would bring his ideas and findings to Poindexter.

Finding Pursuant to Section 662 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961. As Amended, Concerning Operations Undertaken by the Central Intelligence Agency in Foreign Countries, Other Than Those Intended Solely for the Purpose of Intelligence Collection.²⁷

Sporkin argued that the operations in the Middle East were vital to the national security of the US and due to its’ importance he claims that the president should utilize his constitutional authority. Sporkin, exercising his constitutional authority states,

I direct the Director of Central Intelligence not to brief the Congress of the United States as provided for section 501 of the National Security Act of 1947, as amended, until such time as I may direct otherwise.²⁸

The National Security Act of 1947 actually is the original works of the National Security Act of 1977, essentially the same acts except the later one being modified this is still very illegal.

Sporkin also advised Reagan to not notify Congress or the CIA for as long as he wished. The National Security Act is an act to give authority to both foreign policy and military organizations when implementing foreign relations, this also includes the NSC.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

February of 1985, the first \$8 million that was raised by McFarlane was running out, leader of Saudi Arabia, King Fahd ibn Abdul-Aziz visited Reagan in the Oval Office for a private meeting. Shortly after McFarlane would be notified that Saudi Arabia was upping their monthly payments to \$2 million for another year. McFarlane, eager to notify the president found out quickly that he had already known from his previous meeting with the King. Reagan would open up five years later about what happened in that meeting.

Nothing was said about the contra or contra aid until he stood up to leave. And as he was leaving the Oval Office and I was escorting him to the door, he told me of the contribution that he had been making to the contras. There had been no discussion of that in our meeting until that. He told me that, and his last words were that he was going to double it.²⁹

The two agreed to stay quiet about the money influx, which totaled to be \$32 million. Casey, Director of CIA, was also aware of Saudi Arabia's contributions. He complained to McFarlane that North was blabbing about the money, supposedly Casey found out of another CIA member's knowledge of the deal. North denied it.³⁰

June 1985 Reagan is quoted saying "The United States gives terrorists no rewards. We make no concessions. We make no deals."³¹ Meanwhile, the United States was toying with taking a very different approach to dealing with Iran. The Khomeini regime was known for being a terrorist group and McFarlane was told to look in to how the US could influence post-Khomeini Iran.

While in abdominal surgery in July of 1985, McFarlane insisted on visiting the president as he had important news. McFarlane had to inform the president that he had been approached by the Israelis about the Iranian government being vulnerable and this could lead to getting the

²⁹ Draper, Theodore. *A Very Thin Line : The Iran-Contra Affairs*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1991. (82)

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

second group of hostages back. The president's story on this conversation with McFarlane changed several times. In 1987 he completely denied any knowledge of the conversation, in 1990 he admitted to the conversation happening but added that he had a very faint memory of it. His last version of the meeting with McFarlane was in his autobiography when it miraculously reappeared in his memory recollection.³² His latest version of the memory was that McFarlane had arrived at the hospital to tell him about information given by the Israelis of a group in Iran organizing against Khomeini and his dictatorship. He also added that McFarlane suggested supplying this group with arms to follow through with the overthrow of Khomeini as well as making an arms deal with the moderates for the hostages.

August 6th 1985, Reagan called for a meeting in the White House where the following would be present: President Reagan, Vice President Bush, Secretary of State Shultz, Secretary of Defense Weinberger, Chief of Staff Regan and McFarlane. Reagan would attend this meeting in his pajamas as he was still recovering from abdominal surgery. McFarlane told the group that three meetings occurred between the Iranians and Israelis and that the Iranians were to have a government reconstruction soon, and in need of US assistance.³³ Iranians wanted 100 TOW missiles from Israel in exchange for four American hostages. Secretary of State Schultz was not for making this deal with the Iranians as it was essentially an arms for hostages deal, everyone except for the president and McFarlane were in opposition to making the deal, the secretaries were aggressively against it.

May 28th 1986, Roger McFarlane and Oliver North would fly in to the Mehrabad Airport in Iran for a series of secret meetings with Iranian officials to offer gifts to Khomeini; these gifts included a chocolate cake in the shape of a key and a Bible that Reagan inscribed with his

³² Draper, Theodore. *A Very Thin Line : The Iran-Contra Affairs*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1991. (167-171)

³³ Ibid.

passage of choice from the New Testament. The Khomeini was a public figure in Iran who stood up against the Shah and its Western influenced theories. North in the case of capture would later reveal that he brought along a suicide pill. A group of “radical university students,”³⁴ exposed the meeting with a photograph of McFarlane, the reporting would be confirmed by Iranian parliament member Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani and would be made public news by the Lebanese weekly magazine *Al-Shiraa*.³⁵

Once exposed there was no question that Reagan was seeking alternative aides to finance the contras in Nicaragua and Iran while managing to go around the Boland Amendment which was the Democrat’s attempt to keep Reagan out of Nicaragua originally. North had been put in charge of working with a group of fundraisers called the NEPL (National Endowment for the preservation of Liberty) which was framed as a fund for educational purposes within the United States. This targeted extremely wealthy neoconservative folks in to raising money for a fake non-profit that was funneling money to the contras. North framed it as a, “crucial contribution in helping our President in this vital endeavor”³⁶ which Reagan attended from time to time for the sake of taking photos with the generous donors; more than \$6.3 million was raised by the time North’s financial work was done.

North’s next step was hiring an experienced arms dealer, a recommendation by Casey was U.S. Air Force general Richard V. Secord for the job. Alongside Secord was Iranian businessman Albert Hakim who had his connection with military supplies in Iran and experience with previous merchants involved with the Bay of Pigs, President Kennedy’s very own Watergate scandal. Additionally, there has been proof that some of the same money and men involved with not only aiding the contras but also smuggling cocaine in to the United States.

³⁴ Wilentz, Sean. *The Age of Reagan : A History, 1974-2008*. 1st ed. New York, NY: Harper, 2008. (211)

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

North's personal notebooks showed knowledge and therefore proof that he was aware of exactly what was going on in regards to the contras and smuggling of cocaine.³⁷ North in testimony would claim it was an, "ambitious permanent secret military operation, which would allow the White House to pursue every variety of covert operation completely free of congressional scrutiny of any constitutional constraint."³⁸

Reagan would be notified that North's operation to get money funneled towards the contras may be viewed as illegal and in disagreement to Congress, but both Bush and Reagan dismissed this idea and went forward. Members of the NSC argued that the funds were legal as long as the United States did not claim, "no quid pro quo,"³⁹ meaning it was not a something for something type deal. Later McFarlane would admit that it quite literally was a quid pr quo situation.

Arms merchant Richard Brenneke would oversee an agreement between the Iranians (mullahs) and the Reagan Administration in Paris in October of 1980. Later in 1988 during a trial pilot Heinrich Rupp would admit to flying Future head of CIA and George Bush to France weeks before Reagan's inauguration, October 19th 1980.⁴⁰ Brenneke would admit to attending several meetings with Casey and Bush at this time. In the mix as well was Iranian Cyrus Hashemi and French Robert Benes in charge of logistics who would receive a partial payment of \$40 million for shipping and handling of arms to Iran. This series of events set in France, made to organize the release of American hostages in Iran and negotiate an arms sale can also be known as Iran-gate.⁴¹

³⁷ Wilentz, Sean. *The Age of Reagan : A History, 1974-2008*. 1st ed. New York, NY: Harper, 2008. (215)

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Banī Šadr, Abū Al-Ḥasan., and Deniau, Jean-Charles. *My Turn to Speak : Iran, the Revolution & Secret Deals with the U.S*. Washington: Brassey's (US), 1991. (34)

⁴¹ Sick, Gary. *October Surprise : America's Hostages in Iran and the Election of Ronald Reagan*. 1st ed. New York : Toronto: Times Books ; Random House, 1991. (196)

A small Lebanese newspaper company would release an article on the Reagan administration that would reveal secret arms sales to Iran November 3rd 1986, within two weeks it went viral. Go back to 1985, Reagan is on record saying that terrorists will not be treated well by Americans, no rewards. The first news conference in the East Room would hold place on November 19th.

On February 27th 1987, the Tower Commission would release their results of the investigations made; they would criticize Reagan of a hands off style management of his National Security Council. ⁴² Reagan began speaking in the spring of 1987, as the investigations concluded that the president had done nothing illegal, “The President did not seem to be aware of the way in which the operation was implemented and the full consequences of U.S. participation.” ⁴³ March 4th 1987 Reagan would deliver his speech on the subject.

My fellow Americans...

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

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

Good night, and God bless you. ⁴⁴

Millions watched this speech on television, this twelve minute speech Reagan throws himself on the sword, thanking the panel for their time and efforts, and with undertones of denial. March 9th

⁴² Bates, Toby Glenn. *The Reagan Rhetoric : History and Memory in 1980s America*. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2011. (128-132)

⁴³ Sick, Gary. *October Surprise : America's Hostages in Iran and the Election of Ronald Reagan*. 1st ed. New York : Toronto: Times Books ; Random House, 1991. (197)

⁴⁴ American Rhetoric: Ronald Reagan - Iran Contra Address to the Nation. Accessed September 17, 2020. <https://www.americanrhetoric.com/speechesronaldreaganirancontraspeech.htm>.

the *Time*'s would make their cover a picture of Reagan holding the Tower Commission Report with the caption "Can He Recover?"⁴⁵ In convincing himself of his own innocence with proof of efforts to stop communism and free the hostages, the American people ate it up and approval ratings were on the rise. Writer Patrick Butler who formerly wrote speeches for Senator Howard H. Baker Jr. and president Ford, was also made Reagan's chief of staff in February of 1987 and saving Reagan's presidency. "An obvious linguistic contradiction actually remained vital to Reagan's survival of the Iran Contra and his ability to regain credibility with the American people."⁴⁶ Despite the press's continuous questioning of the Contra-Scandal, for Americans Reagan's speech was enough. News was still coming out, allegations against Reagan, but Reagan stuck to his story answering to the allegations the same each time, giving the press no ammunition against the president. The president had accepted responsibility and that was all the public needed. Reagan's admin very carefully kept track of the public's reaction to the speech made March 4th, media showed that the press received it very well.⁴⁷ Within twenty four hours over five thousand calls were made to the White House, 93% of which were in approval of Reagan's speech.⁴⁸ By June of 1987, questions began circulating about Poindexter, Reagan's National Security Advisor, and North's roles in the scandal. The Times reported that the Iran Contra Scandal had become far more complex and challenging to follow than Watergate.⁴⁹

Back to the election of 1980, Carter as the Democratic candidate, running against Reagan, had planned to reveal to the public that Reagan was inexperienced, overly militaristic and a dangerous candidate. This would appeal to the many Americans against the war in

⁴⁵ Bates, Toby Glenn. *The Reagan Rhetoric : History and Memory in 1980s America*. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2011. (122)

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Bates, Toby Glenn. *The Reagan Rhetoric : History and Memory in 1980s America*. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2011. (139-145)

⁴⁹ Draper, Theodore. *A Very Thin Line : The Iran-Contra Affairs*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1991. (19-23)

Vietnam during the 70's, meanwhile Iran was in contact with the United States in 1979 about making a deal for the hostages. The Reagan administration was fearful of an *October Surprise*⁵⁰, meaning the hostages would be released and Carter would win hearts and the election. Carter was in the lead. Carter's next decision would cost him the election, convinced that his knowledge on world issues would clearly win against Reagan's charm, Carter agreed to a debate in Cleveland on October 28th 1979. Carter spoke with philosophy and logic while Reagan spoke with simplicity and image. Reagan's wit, nostalgic rhetoric and charisma would take Carter down by a landslide just a week before the vote.

Originally when running for office in 1976, Reagan used the Watergate scandal as more reasoning to go for office, as the United States had "lost her way"⁵¹ and Carter was not helping the situation. Suitable to Reagan, he blamed this scandal on an overly intrusive government, calling it, "more coercive, more meddlesome and less effective."⁵² Then he carried on to explain that Washington D.C. was corrupted by a "buddy system, consisting of Congress, the bureaucracy, and the lobbyists."⁵³ In trying to hit this point home he used Kissinger's saying that the United States represented Athens and the Soviet Union was Sparta, Reagan then questioned if Americans would accept this idea and suggested that Americans were living in a world where being second best could be fatal—rather apocalyptic. Not to mention that using anything of Kissinger's under a positive light is a red flag, especially after bashing on Nixon for Watergate – makes no sense to agree on something Kissinger said. Throughout his political career Reagan frequently used the idea that America had gotten away from her roots of limited

⁵⁰ Wilentz, Sean. *The Age of Reagan : A History, 1974-2008*. 1st ed. New York, NY: Harper, 2008. (122)

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Wilentz, Sean. *The Age of Reagan : A History, 1974-2008*. 1st ed. New York, NY: Harper, 2008. (129)

government, freedom and prosperity. He used America's oldest defining characteristic to touch American's hearts and became known as the *Great Communicator* for it.

Wilentz would argue that Reagan spent much of his life in the process of becoming something else. Starting at small town college student in the Midwest to Hollywood actor, to leftist liberal Democratic Union leader to informant for the FBI, to right wing Republican television host then conservative governor of California to his last phase as the president of the United States.⁵⁴ This led critics to believe he was simply a stand in for the Republican party with good social skills and an ex career in acting or he was just dense. Either way, how did Reagan become the face of modern day Republicanism if he was just a pitchman? It was clear that Reagan despised communism passionately; this caused him to engage in lawlessness which occurred primarily in his second term (the Iran / Nicaraguan Contras), once he got the United States economy up and running again, might I remind that it was through making budget cuts to programs meant to aid the poor and the occasional tax cut.

Reaganism represented reminiscence of old American roots—Make America Great Again was the perfect slogan to incapsulate what Reagan could spark up in Americans. Many of his speeches gave images of the homeland and related closely to original American literature such as *Gone with the Wind* and *The Great Gatsby*. It was meant to recover the principles of the American Revolution which meant prosperity, freedom, innovation and security.⁵⁵ Reaganism was a personal attack on big government, it stood for antigovernment while reminding the American people of Watergate, Vietnam and even the hostage crisis in Iran; which at the time Carter was taking all the heat for this crisis and Reagan's behind the scene relationship with Iran was yet to be uncovered.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ritter, Kurt W., Henry, David R., and Reagan, Ronald. *Ronald Reagan : The Great Communicator*. Great American Orators ; No. 13. New York: Greenwood Press, 1992. (xiv)

Ritter and Henry would argue that Reagan may have found inspiration and or rhetoric in Franklin D. Roosevelt's presidency. The generation of the 1930's was one in search of redemption and perhaps this was a similar feeling post Carter. Roosevelt's inaugural address was primarily about flipping the economy in a country of hard working and self-seeking people.⁵⁶ Ritter and Henry would consider Reagan's role in office to be *pastoral*, often incorporating God's presence in his speeches, he showed a number of times his incredible ability to manipulate the nation's view of him while keeping the nation mesmerized by his narrative and storytelling all while coming off as a moralist; he truly believed himself to be one.⁵⁷ Using his rhetorical presidency, he would lift the nation out of economic despair all while establishing conservatism to lead the public with a splash of charm in his speeches using heroism and patriotism of the American flag and what it could stand for or mean to Americans, worked very well. It is also clear that Reagan was far less effective at these points when his rhetoric was toyed with; if he was unable to choose the platform and theme of his speech or unprepared for the issues brought up he would often embarrass himself publicly—specifically in regards to the Iran Contra Affair when he was asked in the East Room during a conference with the press. This led commentator's and American's across the board to question Reagan's knowledge which would save him from taking ownership and any actual punishment in the end.

Reagan had a spectacular and disposable staff in charge of speechwriting, having gone through six different speechwriters that served him well on television and radio as being a well-rehearsed, self-conscious and conscientious speaker,⁵⁸ winning him a massive audience and overall approval rating. Reagan knew very well that in a crown of varying people in their beliefs

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ritter, Kurt W., Henry, David R., and Reagan, Ronald. *Ronald Reagan : The Great Communicator*. Great American Orators ; No. 13. New York: Greenwood Press, 1992. (36)

and opinions, one common ground was a well told story evoking passion towards the United States and what it stands for. Today we see politics becoming less about actual politics. It is not common to instead acknowledge political figures as public figures; Reagan being one of the early and most successful presidents with a long lived background as an actor made in to a political and national figure. At the Republican presidential nomination, “I ask you not simply to ‘trust me,’ but to trust your values—our values—and to hold me responsible for living up to them.”⁵⁹ This was an early example of Reagan’s rhetoric involving religion and traditional American values ,while alarming citizens of the near extinction of American tradition and values and grasping American hearts while he did it. Along with this, Reagan genuinely believed that American freedom was being jeopardized by communism and domestic government bureaucracy, this belief came about in the late 1950’s and was delivered this idea as apocalyptic to the public in the beginning of his political career and would use it sparingly through his time in office. ⁶⁰ This gave comfort to conservative Americans in fear of communism taking over democracy on the homeland by oppressors abroad. In his speeches of anticommunism, he was also able to articulate the American dream beautifully. Along with that Reagan focused on the American jeremiad :

- The *promise*, which stresses America’s special destiny as the promised land—literally, its covenant with God;
- The *declension*, which cites Americas failure to live up to its obligations at the chosen people, its neglect of its mission, its failure to progress sufficiently—its national sin of retrogression from the promise
- The *prophecy*, which predicts that if Americans will repent and reform, the promise can still be fulfilled ⁶¹

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ritter, Kurt W., Henry, David R., and Reagan, Ronald. *Ronald Reagan : The Great Communicator*. Great American Orators ; No. 13. New York: Greenwood Press, 1992. (40)

Ritter calls this the jeremiad rhetoric, it stems from his original pastoral rhetoric, however the updated rhetoric took him all the way to the white house. Essentially, Reagans message was from one of the main points of the Old Testament, once disaster hits, then comes repentance, new life and salvation. ⁶² Additionally, Reagan blamed the disaster that his America on its leaders rather than its people, making this very appealing to the public.

Reagan clearly managed to get himself out of the Iran Contra Scandal, how he did this is a three part series beginning with him addressing the American Bar Association on July 9th 1985. He described Iran to the American people as a “confederation of terrorist states...a new, international version of Murder, Incorporated,”⁶³ and that this country was not to be tampered with. Then sixteen months down the line, it went public that Reagan was selling military arms to Iran, as he described to be a terrorist state exposing his foreign affairs complex. Beginning in November of 1986 and ending in August of 1987 there was a variety of coverups, lies, memory loss, and prolonged silence on the subject. This was all resolved by the *Great Communicator*’s ability to remain calm, confident and cool all while demonstrating strength in leadership and transparency towards Americans.

Ritter and Henry would describe Reagan’s plan to manipulate the public’s perception of the scandal in four stages. First, Reagan used his pastoral rhetoric to his advantage showing confidence despite news and reports coming out suggesting him to be guilty. Secondly he acknowledged the allegations and conditions he was under and taking minor blame on his behalf while putting the major blame on his staff. Third he made a massive recovery in February of 1987 when the panel ruled him innocent and he had chief of staff Donald Reagan and Senator

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ “Individual Speeches: Ronald Reagan Presidential Library - National Archives and Records Administration.” Individual Speeches | Ronald Reagan Presidential Library - National Archives and Records Administration. Accessed September 28, 2020. <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/sspeeches/70885a>.

Howard Baker putting their primary efforts towards rebuilding Reagan's image. Lastly, despite Reagan's strengths being mainly in speech, he learned to keep his mouth shut as damage control of this mess.⁶⁴ Even after changing the story several times, Reagan made it out with no impeachments and little hate.

In the first stages of his coverup, Reagan broadcasts a speech and starts off by arguing the stories going around on the Iran Contra Scandal were false and that Americans would be getting facts straight from the White House from a credible name and source, the president himself. He explained that small amounts of defensive weapons and spare parts for defensive systems were being sold for the purpose of bringing an honorable end to a bloody six year long war between Iraq and Iran as well as to bring home the hostages and renewing the relationship between the United States and Iran. In claiming that the weapons were specifically for a *defense system*, this was meant to justify the sale of arms because the amount was too small to do any notable damage or sway the war in the Middle East and they were an olive branch to Iran to get the hostages back and mend a broken relationship. Additionally Iran's acceptance was supposed to be seen as a sign of progress between the two countries and considered growth in the right direction because the hostages were released.

Many of the questions asked by reporters on November 19th during the conference in the East Room are followed by clips of Reagan's face in absolute panic before he begins using his best asset, speech and rhetoric. Reagan is asked plainly if he did in fact trade arms for hostages in Iran.

Everything that we sold them could be put in one cargo plane and there would be plenty of room left over...we know this is going on and there have been countries that have been dealing arms with Iran, there have also been private merchants of such things that have

⁶⁴ Ritter, Kurt W., Henry, David R., and Reagan, Ronald. *Ronald Reagan : The Great Communicator*. Great American Orators ; No. 13. New York: Greenwood Press, 1992. (74)

been doing the same thing...we did something for a particular mission, there was a risk entailed...Iran did not kidnap anyone, Iran held no hostages...the kidnapers of our hostages did have a relationship with them and could have some influence, so three hostages came home [crowd laughs]⁶⁵

When Reagan brings up other countries being involved, the only way this statement would be accurate if it was regarding the third party money funneling in order to get away with the arms trade. It is clear that during this conference the president brings up the fact that the hostages were brought home time and time again to distract the audience from the real scandal. Again, when asked about the missiles undoubtedly sent to Iran, Reagan has the most ridiculous response as to why this should not be considered unlawful.

This is a purely defensive weapon, a shoulder carried weapon and—and we don't think that in this defense if we didn't add to any offensive power on the part of—of Iran we know that Iraq has already announced that they would be willing to settle the conflict as we've said with no winners or losers.⁶⁶

Clearly stressed, stuttering his words it is made clear that even Reagan's biggest strength in his presidency, speech, cannot dig him out of this gaping hole he is in. The reporters are ruthless, suggesting that his presidency is permanently damaged; there was no holding back during the questions, this is standard for these kinds of conferences. However the president walking in that room to the reporters was a death sentence.

Everything you've said you've based on a supposition that is false, um we did not condone and do not condone the shipment of arms from other countries and as to what was the other point that you made here...I didn't know that it didn't violate the or that did violate the law...the president, believe it or not does have the power if in his belief

⁶⁵ "President Ronald Reagan Holds a News Conference and Takes Question on the Iran Arms and Contra Aid c - YouTube." n.d. Wwww.Youtube.com. Accessed November 16, 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HnmdVVK2-4>.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

national security can be served to waive the provisions of that law and well as to defer the notification of the congress. ⁶⁷

The president claiming that he has more power than what is commonly known is not true, the Boland Act and the 1977 International Security Act both prove otherwise—I will be explaining what both of these acts entail later in the essay. Going back to Reagan’s whole philosophy on less government and America ‘losing her way’ through too much government involvement; why all the sudden does Reagan hold all of this power ? A reporter brings up that there were 1000 tow anti-tank missiles sent to Iran, despite the president saying that it did not alter any military balance he asks,

How could you claim that it didn’t break the law when the National Security Act of 1977 plainly talks about timely notification of Congress and also sir stipulates that if the National Security requires secrecy the president is still required to advise the leadership and the chairman of the intelligence committees. ⁶⁸

The reporter asks the president why he thinks that 1000 TOW antitank missiles is not enough to upset the balance of a war in the Middle East, Reagan goes around the question and reminds the reporters that he did achieve getting hostages back again. This reporter was absolutely on to something as the 1977 International Security Act states,

To amend the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 to authorize international security assistance programs for fiscal year, 1978, to amend the Arms Export Control Act to make certain changes in the authorities of that Act, and for other purposes. ⁶⁹

Then for three months Reagan refused to speak on the subject, claiming it was inappropriate while several investigations currently in motion on the topic.

⁶⁷ “President Ronald Reagan Holds a News Conference and Takes Question on the Iran Arms and Contra Aid c - YouTube.” n.d. Wwww.Youtube.com. Accessed November 16, 2020.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HnmdVVK2-4>.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/STATUTE-91/pdf/STATUTE-91-Pg614.pdf#page=1>

Iran also happened to be important to the United States' and the world's economy for its oil supply, making it an easy decision for Reagan on which country to make efforts with. Reagan concluded by saying, "We did not—repeat—did not trade weapons or anything else for hostages, nor will we...those who think that we have gone soft on terrorists, take up that question with Colonel Qadhafi." ⁷⁰ ABC News would report the first post-speech opinion poll which would show to be unfavorable to Reagan's plea of innocence, he would respond to this first poll by saying, "Bringing Iran back into the community of responsible nations, ending its participation in political terror, bringing an end to that terrible war, and bringing our hostages home—these are the causes that justify taking risks."⁷¹ Reporter Helen Thomas would respond to this by asking Reagan to, "assess the credibility of your own administration in the light of the prolonged deception of Congress and the public in terms of your secret dealings with Iran." ⁷²

Shortly after this public interaction was when Reagan first began keeping his responses straight to the point before he went silent on the subject, "I was not breaking the law...I have the right under the law to defer reporting to Congress...until such time as I believe it can safely be done with no risk to others." ⁷³ In efforts to explain his administration's intentions and policies, Reagan grew increasingly frustrated and resorted to the argument that he was unaware of the illegalities made by his administration and specifically the National Security Council. "I was not fully informed on the nature of one of the activities undertaken in connection with this

⁷⁰ Ritter, Kurt W., Henry, David R., and Reagan, Ronald. *Ronald Reagan : The Great Communicator*. Great American Orators ; No. 13. New York: Greenwood Press, 1992. (76)

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² "President Ronald Reagan Holds a News Conference and Takes Question on the Iran Arms and Contra Aid c - YouTube." n.d. Www.Youtube.com. Accessed November 16, 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HnmdVVK2-4>.

⁷³ "President Ronald Reagan Holds a News Conference and Takes Question on the Iran Arms and Contra Aid c - YouTube." n.d. Www.Youtube.com. Accessed November 16, 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HnmdVVK2-4>.

initiative.”⁷⁴ Which was then followed up with the question as to whether or not Reagan made a mistake by sending arms to Iran, which he would answer with “No, and I am not taking any more questions.”⁷⁵ Public approval ratings of Reagan would decline massively during this time, February of 1987. It was said by a White House staff member that the March 4th speech would be the most important speech of Reagan’s presidency and his last chance at restoring the public’s faith in him, and pastoral rhetoric would get him there.

In you, the American people, your trust is what gives a President his powers of leadership and his personal strength...As angry as I may be about activities undertaken without my knowledge, I am still accountable for those activities...and as personally distasteful as I find secret accounts and diverted funds—well, as the Navy would say, this happened on my watch.⁷⁶

Blatant denial would not serve Reagan well as he saw, it did not work for Nixon either; instead he takes ownership of the Iran Contra while still claiming to be aloof of the scandal, and somehow somehow it worked. Once the panel made its decision, all Reagan had to do was relay that to the public and add an apology for not knowing it happened. Along with Reagan’s very sincere apology he also mentioned that the hostages were on the forefront of his mind despite the diversion of funds and withholding of information on the detail of these funds and weapons. The hostages throughout the heat of the scandal made for a great deflection. He reminded Americans that this made him very angry, but “the best therapy for outrage and anger is action.”⁷⁷

Oliver North would not speak of the scandal or suggest anything against Reagan until 1991, where he is quoted by the *Times* in saying that Reagan did in fact know of the arms sale and much more. North wrote a book after he was released from prison, where he writes, “Ronald

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ritter, Kurt W., Henry, David R., and Reagan, Ronald. *Ronald Reagan : The Great Communicator*. Great American Orators ; No. 13. New York: Greenwood Press, 1992. (80)

Reagan knew of and approved a great deal of what went on with both the Iranian initiative and private efforts on behalf of the contras and he received regular, detailed briefings on both.”⁷⁸ Prior to Poindexter’s trial, Reagan is on video claiming to have no recollection of the affair, which lined up well with Poindexter and North’s strict instructions to deny ever informing the President of the contras and destroy any evidence suggesting the President knowing anything about the affair. The article is concluded by telling how betrayed North felt in the end, by a man whose policies he firmly stood behind. North explains that before he was detained he received a call from Reagan where he said, “Ollie, I am sorry I just didn’t know.”⁷⁹ Again, Reagan could have saved North and his family from a lot of trouble and hardship, North was very clearly used as the main cover up through the entire scandal and did not feel safe talking about it until years later.

Through these 30 plus pages of historiography it is being suggested quite clearly that Ronald Reagan was a crook and a liar and a cheat. However, bigger picture here is that as he is the face of modern day Republicanism, so are his lies and cheatings. The Democratic party has their fair share of scandal however it is in a different department of scandal. When I think of democratic presidents involved in misconduct, I think of Clinton receiving oral sex from Monica Lewinsky, besides hurting his image and potentially his marriage (which appears to still be going strong) I would not consider this in the same category of the Iran Contra or Watergate.

The Bay of Pigs is one of the only scandals on a democratic presidents watch that I would consider to come close to anything along the lines of the contras. President Kennedy did get his head blown off for being the first president to demand social justice for black Americans, I would say he paid his debts for the Bay of Pigs. To give background, this was an effort on the

⁷⁸ Johnston, David. “North Says Reagan Knew of Iran Deal.” The New York Times. The New York Times, October 20, 1991. <https://www.nytimes.com/1991/10/20/us/north-says-reagan-knew-of-iran-deal.html>.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

president's behalf to stop Fidel Castro's regime in Cuba, a fight against communism to bring the Cuban people justice. It's efforts were in training a group of Cuban exiles by bringing them to Guatemala to master guerilla warfare and bring it back to Cuba to stop Fidel Castro. In February of 1961 Kennedy would send the green light to send the exiles to invade, this resulted in Castro sending his 20,000 troops stopping the invasion easily. This was primarily planned by the Central Intelligence Agency during Eisenhower's term (a heavily militaristic president) and when it was brought to president Kennedy he did allow it to follow through which essentially does place the blame on him, however the beginnings of this plan were not his doing, they were Eisenhower's and I think this ought to be considered when comparing the scandals of Republican presidents against Democratic, as well as the fact that nothing about this was illegal except it being criminally unsuccessful.

The Republican party today, right now looking at president Trump has only taken off from where presidents like Reagan left off. Nixon's attempt was a massive failure obviously as I have stated several times but Reagan's was frighteningly successful. Trump I would argue has stepped in to these shoes unapologetically, which I have realized I would prefer to a president like Ronald Reagan. This relates back to explicit and inexplicit racism; one is openly discriminatory and easily pointed out while the other is sly, shoved under the rug and often times institutionalized, somehow without question. I would prefer Trump's explicitly unlawful and disgusting acts to Reagan's. The only difference between these two presidents in my eyes is that one did it with a smile on his face and the hearts of many blinded Americans and the other has half the country in distress and outrage and the other half openly and honestly supporting his horrific leadership.

Now I don't mean to completely dump all over the Republican party, after all I am a registered Republican—for the soul purpose of not getting my ballot shredded up this year, uncounted, and to do my very best to vote the least white supremacist Republican I can find for the primaries. I think Donald Trump has opened the public's eyes to presidents like Reagan, not all Republicans have to be bad but there is a clear and prevalent divide between Democratic and Republican party people that has gotten out of hand and Trump, as bad as he is had offered a breaking point to silent and lazy democrats. Good old Martin Luther King said it, he preferred an angry white supremacist preaching their poison to everyone to an unchallenging and reserved leftist who believes in racial justice but does nothing. The point is, president Reagan is the ideal Republican, as he did what he did quietly and behind closed doors and good rhetoric; he got away with far more than president trump could have, with all the same intentions. Trump just cannot manage to go about his ideas and policies as deceitfully as Reagan could and therefore I am praying—hoping that Trump has outed the men like Reagan, a part of the Republican party for what they really are and there will be change in the White House.

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