

California State University, San Bernardino

**CSUSB ScholarWorks**

---

Theses Digitization Project

John M. Pfau Library

---

1990

## On dichotomous political rhetoric: With special reference to Ronald Reagan's language

Sirkka Helena Halmari

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/etd-project>



Part of the [Rhetoric Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Halmari, Sirkka Helena, "On dichotomous political rhetoric: With special reference to Ronald Reagan's language" (1990). *Theses Digitization Project*. 567.

<https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/etd-project/567>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the John M. Pfau Library at CSUSB ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses Digitization Project by an authorized administrator of CSUSB ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@csusb.edu](mailto:scholarworks@csusb.edu).

2  
ON DICHOTOMOUS POLITICAL RHETORIC: 2  
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO RONALD REAGAN'S LANGUAGE

---

A Thesis  
Presented to the  
Faculty of  
California State University,  
San Bernardino

---

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts  
in  
English Composition

---

by  
Sirkka Helena Halmari  
December 1990

ON DICHOTOMOUS POLITICAL RHETORIC:  
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO RONALD REAGAN'S LANGUAGE

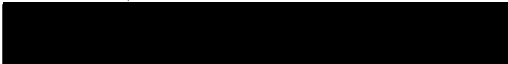
---

A Thesis  
Presented to the  
Faculty of  
California State University,  
San Bernardino

---

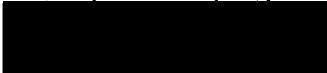
by  
Sirikka Helena Halmari  
December 1990

Approved by:

  
Susan C. Herring

12/17/90

Date

  
Harold Hellenbrand

  
Elinore H. Partridge

## ABSTRACT

The language of politics often divides our world into two groups: those who share our values, and those who supposedly oppose them. This dichotomy is exhibited in our language choices: we tend to glorify ourselves and our good actions, exculpate our bad actions, vilify those who are opposed to us, and denigrate anything good on their side. The rhetorical processes of euphemism and dysphemism help us depict the world the way we want it to be seen by our audiences.

Ex-President Ronald Reagan was a master of the use of dichotomous language. His dichotomies were most clearly present in his descriptions of U.S.-Soviet relations and the American and the Soviet military. In his rhetoric, Reagan exaggerated the threat caused by the Soviet military buildup to justify the fact that the United States was taking part in the arms race as well. The military buildup on the American side was exculpated while the Soviet military buildup was vilified.

With the change of the Soviet leadership in 1985, Reagan's dichotomous thinking was challenged, and towards the end of Reagan's presidency a slight change in his rhetoric can be noticed: he started to acknowledge a good side to the Soviet Union; however, there was often a tendency to denigrate the observed good. New areas of



dichotomies arose, and vilification flourished till the end of his presidency.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want especially to acknowledge Tampere Peace Research Institute (TAPRI) for the grant which made the writing of this study possible. I would also like to thank Dr. Vilho Farle (TAPRI), my teachers in Tampere University, and in particular, Professor Juhani Rudanko, for the support and help which I received at the initial stage of the planning of this paper.

The staff of the English Composition program in California State University taught me not to be afraid of writing, and I want to express my warmest thanks to them for an interesting and rewarding year in CSUSB. I want especially to thank my principal reader, Professor Susan Herring, for her devotion and insights, and my other readers, Professors Harold Hellenbrand and Elinore Partridge, for their valuable comments and suggestions.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT  
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS  
INTRODUCTION.....1

1. THE DICHOTOMOUS NATURE OF POLITICAL LANGUAGE.....4

2. IT'S A WORLD THAT WE SHARE, BUT ALAS, IT'S BLACK  
AND WHITE: REAGAN'S DICHOTOMIES.....11

    THE MAKING OF GOOD GUYS AND BAD GUYS:  
    THE TWO SUPERPOWERS IN REAGAN'S EYES.....11

        REAGAN'S VISION OF AMERICA.....12

        HOW WE CAN MAKE THE EVIL LOOK EVEN WORSE....24

        THE BATTLE BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL.....31

    THE QUESTION OF WAR AND PEACE

        MILITARY BUILDUP.....39

            Defending the Defense: The Good Arms  
            Race.....39

            The Evil Arms Race.....49

        OFFENSIVE, DEFENSIVE OR JUST PLAIN  
        WEAPONS?.....53

        PEACEMAKERS?.....65

        DID HE EVER CHANGE?.....68

SUMMARY.....75

CONCLUDING REMARKS.....77

BIBLIOGRAPHY.....83

## INTRODUCTION

Political rhetoric is often a rhetoric of prejudice. It is full of dichotomies; it tends to divide people into us and them. This is an ancient tradition--political speakers, it seems, have always felt the need to depict the world as black and white.

The purpose of this paper is to illustrate how language can be used for the purpose of dividing the world in two. I will take as an example an American political figure from the 1980's, Ronald Reagan, who, I will claim, is representative of the old tradition of seeing the world divided into a virtuous us, and an evil them--in Reagan's case good Americans and bad Soviets.

In this thesis, the concept Reagan's language refers to everything spoken by him, despite the fact that his speeches were often written by speechwriters.<sup>1</sup> I understand Reagan's language not in the narrow sense, i.e. the idiolect of one American, but rather as the language of all that he stood for: conservative American thinking of the 1980's.

My data are drawn from the White House publication the Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents volumes 17

---

<sup>1</sup>On the importance of advisers, see e.g. Tulis 184-186; and Perry. For articles about the process of writing certain of Reagan's speeches, see e.g. Barnes; Kondracke; and Shapiro. Stengel has written of Reagan: "His writers supply the substance; he adds the homespun parables. His attention to speeches reflects his own perception of the job: on many issues he sees himself less as originator of policy than as the chief marketer of it" (34).

(1981), 18 (1982) and 23 (1987). My data include everything Reagan said in public: addresses, remarks on different occasions, news conferences, formal question-and-answer sessions, as well as informal exchanges with reporters. However, this is not a study of spoken language per se, since the speeches were written beforehand and carefully rehearsed. My decision to include only his spoken words, and exclude letters and written documents which were to be filed in government archives, is based on the fact that it was his spoken words which were made public, and which were mainly responsible for formulating the political atmosphere of the 1980's. These were the words that "made America great again."

I begin by considering Reagan's speeches from the early years of his presidency (1981 and 1982), concentrating on the areas of the arms race and U.S.-Soviet relations, in which areas dichotomous language was frequently employed by the former President. My purpose is to show how Reagan used language to divide the world in two, into "This Blessed Land" and "The Evil Empire." I concentrate on the structuring of his messages and his lexical choices to reveal the linguistic means he used to impose this dichotomy on his audience, and I identify three processes at work in his rhetoric: glorification, exculpation and vilification.

I then examine Reagan's speeches from his second presidential term (the year 1987) in an attempt to determine if there were any changes in his rhetoric, e.g. if his speeches became less dichotomous, and more aware of complexities.

Dichotomous political rhetoric is a simple-minded way of viewing a complex world. In Reagan's case, the change in the leadership of the Soviet Union in 1985 posed a major challenge to his rhetorical style; he had either to change it or deny the changes in the world around him. From this arises the deeper question in this study: what happens to dichotomous rhetoric when it is confronted with a change in the world, a change in the reality that it is supposedly depicting?

## 1. THE DICHOTOMOUS NATURE OF POLITICAL LANGUAGE

"It is plain ... that we can prove people to be friends or enemies; if they are not, we can make them out to be so ..."

Aristotle

I believe that a world exists outside language which can be made to appear different according to how it is described, just as a picture looks different depending on the angle from which you are looking at it. We are constantly creating for ourselves pictures of reality, but because everybody's reality looks different depending on the angle from which it is being looked at, we will never be able to know whose reality is the true and objective one.<sup>1</sup>

Language is an important tool to persuade others to see "reality" from our point of view. Language is powerful and it is often used for biased purposes. Representing matters objectively or neutrally requires a special effort, and our feelings, attitudes and intentions color our lexical choices to a greater or lesser extent. Besides, what would be neutral? Neutral from whose point of view? (Bolinger 68-69)<sup>2</sup>

To achieve their various goals, politicians throughout time have exploited the possibilities offered by language. In the world of politics there often exists the need to make

<sup>1</sup>See Wittgenstein 15-17.

<sup>2</sup>On the power of language, see also: Bennett; Hart; Lasswell.

oneself and one's own actions appear good, and the complementary need to make one's opponents and their deeds appear bad. Rank proposes a more subtle, four-point categorization of the purposes of political language: to make one's own good actions seem even better ("glorification"), to make one's own bad actions seem better than they in reality are ("exculpation"), to make the opponents' bad actions seem even worse ("vilification"), and finally, to make the opponents' good actions seem unimportant ("denigration") (21-27). In the following analysis it will be seen how glorification was used by Ronald Reagan in his references to the United States, exculpation in his references to the U.S. military buildup, arms and soldiers, and vilification in his references to the Soviet Union and their military buildup. It is interesting that, although three of Rank's categories fit neatly with Reagan's dichotomous rhetoric, it is hard to find examples of genuine denigration, the downplaying of the opponents' positive sides or actions, at least in the speeches of his first presidential term. This is probably because at that time Reagan avoided speaking about the Soviets' possible good sides altogether, and thus denigration was unnecessary.

Various linguistic tricks are used to glorify, exculpate, vilify, and denigrate by political speakers. As a cover term for all these processes we might use Leech's



term "associative engineering" (53 ff.) This is the phenomenon whereby careful consideration is given to the choice of words in order to create the right kinds of associations in the minds of the audience: good associations in the case of glorification (as when calling America "a land of freedom"), non-negative associations in the case of exculpation ("tools" instead of weapons), and negative associations in the case of vilification (as when calling Soviet weapons "instruments of destruction").

Dichotomous political language can also be described as euphemizing and dysphemizing the objects or deeds to which it is referring (Bolinger 119). Euphemism is "good-naming" or giving nice-sounding names to things which usually create negative associations. Euphemism is used in reference to traditionally taboo subjects such as death, sex and bodily parts and functions, and many discussions on euphemism also include such areas as war and the military.<sup>3</sup> It is true that the linguistic process of euphemism cannot be restricted to certain areas, since if the purpose of the speaker is to hide the negative connotations a word has, he is euphemizing, no matter what the subject matter.

Dysphemism is often defined as the opposite of

---

<sup>3</sup>For discussions of euphemism, see e.g. Jespersen 227 ff.; Leinfellner; Stern 330 ff.; Ullmann 205 ff. For euphemisms about war and the military, see Barber 255; Bolinger 118; Boxmeyer 37; Brook 73; and Gerber 176.

euphemism.<sup>4</sup> It is the process of building negative associations, "badnaming." Both euphemism and dysphemism are essential parts of dichotomous rhetoric.

In glorification and exculpation euphemism is often at work because creating positive associations is the goal in both processes. In vilification dysphemism, the creation of bad associations, is present.

The dichotomous nature of political language has long been realized; however, "goodnaming" has received much more attention than "badnaming." Aristotle's description, especially of forensic oratory and ceremonial oratory of display, characterizes a dichotomy between attacking vs. defending, and praising vs. censuring (32). Aristotle gives a detailed description of praising (62-63), but does not go into detail when defining blaming. In fact, he gives a negative definition: "No special treatment of censure and vituperation is needed. Knowing the above facts [about praising] we know their contraries; and it is out of these that speeches of censure are made" (63). Many of the later writings on political rhetoric concentrate on its euphemizing aspect as well.

---

<sup>4</sup>The Oxford English Dictionary defines dysphemism as the "substitution of an unpleasant or derogatory word or expression for a pleasant or inoffensive one; also, a word or expression so used; opp. euphemism." For a description, see also Howard 117.

Goodnaming and euphemism can take many different forms, but all involve bending the viewpoint so that the piece of reality in question appears as favorable as possible. In its extreme form, this mindbending may approach lying (Swift 426).

The forms that the building of positive associations can take are, for example, metaphors, meaningless words, words of Latin origin, or "sheer cloudy vagueness" (Orwell 130-136), the use of certain key words, such as freedom and democracy (Lasswell 13), a high level of abstraction and elision of unpleasant words (Wagner 23). Especially in the area of international politics, the emotive content of words is often exploited to blur reality and make the world seem black and white. When attitudes are manipulated in this manner, there is a danger that we might actually begin to view the world not as a complex whole but as split into two halves, between which no compromise is possible. Words can indeed hurt, especially in today's international politics where the life of all humanity is in the hands of a few politicians.<sup>5</sup>

According to yet another terminological distinction,

---

<sup>5</sup>For discussions about the relationship between language and reality, and the dangers of biased rhetoric, see e.g. Orwell 136-137; Adams 45; Brown 313-315; Fairlie 19; Rank 1-2; and Wander 339-340.

"purr words" and "snarl words"<sup>6</sup> divide our world in two: open, free and democratic versus closed, enslaved and communist in Western terms (Postman 18), and similar mindbending is in progress on the other side.<sup>7</sup> American foreign policy is supported by what Wander calls "prophetic dualism," a doctrine according to which the world is viewed as consisting of two camps: "One side acts in accord with all that is good, decent, and at one with God's will. The other side acts in direct opposition" (342). This is an ideology designed for coping with a "Communist menace" (343). There is no doubt that President Reagan was a devoted follower of this doctrine. His speeches followed the old American speech tradition of the "paranoid style,"

---

<sup>6</sup>These are terms used e.g. by Hayakawa (56) and McDonald (102). Philbrick (335) uses the terms "favorable" vs. "unfavorable" words, and Sproule (186) talks about "god terms" (for example America, allies) and "devil terms" (fascist, communist).

<sup>7</sup>There is no doubt that bad- and goodnaming are used with high frequency in Soviet political speeches as well (May 129). There have been many studies of Soviet political language, for example Yakobson and Lasswell's article covering the long period of hardboiled political manipulation in Soviet Russia between 1918-1942. Zemtsov has written a book-length study about Soviet political language; he notes that on the one hand it is full of euphemistic glorification, and on the other hand dysphemistic aggressiveness (10-11). Skorov has written about "Reaganomics" and about the "unprecedented increase of armaments" during Reagan's administration (22-24), and Talbott describes some dysphemisms used by the Soviets about the United States (24-25). Luckham notes the rhetoric of disarmament from the Socialistic countries' point of view, where the West is depicted as a warmonger (46).

described by Hofstadter. According to Hofstadter, right-wing thinking is often based on "paranoid" assumptions: there has been a conspiracy "to undermine free capitalism, to bring the economy under direction of the federal government, and to pave the way for socialism or communism" (25). Reagan's rhetoric also has features in common with the style of Senator Goldwater: communists are seen as the ultimate enemy who must be exterminated ideologically, as well as politically (Hofstadter 128). Reagan's speeches on foreign relations and military buildup were loaded with dichotomies of this nature. He exploited language in order to make people friends or enemies.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup>For other discussions of Reagan's rhetoric, see e.g. Erickson; Stuckey 1989; and Stuckey 1990. In her analysis of Reagan's early speeches, Stuckey (1989) argues that Reagan's entire world view is dictated by the basic dichotomy "Totalitarianism vs. Freedom" (7 ff.) The world is divided simplistically into "heroes and villains" (Stuckey 1990, 4), "the good guys and the bad guys" (92), "us" and "them" (53), "devil figures" (57) and "God figures" (73).

## 2. IT'S A WORLD THAT WE SHARE, BUT ALAS, IT'S BLACK AND WHITE: REAGAN'S DICHOTOMIES

In this section of my paper I want to take the reader with me to delve into Reagan's dichotomies. His dichotomous thinking is by no means restricted to foreign policy issues. His thinking was often divided in domestic issues as well: himself versus Speaker O'Neill, Republicans versus Democrats, and generally, himself versus those opposing him. Here, however, I will restrict myself to Reagan's foreign policy, and focus on two large aspects of it, where his juiciest dichotomies proliferated: American-Soviet relations, and the military. I will use Rank's four part division (glorification, vilification, exculpation, and denigration)<sup>1</sup> to analyze Reagan's language in these areas, which will be thematically subdivided.

### THE MAKING OF GOOD GUYS AND BAD GUYS: THE TWO SUPERPOWERS IN REAGAN'S EYES

The glorification of one's own country is an integral and natural part of the speeches of politicians. One of Reagan's goals was to "make America great again" in the eyes of both the American people and the whole world. Reagan relied on the old values which traditionally have been associated with America: freedom and religion, and used these in order to build up the pride of the American people

---

<sup>1</sup>See p. 5 above.

and to make America appear righteous and virtuous in the eyes of the world.

To justify the military buildup that was going on, Reagan needed a reason, and this reason was the alleged threat posed by the Soviet Union.<sup>2</sup> While Reagan glorified America on the one hand, on the other hand, he vilified the Soviet Union with menacing terms, and with his words divided the world in two.

#### REAGAN'S VISION OF AMERICA

Appealing to people's inherent patriotism is an old persuasive trick. Most of Reagan's public speeches were directed to an American audience. He gave a radio address to the nation every week, and in these messages he frequently exercised the positive emotions of the American people towards their own country. He did this effectively and spared no words on it, and it was worth the trouble because Reagan, to realize his plans, needed the support of the American people. His patriotism was a way of flattering Americans: America is the best; you are Americans, so you are the best. To Americans it must have sounded all right; the rest of the world most certainly took it as "typical American boasting."

---

<sup>2</sup>For a discussion of "the New Cold War" and superpower propaganda, see Chomsky 208 ff.

America, America

Surprisingly, Reagan rarely refers to America as the United States. This is a neutral name of a country, and evidently not loaded with enough positive emotional associations. When speaking to an American audience, he tends most frequently to use the word nation:

- (1) a. this Nation (112/17<sup>3</sup>, 530/17, 564/17, 668/17, 735/17, 771/17, 819/17, 925/17, 1003/17, 1048/17, 1133/17)
- b. the Nation (722/17, 1005/17, 1006/17, 163/18)
- c. this great Nation (941/17)
- d. the great Nation (1110/17)
- e. our Nation (545/17, 817/17, 1039/17, 1042/17, 1139/17, 93/18)
- f. our great Nation (93/18, 155/18)
- g. this Nation of ours (892/17)
- h. this great Nation of ours (47/18, 92/18)
- i. a nation under God (4/17)

Glorification is at work here. The word nation is a term referring to an entity, definite and separate from other

---

<sup>3</sup>The references after the examples are to the issues of the Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents. This particular reference 112/17 is to the volume 17 (year 1981), page 112.



countries.<sup>4</sup> Unlike the neutral United States, it creates associations of togetherness, shared background and mutual goals. When it is connected with the proximal demonstrative pronoun this--as opposed to the distal that--(a, c, g, h), the possessive our (e, f), or a combination of both (h), the positive connotations are further reinforced. The adjective great explicitly states the President's strategy (c, d, f, h), but even with the definite article alone the word nation seems to carry emotional overtones (b).

Another appellation for the United States is the word land, which exhibits a semantic extension from "soil" to "a political unit, including territory and all people on it." An association with "The Holy Land" may have been intended:

- (2) a. this land (3/17, 564/17, 676/17)
- b. this wonderful land (1233/17)
- c. this blessed land (3/17, 1319/17, 115/18)
- d. our blessed land (160/18)
- e. our own land (1006/17)
- f. this land of ours (518/17, 1009/17)
- g. a caring, loving land (92/18)

---

<sup>4</sup>The Oxford English Dictionary defines the word nation as an "extensive aggregate of persons, so closely associated with each other by common descent, language, or history, as to form a distinct race or people, usually organized as a separate political state and occupying a definite territory." (My underlinings)



This land of ours ("This land is your land, this land is my land..."), is wonderful (b), blessed (c), and our own (d, e, f). These short phrases are full of emotion, and the use of the first person plural possessive persuades the audience to strongly identify itself with the speaker. Both possess a common heritage and thus, by cunning inference, a common goal as well.

If we compare the phrases "a foreign land" and "a foreign country," we can notice that the former phrase has exotic and even romantic associations, while the latter is neutral, or even slightly negative, in its associations. The word country is also sometimes used by the ex-President. Since it is more neutral, freer of emotion, than nation and land, the word country seems to need some "emotional support" around it (3), unlike the word nation, which itself is more emotional and can stand with only a definite article (cf. 1b above):

- (3) this country (641/17, 674/17, 668/17
- our country (1015/17)
- our free country (681/17)

The words this, our and free add the needed emotional touch to this word. It is interesting that a function word, this, seems to be able to carry emotional meaning. The connotatively empty pair of function words this and that, in addition to denoting deixis, is able in certain contexts to

carry the emotional connotation of this being close to us and thus dear, and that being far away and less agreeable.

Despite the political vagueness of the word America, which officially means the whole Western Hemisphere, this word is often used to replace the more impersonal United States. Besides being ethnocentric, as though The United States were the only "America" that counts, America is a more abstract term than the United States, and vague and abstract terms often have the capacity to upgrade:<sup>5</sup>

- (4) America is such a special country (1139/17)  
America ... has got its eyes and its heart on  
you (1257/17) strong and prosperous America  
(2/17) an America that is strong and free  
(533/17) a healthy and a strong America  
(1059/17) America is not a second-best society  
(681/17)

Reagan personifies America: it is special, strong, prosperous, free, and healthy. Who would not be proud of living in such a paradise?

In one particular speech Reagan uses all the appellations which in examples 1-4 function as heads of noun phrases to refer to the United States:

- (5) ...an America<sup>6</sup> that is strong and free ...  
this much-loved country, this once and future  
land, this bright and hopeful nation whose  
generous spirit and great ideals the world still

---

<sup>5</sup>See e.g. Stern's discussion of vague and general terms for more precise examples of the tendency to euphemize (330-332).

<sup>6</sup>All underlinings in the examples from here on are mine.

honors. (533/17)

America - country - land - nation; while on the one hand this is an example of elegant variation, a cohesive strategy to avoid repetition, the emotive content also accumulates with each new added phrase. With the highly favorable adjectives strong, free, much-loved, bright, hopeful, generous, and great, the positive emotive load of these few phrases becomes enormous. Note that Reagan also expresses an assumption that the whole world honors American ideals and loves America. This assumption is manifested elsewhere:

- (6) ...a society that ... is still the envy of the world and the last, best hope of mankind.  
(1178/18)

In addition to highly favorable, emotional adjectives, Reagan also likes to use them in superlative forms:

- (7) ... a nation that would become the greatest the world has ever seen. (1284/17)

... the freest and the greatest society that man has ever known (891/17)

the freest land on Earth (1173/18)

this last and greatest bastion of freedom (2/17)

And once again, we felt the surge of pride that comes from knowing that we're the first and we're the best--and we are so because we're free. (539/17)

In all the above cases positive superlative qualities are attached to America. Sometimes Reagan, however, does show some "modesty":

- (8) America is not a second-best society.  
(681/17)

The phrase not a second-best (8) is an example of a type of litotes, a denial of the opposite, which is here used to avoid the perhaps too obvious boasting tone of the phrase "America is the best society." However, the litotes not a second-best drives the same messages home. The best society would make the same claim directly but, being so frequently used by advertisers and politicians, the word best has lost some of its glory, and has become somewhat flat and meaningless. The advantage of not a second-best is that it makes the audience think about what is being said because it is not stated directly.

Not only America but also American people receive their share of glorification:

- (9) a. We're still the most productive people in the world, living in a nation with a potential that staggers the imagination. (111/17)
- b. I would match the American worker against any in the world. (941/17)
- c. Today's living Americans have fought harder, paid a higher price for freedom, and done more to advance the dignity of man than any people who ever lived. (681/17, 690/17)

In example (a) the American people are ascribed a superlative quality, the truth of which might be difficult to prove. Example (b) is fair-sounding flattery. Example (c) is a strong assertion which can only be understood as flattery directed to the American public. The statement consists of vague favorable words and exaggerated

generalizations. What does, for example, "paying a higher price for freedom" mean? Reagan is saying this of "today's Americans" who have never experienced a war on their territory during their lifetime. Or did Reagan mean this in the very literal sense of today's Americans having to pay (i.e. taxes) for the defense system of their country, which is a high price indeed?

Certain values are frequently attached to America, and the most commonly mentioned of these are freedom and religion. These values have a long tradition in American thinking, going back to the Declaration of Independence. In his rhetoric, Reagan builds strongly on this old tradition.

### Freedom

The words free and freedom are often mentioned as being among the most frequently employed abstractions in political speaking,<sup>7</sup> and Reagan lives up to this generalization. The following phrases refer to America:

- (10) a. a trustee of freedom and peace (90/18)
- b. this last and greatest bastion of freedom (2/17)

These are both strong metaphors, depicting America as something trustworthy and capable of handling matters (a)

<sup>7</sup>Weldon mentions the words liberty and freedom as words "used mainly to arouse emotion," and he questions "what it means to say that a person is free ... 'Free from what?'" (69-70).

or, as a stronghold defending people's freedom from attacks from outside (b). The metaphor in example (b) is of military origin, implying the defensive, non-aggressive nature of the United States' military might.<sup>8</sup>

The word freedom itself is rich with emotion, and Reagan liked to reinforce its affective quality by introducing it with highly emotional diction, and describing it with favorable adjectives in superlative form:

- (11) At Cancun we will promote a revolutionary idea born more than 200 years ago, carried to our shores in the hearts of millions of immigrants and refugees, and defended by all who risked their lives so that you and I and our children could still believe in a brighter tomorrow. It's called freedom, and it works. It's still the most exciting, progressive, and successful idea the world has ever known. (1143/17)

The phrase you and I and our children is important here because, by including the hearers, it makes this a personal message to them. Freedom is the prerequisite to a brighter tomorrow.

Being free is given as the cause of other good things:

- (12) ... we're happy and proud because we're free ... (721/17)

And once again, we felt the surge of pride that comes from knowing that we're the first and we're the best--and we are so because we're free. (539/17)

---

<sup>8</sup>Hook has written an interesting article about the "metaphoric legitimization" of Japan's military buildup: Japan is a "hedgehog," "a small, defensive creature" and its military buildup is referred to as "house insurance" (94-97).

Freedom--whatever Reagan understood by it (possibly capitalism, minimal government control over people's lives, and on the other hand minimal government protection from life's misfortunes)--was evidently placed at the top in Reagan's hierarchy of values.

- (13) a. The most precious gift we have is our political freedom--the legacy left us by Virginians like Jefferson, Madison, and Patrick Henry. (1194/17)
- b. ... the unique form of government that allows us the freedom to choose our own destiny ... (690/17)

Example (13 b) contains the assumptions that people can choose their destinies, and that being allowed to do so is freedom. The same assumptions are present in the following example:

- (14) ... we can leave [our children] liberty in a land where every individual has the opportunity to be whatever God intended us to be. (98/17)

If God intended some people to be, say, poor, the government can wash its hands. This leads us to the issue of religion in Reagan's speeches.

### Religion

Religion is often closely tied with politics, and since the birth of the nation, religion has been regarded as a traditional American value. In Reagan's family religious values were appreciated, and the Christian church played an important part in his early life (Wills 16-17). Hofstadter



writes that "ascetic Protestantism remains a significant undercurrent in contemporary America" (79), and Reagan follows this tradition;<sup>9</sup> at least that is how he chose to market himself.

Religion and freedom are readily linked together:

(15) ... I believe God intended for us to be free.  
(4/17)

... man is born with certain God-given rights.  
(1172/17)

Associations with "The Pledge of Allegiance" are evoked:

(16) a nation under God (4/17)

According to Reagan, God was behind the birth of America:

(17) There must have been a Divine plan that brought to this blessed land people from every corner of the Earth ... (1235/17)

... there is a plan, somehow a divine plan for all of us. (115/18)

... this blessed land was set apart in a very special way, a country created by men and women who came here not in search of gold, but in search of God. (115/18)

For glorification purposes, Reagan reserves God for the Americans.

---

<sup>9</sup>For Reagan's attachment to old American values, see e.g. Dallek (4-8).

### The Free World

The governments whose principles Reagan agrees with also receive their share of glorification. All non-communist countries form "the free world" (659/17, 754/17), and Reagan makes this explicit--free means Western (18 a), and implies that the Western Hemisphere consists and should consist only of freedom-loving people (18 b):

- (18) a. in the Western World, in the free world (68/17)
- b. Freedom-loving people in this hemisphere (462/18)

It is noteworthy that freedom-loving people systematically means people living in countries whose economic systems favor free enterprise. Freedom in that sense is the concept that ties all of those countries together with the United States:

- (19) Mr. President, you're a man, and Venezuelans are a people, whose love of life and of freedom are something with which the people of the United States can identify. You and your country stand for those values and those principles that reflect the best of mankind. (1271/17)

In this example, glorifying abstractions (love, life, freedom, etc.) are frequent, and a superlative (the best of mankind) is also used. In other examples, Australia is "a force of peace" (708/17), Spain "a beacon of hope" (1124/17), and West Germany stands on "the cliff of freedom:"

- (20) The Federal Republic is perched on the cliff of freedom that overlooks Soviet dependents to the East. While the dominated peoples in these lands cannot enjoy your liberties, they can look at your example and hope. (546/17)

Soviet dependents and the dominated peoples hint at the direction of the other half of dichotomous language, which I shall discuss next.

#### HOW WE CAN MAKE THE EVIL LOOK EVEN WORSE

"It is noble to avenge oneself on one's enemies and not to come to terms with them; for requital is just, and the just is noble; and not to surrender is a sign of courage."

Aristotle

Dichotomous language does not mean only glorification, intensifying one's own good. In order for language to be dichotomous we also need the opposite process of vilification, intensifying the other's bad properties and actions. Reagan's rhetoric in reference to the Soviet Union was notoriously harsh. His "Evil Empire" speech in 1983 received a lot of attention, but even before that the appellations he used when talking about the Soviet Union are systematically dysphemistic:

- (21) a. an evil force (567/17)  
b. totalitarian forces (696/17)  
c. hateful forces (1212/17)  
d. the forces of oppression (81/18)

- e. the forces of tyranny (1406/17)
- f. the forces of aggression, lawlessness, and tyranny (949/17)
- g. tyrants (500/17)
- h. aggressors (152/18)
- i. the enemies of freedom (4/17, 890/17)
- j. a country which denies freedom to its people--the Soviet Union (1139/17)
- k. foe of freedom (199/17)
- l. foe (734/17)
- m. potential adversaries (4/17, 734/17, 309/18)
- n. our adversaries (181/18, 182/18)
- o. our adversaries, such as the Soviet Union (61/18)

All this "snarl-talk" serves the purpose of vilifying the Soviet Union. At the time, Reagan was in the process of building up the American military; enormous sums of dollars were needed, and, without a legitimate purpose, without a threat menacing "freedom" (i, j, k), the people and the Congress of the United States would perhaps not have been motivated to devote their money to the purpose of protecting themselves.

The use of the word force/forces (a-f) connotes the military and violence, and is also a metaphor for something that is not under human control. The word evil (a), since

it appears frequently in the Bible, carries religious and moral connotations. To be evil is worse than to be bad.

"The Russians" (1233/17, 1328/17) is used as a synonym for "the Soviets" (196/17), which is a common practice, but incorrect because Russians represent only one nationality group in the Soviet Union. The use of the pre-revolutionary Russian for the post-revolutionary Soviet, and the replacing of a whole with a part of it, might be seen as reflecting disrespect towards the Soviet Union, a refusal to acknowledge it as a sovereign country. If it is not a way of showing disrespect, one would expect a more precise use of terminology from a President. On the other hand, Lenin's first name, according to Reagan, was Nikolai... (Quotations 25).<sup>10</sup>

Reagan does not always overtly state that he is referring to the Soviet Union, but it is clear from the context. Sometimes he makes it explicit, as in (j) and (o) above. In the following exchange with reporters he repeatedly refers to the Soviet Union without explicitly stating it:

(22) Reagan: I want to sit down--and we already are sitting down with them--to discuss legitimate arms reductions.... Today they are literally starving their people of consumer products in order to maintain this great military buildup. We think they've been able to get away with

---

<sup>10</sup>In one of his speeches Reagan cited Lenin: "There is a line attributed to Nikolai Lenin: 'The road to America leads through Mexico.'" (473/23)

this because we've been unilaterally disarming for the last several years. When they see that we mean it ...

Question: By "them," obviously you're talking about the Russians.

Reagan: Yes. (182/18)

This shows that he assumed that others followed his line of thought and knew who "they" were, which I think was the case. "They" in certain negative contexts in Reagan's speech unambiguously seems to refer to the Soviets, which allows for the inference that the Soviets are the only or the most important bad people that he talks about.

The Soviet Union, this "evil force," represents an ideology which Reagan does not know whether to call socialism or communism (23 a), but it is an ideology which would spread unless something was done; what need would there be to build up the military if this were not the case? Communism was a spreading disease and Reagan devoted himself to making the American people aware of it and afraid of it:

- (23) a. ... they hold their determination that their goal must be the promotion of world revolution and a one-world Socialist or Communist state, whichever word you want to use. (66/17)
- b. ... they ... have openly and publicly declared that the only morality they recognize is what will further their cause, meaning they reserve unto themselves the right to commit any crime, to lie, to cheat, in order to attain that, and that is moral, not immoral, and when you do business with them ... you keep that in mind. (66 67/17)
- c. ... the teachings of Marxist-Leninism confirm what I said.... what I spelled out

was that they recognize as immoral only those things which would delay or interfere with the spread of socialism and that otherwise, anything that furthers socialism ... is moral.

Now I didn't set out to talk harshly about them. I just told the truth, and it's what Harry Truman said it was once for some people when they hear the truth. (1348/17)

In examples (23 b-c) the moral values of socialists are questioned. The use of the words only and any/anything make the assertions hyperboles. Still, Reagan claims he is just telling the truth about the Soviets (23 c), and refers to Truman, who was famous for his dichotomous anti-communist rhetoric.<sup>11</sup> By characterizing socialism as "committing crimes," "lying" and "cheating" (23 b), it is no wonder that Reagan was able to create an atmosphere of cold war in just a few months after becoming President.

What else did Reagan tell us about socialism? Among other things, he reminds his listeners that the Soviets do not have a God; socialism is their "religion" (1419/17). It is "an ideology that smothers freedom and independence and denies the existence of God" (108/18), or it is "an illogical system, a system that has no trust, no belief or faith in people" (737/17). Sometimes Reagan only hints at this nameless terror, referring to "certain economic

---

<sup>11</sup>For an analysis of Truman's 1949 Inaugural Address, see Smith 383-392. Smith writes: "Truman's inaugural address gave 'our case' in the fight. No President since has had the insight or the courage to change the terms" (392).

theories that use the rhetoric of class struggle to justify injustice" (532/17).

If the above does not paint a dark enough picture of socialism, Reagan vividly relates what socialism and its advocates do: they "preach the supremacy of the state" (207/17), "suffocate" people "under [an] oppressive whim," "[encourage] hatred and conflict" (108/18), "oppose the idea of freedom, ... are intolerant of national independence, and hostile to the European values of democracy and the rule of law" (1379/17); they "preach revolution against tyranny, but they intend to replace it with the tyranny of totalitarianism" (1171/17), and they answer "the stirrings of liberty with brute force, killings, mass arrests, and the setting up of concentration camps" (1405/17).

All the above descriptions of the advocates of the Soviet system create a frightening picture of them and the ideology they represent. Sometimes, however, Reagan changes his strategy from painting horror pictures of the Soviet Union, to trivializing and denigrating it. The following patronizing statements imply that we are so morally superior that we can pity them:

(24) ... cliches ... a gaggle of bogus prophecies and petty superstitions. (207/17)

... a sad and rather bizarre chapter in human history. (207/17)



Reagan also talks about the Soviets as if they were little children:

(25) I can't ... simply hope that the Soviets will behave themselves ... (157/18),

and sometimes he reduces himself to the level of a child by adopting a tone of "I-am-being-nice-and-you're-still-not-playing-according-to-my-rules":

(26) Well, the real reason why they're not coming [to a summit meeting in Cancun, Mexico] is they have nothing to offer. In fact, we have just one question for them: Who's feeding whom? (1139/17)

In one thing Reagan is resolute and consistent: the spread of communism must be prevented:

(27) a. ... we will stand together ... in our opposition to the spread to our shores of hostile totalitarian systems ... (1265/17)

b. ... we must stand together for the integrity of our hemisphere, for the inviolability of its nations, for its defense against imported terrorism, and for the rights of all our citizens to be free from the provocations triggered from outside our sphere for malevolent purposes. (282/17)

c. ... we will not look the other way as aggressors usurp the rights of independent people or watch idly while they foment revolutions to impose the rule of tyrants. (152/18)

d. ... we will express our quiet determination to defend those institutions against any threat. (754/17)

All these examples start with either "we will" or "we must."

Keeping the Western Hemisphere free from communism is

especially important (a, b), and the threat posed by communism is again described with vivid dysphemisms. The adjectives hostile, totalitarian (a) and malevolent; the nouns terrorism, provocation (b), aggressors, revolutions, tyrants (c) and threat (d); and the verbs spread (like a disease) (a), trigger (b), usurp, foment, and impose (c) are all rich in negative connotation. They work together to vilify the Soviet Union and its "evil purposes."

#### THE BATTLE BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL

"... the forces of good ultimately rally and triumph over evil." (207/17)

Ronald Reagan

No official war between the United States and the Soviet Union was proclaimed, but there was a war of words going on, creating a strong impression of a battle between good and evil, which Reagan was cleverly able to fit into the ancient frame wherein morality and religious values are confronted by immorality and evil. There is a deep difference between the United States and the Soviet Union, the one representing capitalism and the other socialism; this is a political and economic opposition. However, Reagan "elevates" this opposition to an abstract level; to a dichotomy of Right and Wrong:

(28) ... this isn't a question of East versus West, of the U.S. versus the Soviet Union.

It's a question of freedom versus compulsion,  
of what works versus what doesn't work, of  
sense versus non-sense. (1139/17)

Since the rational opposition of two different economic systems had been elevated to an opposition in spiritual spheres, a battle between good and bad spirits can be inferred, a battle not without Biblical implications:

- (29) a. But, good men, with the help of God cooperating with one another, can and will prevail over evil. (851/17)
- b. Let the light of millions of candles in American homes give notice that the light of freedom is not going to be extinguished. We are blessed with a freedom and abundance denied to so many.... these blessings bring with them a solid obligation, an obligation to the God who guides us, an obligation to the heritage of liberty and dignity handed down to us by our forefathers and an obligation to the children of the world, whose future will be shaped by the way we live our lives today. (1407/17)

The metaphor of the light of freedom (29 b) and the danger of it being extinguished imply that dark forces are threatening to spread. Three different types of obligations are tied with the preserving of "the light of freedom:" It is the will of God, the will of the forefathers, and it has to be done because of "the children of the world." It is implied that dark forces are threatening the future of the world's children, and in the following extract this threat is explicitly stated:

- (30) ... the forces of aggression, lawlessness, and tyranny intent on exploiting weakness. They seek to undo the work of generations of our people, to put out a light that we've been

people, to put out a light that we've been tending ... (949/17)

One of the unwritten rules of dichotomous rhetoric is that ideas can be repeated over and over again, if they are dressed in a different form. The idea in example (30) is the same as in (31 a-c), but the elements of the phrases are different. However, certain key terms, such as freedom, threaten and destroy recur:

- (31) a. ... the survival of our nations and the peace of the world are threatened by forces which are willing to exert any pressure, test any will, and destroy any freedom. (199/17)
- b. We live in a precarious world threatened by totalitarian forces who seek to subvert and destroy freedom. (969/17)
- c. ... a world where freedom and democracy are constantly challenged. (708/17)

Reagan also expresses his counter-threat to the Soviets and their allies:

- (32) No foe of freedom should doubt our resolve. (199/17)

When action is called for, we're taking it. (81/18)

... America will not conduct 'business as usual' with the forces of oppression. If the events in Poland continue to deteriorate, further measures will follow. (81/18)

Toward those who would export terrorism and subversion in the Caribbean and elsewhere, especially Cuba and Libya, we will act with firmness. (81/18)

These are all threats: if you do not follow our rules, we will punish you. A parallel between playing children and world politics is again evident.

According to Reagan, the division between the United States and the Soviet Union did not arise until after the Second World War. Reagan gives a short account of how it came into being. In this speech, generosity is opposed to meanness of spirit:

- (33) We set out to restore the war-ravaged lands of our erstwhile enemies as well as our friends. We prevented what could have been a retreat into the Dark Ages. Unfortunately another great power in the world was marching to a different drumbeat, creating a society in which everything that isn't compulsory is prohibited. The citizens of that society have little more to say about their government than a prison inmate has to say about the prison administration. (562-563/17)

We are glorified because we are acting in accordance with the Biblical expectation of helping even our enemies. The Soviet Union is vilified by being compared to a prison. It is true that there are rules, orders and prohibitions in Soviet society--still, the use of everything in the phrase everything that isn't compulsory is prohibited is an obvious hyperbole.

In fairy tales the good always wins, and Reagan promises that the good will also win this particular battle:

- (34) The West won't contain communism, it will transcend communism. It won't bother to dismiss or denounce it, it will dismiss it as some bizarre chapter in human history whose

last pages are even now being written. (532/17)

... freedom will eventually triumph over tyranny.... Time will find them beaten. The beacon of freedom shines here for all who will see, inspiring free men and captives alike, and no wall, no curtain, nor totalitarian state can shut it out. (1171/17)

This side, however, cannot be emphasized too much; otherwise, if people become too convinced that good will win, there might not be enough incentive to continue the arms race...

#### Dichotomous pronouns

"... what we had to do--the renewal of the American spirit. And I used a number of times the word 'we,' and I want to emphasize that, because that's the only way I know how to do it. We are a team. We're going to act as a team."  
(30/17)

Ronald Reagan

Because pronouns are usually considered semantically "empty," it is interesting to note that they also can be used dichotomously. The use of the deictic we and they does not necessarily represent a dichotomy in thinking, since the main distinction they express reflects proximity vs. distance (self vs. other identification), but when used frequently, they begin to etch a deeper and deeper line

between those who are included on our side and those who are excluded.<sup>12</sup>

The following extract refers to possible arms reductions:

- (35) We're going to continue, at the same time we are going to continue to urge them to sit down with us in a program of realistic strategic arms reduction. But it will be the first time that we have ever sat on our side of the table and let them know that there's a new chip on the table. And that chip is: There will be legitimate arms reduction, verifiable arms reduction, or they will be in an arms race which they can't win. (923/17)

This card-game metaphor illustrates the two superpowers involved in a game where chips are thrown on the table and which divides the parties, and where we are determined to win over them. Games, arms race included, also involve consequences: if you do this, we do that.

In example (36) Reagan speaks about the philosophy of socialism:

- (36) ... that is their philosophy, it's their religion. And as long as they adhere to that, we're fools if we do not negotiate, recognizing that they claim that right for themselves. (1419/17)

The master of "divisive rhetoric" realizes the power of words, and uses it deliberately as a political strategy. The following extract presupposes that Reagan believes in the power of language:

---

<sup>12</sup>Cf. Stuckey 1990, 32 ff., 56.

- (37) Let us put an end to the divisive rhetoric of 'us versus them,' 'North versus South.' Instead, let us decide what all of us, both developed and developing countries, can accomplish together. (1054/17)

Sadly, Reagan was only talking about North-South relations inside the Americas, not East-West relations.

Innocent pronouns themselves do not divide our world, but the repetitious use of us versus them emphasizes the fact that the world has already been divided.

There is another set of pronouns which shows this division on a more emotional level than us vs. them, which basically indicate inclusion and exclusion, namely the pair she-it, and their possessive forms her-its. In the same way that we refer to cats and dogs using either he/she or it, depending on the degree of our personal affection for the animal in question, we can also show our affection toward countries by choosing between she/her and it/its:

- (38) a. America will be. And this time she will be for everyone. (702/17)
- b. America is better off today than she was yesterday. (832/17)
- c. America now has an economic plan for her future. (832/17)
- d. ... America--her way ... her people ... her strength as a nation. (1001/17)
- e. America will honor her commitments to Japan ... (503/17)
- f. But the dynamics of the Australian way of life make her an even more powerful ally, and the vitality of her people make her an



even stronger friend. (712/17)

- g. We of the United States are aware of this relentless pressure on the Federal Republic and her citizens ... (546/17)
- h. But Israel will have our help. She will remain strong and secure, and her special character of spirit, genius, and faith will prevail. (948/17)

The pronouns she/her are systematically used when referring to the United States (a-e), and Reagan uses these pronouns also when referring to his allies, to countries which he considers to belong to us (f-h). The pronoun it is reserved for the socialist countries, the Soviet Union (39 a-b), and other Eastern block countries (39 c-d):

- (39) a. The Soviet Union, through its threats and pressures, deserves a major share of blame for the developments in Poland. (1406/17)
- b. The Soviet Union continues its aggression ... (503/17)
- c. ... the whole East-West problem, because Poland didn't bring this on itself. (1414/17)
- d. I urge the Polish government and its allies ... (1405/17)

The above discussion shows that even semantically "empty" grammatical forms can be employed as tools for rhetorical manipulation.

## THE QUESTION OF WAR AND PEACE

### MILITARY BUILDUP

#### Defending the Defense: The Good Arms Race

The glorification of the United States and the vilification of the Soviet Union were evidently deemed necessary to legitimize the U.S. military buildup. Because the arms race is generally considered a bad thing, Reagan made use of exculpation and euphemism when talking about it. At the same time, the opposite processes of denigration and dysphemism were employed to make the arms race on the Soviet side appear even more malevolent.

According to Reagan, the Soviet Union had weapons because their goal was to aggressively expand their system all over the world. Reagan is concerned about "the superiority of the Soviet forces" (923/17). The Soviets are far ahead in the race, this "decline of America's defenses" (1131/17) was caused by the unwise politics of the previous President:

(40) ... a strong national defense ... which had been allowed to deteriorate dangerously in previous years. (164/18)

We've let our defense spending fall behind and our capability to defend ourselves against foreign aggressors is not what it should be. (368/17)

The designation foreign aggressors above implies a threat to our national security. Sometimes Reagan merely

hints at this threat, suggesting that people have no way of knowing how great the menace in actuality is:

(41) ... but now it's been confirmed that there are things that, in this job--there is information that you have that probably you're the only person, plus a few immediately around you who have that information. I have to tell you that I am as firm in my conviction that the very safety of this Nation requires that we go forward with the defense spending program as we've laid it out. (201/18)

This insinuation is a cunning strategy because if the President says that he knows something that we do not know, and he is basing his decisions on that information, there is little that ordinary people can use to argue against it, even if they are basically against military spending. Reagan also insinuates that if people do not support his military spending, they do not fully understand the seriousness of what is going on and they are not fully committed to liberty:

(42) ... liberty requires an understanding by ordinary people of what is at stake. The survival of the whole way of life depends on their commitment. (708/17)

Reagan also often refers to the threat posed by the Soviet Union more openly, thus adding to the vilified, dysphemistic picture of the Soviets, these "foreign aggressors" (368/17) and "those who would seek to pull [this Nation] down" (532/17). This is "a precarious period of world history" (1137/17), and we live in a "dangerous world" (680/17) where freedom is being threatened:

(43) ... we're confronted with threats to our freedom. (48/17)

... the liberty we enjoy has no guarantee. (708/17)

And to allow ... this imbalance to continue is a threat to our national security. (371/17)

Reagan needs his high military budget to defend his country "against aggression" (80/17), and deter "foreign attacks" (1074/17), which "jeopardize ... our hopes for peace and freedom" (1074/17). The "superiority of the Soviet forces" has opened a "window of vulnerability" (923/17), a metaphor Reagan likes to use when referring to the assumed gap between the military arsenals of the two superpowers.

"The window of vulnerability" metaphor is parallel to Japan's "house insurance" metaphor (see note on p. 19 above). Catching up with the Soviets by spending enormous sums on weapons is referred to as an innocent act of "closing a window:"

(44) ... we're determined, that we are going to close that window of vulnerability that has existed for some time with regard to our defensive capability. (889/17)

Military buildup is "increases in defense spending" (134/17), but usually it is referred to with more euphemistic, exculpatory phrases: it is protecting "our security ... by a balanced and realistic defense program" (134/17), "the prime responsibility of the National

Government" (1292/17), "essential to our national security" (1067/17), and one of "the necessary things we must do" (371/17). It is "safeguarding our freedom" (273/17), "meeting our responsibility to the free world" (566/17), "making America once again strong enough to safeguard our freedom" (986/17), and "protection for all that we hold dear" (564/17). Reagan appeals to his and the American people's sense of duty to go on with the military buildup.

(45) It's my duty as President, and all of our responsibility as citizens, to keep this country strong enough to remain free. (371/17)

Building up the military requires not only will but also money, lots of taxpayers' money. However, these "economic sacrifices" (46 a), according to Reagan, are "relatively small" (46 b) and very worthwhile:

(46) a. ... we are ... making economic sacrifices for the sake of Western security. (772/18)

b. ... the relatively small sacrifices to preserve our freedom today and our children's freedom tomorrow ... (371/18)

There is no denying that the increases in the United States military buildup in the early 1980's were quite high, and Reagan had to explain it to the people:

(47) a. ... I've asked for substantial increases in our defense budget--substantial, but not excessive. (237/18)

b. But the truth is we're only spending about 6 percent--our military budget is only about 6 percent of the gross national product. (181/18)

- c. Though not small, the cost of our program represents an historically reasonable share of our resources ... (371/18)

Increases are "substantial but not excessive" (a), "reasonable" (c), and the debated budget constitutes "only 6 percent" of the gross national product (b). If, instead of the percentage, Reagan had used the dollar amount, the result would not have been as soothing. Only 6 percent is here a euphemism. It is also interesting to notice that Reagan changed his syntax in the middle of sentence (b). His "false start" would inevitably have led to a collocation he wanted to avoid: "spending about 6 percent on the military." In (47 c) Reagan has used the litotes not small in order to avoid saying that his military budget is "big."

The verbs which Reagan uses for building up the American military might are systematically euphemistic, verbs which create positive associations:

- (48) a. ... the commitment of the Congress to improving America's defenses ... (937/18)
- b. ... this program will enable us to modernize our strategic forces ... (1075/17)
- c. ... our planned program to strengthen the national defense. (1299/17)
- d. ... the basic program of upgrading and building weapons systems that we need in order to close the window of vulnerability ... (442/18)
- e. The search for peace must go on, but we have a better chance of finding it if we maintain our strength while we're searching. (564/17)

Improving (a), modernizing (b), strengthening (c), and upgrading (d) carry positive associations of making something qualitatively better. Building (d) and maintaining (e) are also free from negative associations, and are good, working euphemisms which exculpate the busily advancing military buildup from its possible negative connotations.

Reagan also wanted to show that there was currently something wrong with the United States military, and that his budget was aimed at repairing it. Halting the decline (49 a) and rectifying imbalance (49 b) create associations of positive, constructive activities, as also the phrases remedying (49 c) or ending neglect (49 d):

- (49) a. ... I have repeatedly pledged to halt the decline in America's military strength ... (1074/17)
- b. We simply must rectify that imbalance. We will not cut defense spending ... (1005/17)
- c. We have proposed a defense program ... which will remedy the neglect of the past decade ... (1275/17)
- d. ... I have directed that we end our long neglect of strategic defenses. (1075/17)

Metaphors of erosion and starvation are evoked with reference to military weakness. Fighting against erosion and hunger is generally considered good and thus these metaphors are likely to create the right kind of response:

- (50) a. We have proposed a defense program ... which will ... restore the eroding balance



on which our security depends. (1275/17)

- b. ... we're trying to make up for a number of years of starvation ... (659/18)

The prefix re- carries the meaning of making something back into what it once was, in Reagan's terms, making "America strong again" (1258/17). Since the issue of military buildup was discussed frequently during Reagan's first term, Reagan and his speechwriters had to come up with various ways of saying the same things over and over again. Too much lexical repetition might lead the listeners to think about what is actually meant by the words, and thus could be dangerous. It is surprising how many words with the prefix re- alone the speechwriters were able to find, in addition to all of the other circumlocutions used in reference to the arms race:

- (51) a. We pledged to end disrespect for America abroad and to rebuild our national defense so as to make America respected again among the nations. (734/17)
- b. ... the absolute necessity of redressing the imbalance in our defensive standpoint. (1033/17)
- c. ... our defense program to refurbish our defenses ... (1247/17)
- d. ... restoring our margin of safety ... (563/17)
- e. ... I am announcing today a plan to revitalize our strategic forces ... (1074/17)

In (51 a) Reagan expresses his assumption that in order to be respected, a country has to be militarily strong. If



respect means the same as the fear that Reagan's rhetoric generated at least among many Europeans, he did achieve his goal.

When possible, elision is used in order to avoid mentioning a word which might create unwanted associations. In (52 a) Reagan is answering a question about defense cuts, and in (52 b) the context is again that of the military:

- (52) a. ... if it would be one that would not hurt the program of building that we are going forward with ... (1033/17)
- b. We're going to continue, at the same time we are going to continue to urge them to sit down with us in a program of realistic strategic arms reduction. (923/17)

Building and continuing what? The objects of the verbs are elided because they would have been "our military" and "the arms race," or some Reaganistic circumlocutions for these.

If military buildup must be mentioned, Reagan almost invariably connects it with the word peace. Participating in the arms race is Reagan's strategy for "preserv[ing] the peace" (53 a, d):

- (53) a. ... we're forced to try to catch up so that we can preserve the peace ... (1026/17)
- b. Our strong defense is the foundation of freedom, peace, and stability ... (276/17)
- c. ... so we can maintain peace through strength ... (688/18)
- d. It's morally important that we take steps to protect America's safety and preserve the peace. (157/18)

- e. ... our greatest goal must be peace, and I also happen to believe that that will come through our maintaining enough strength that we can keep the peace. (636/17)
- f. We've laid the foundation for a long-range buildup of our Armed Forces, bringing us nearer the day when Americans can once again enjoy a margin of safety and peace will be made more secure. (735/17)
- g. In our search for an everlasting peace, let all of us resolve to remain so sure of our strength that the victory for mankind we won here is never threatened. (1171/17)
- h. ... it's my solemn duty to ensure America's national security while vigorously pursuing every path to peace. Toward this end, I have repeatedly pledged to halt the decline in America's military strength and restore that margin of safety needed for ... the maintenance of peace. (1074/17)
- i. ... a plan that will meet our vital security needs and strengthen our hopes for peace. (1075/17)
- j. ... I am announcing today a plan to revitalize our strategic forces and maintain America's ability to keep the peace well into the next century. (1074/17)

Peace is the magic word that legitimizes military buildup. These examples prove that Reagan was trying to create a collocation military strength/peace, so that people would automatically think about the desirable thing peace when they heard the phrase American military strength. Reagan

was a follower of the old Latin proverb: Si vis pacem, para bellum.<sup>13</sup>

The arms race was going on at the same time as efforts to negotiate arms control:

(54) ... our support ... to modernize long-range theater nuclear forces and to pursue arms control efforts at the same time, in parallel. (196/17)

While simultaneously increasing nuclear arsenals, Reagan could seriously claim the following:

(55) ... we're opposed to the proliferation of nuclear weapons and do everything in our power to prevent it. (635/17)

Reagan depicts the Soviet Union as a threat to the freedom of the Western World, and this necessitates arms buildup on the United States' side. On the other hand, he claims that the Soviet Union is "just a facade of strength:"

(56) ... our civilized ideas, our traditions, our values, are not--like the ideology and war machine of totalitarian societies--just a facade of strength. (533/17)

If it is "just a facade," why fear it?

According to Reagan, the Soviet Union was far ahead in the arms race, and Reagan's goal was balance. However, he talks about "the importance of American leadership in the world" (1190/17) and also says the following:

(57) We pledged, in short, to reopen all those roads to greatness that led America to unrivaled freedom and unparalleled strength in

---

<sup>13</sup>If you want peace, prepare for war.

the world. (734/17)

Unrivaled and unparalleled imply that America was and will be number one, and thus that Reagan actually wants to get ahead in the arms race.

There is still one contradiction left, and I think this is the most essential one. Reagan spread fear of the Soviet Union because they supposedly wanted to expand communism all over the world. The opposite of communism in Reagan's vocabulary is freedom which, translated into less glorified language, can be read capitalism. And Reagan states:

(58) America was put here to extend freedom ...  
(681/17)

This line of thinking should have provided justification for the arms race on the Soviet side, as well.

#### The Evil Arms Race

While the United States was "modernizing," "restoring" and "refurbishing" its "defenses," the Soviet Union was simultaneously doing something quite different, judging from Reagan's lexicon: they were "engaged in the most massive military buildup the world has ever seen" (1026/17), "the most massive arms buildup in history" (503/18) or "the greatest military buildup in the history of man" (874/17). As in glorification (e.g. in example 7 above), superlatives come in handy for vilification purposes as well. While Reagan, when talking about the United States, avoids the

words military buildup or arms buildup, he readily uses these words when referring to the Soviet Union.

Example (52 a) illustrates the use of elision in avoiding mention of a word with negative associations with reference to the United States' military buildup. When referring to the same activity as carried out by the Soviets, the elision of the object of build does not take place; on the contrary, the object is elaborately described:

- (59) ... they've been building the greatest military machine the world has ever seen.  
(1161/17)

While the United States' military buildup is purely defensive in nature, the Soviets are arming "themselves at a pace far beyond the needs of defense" (194/17). The Soviet arms race

- (60) ... cannot be described as necessary for their defense. It is plainly a buildup that is offensive in nature. (874/17)

The adjectives which Reagan uses with reference to the Soviet military buildup are loaded with negative emotional connotations:

- (61) a. ... the Soviet Union has undergone a massive military buildup, far outstripping any need for defense. (371/17)
- b. ... the disturbing buildup of Soviet military forces. (547/17)
- c. ... this relentless buildup of Soviet military power ... (1275/17)
- d. ... an unrelenting buildup of their military forces. (82/18)

Comparisons of the military strength of the United States and the Soviet Union are in a sense irrelevant; both were--and are still--capable of destroying the whole of humankind many times over. When Reagan talks about the United States' military buildup, he keeps to the abstract level of "modernizing" (see examples 48 a-e above on page 43), attempting to create an image of simply remedying a neglect (ex. 49 c), whereas when it comes to the Soviet military buildup, he descends from high abstractions to the more tangible level of numbers.<sup>14</sup> By selecting the right "facts," he is able to make the Soviet threat appear enormous:

- (62) a. Consider the facts. Over the past decade, the United States reduced the size of its Armed Forces and decreased its military spending. The Soviets steadily increased the number of men under arms. They now number more than double those of the United States. Over the same period, the Soviets expanded their real military spending by about one-third. The Soviet Union increased its inventory of tanks to some 50,000, compared to our 11,000. (1275/17)
- b. They've spent \$ 300 billion more than we have for military forces resulting in a significant numerical advantage in strategic nuclear delivery systems, tactical aircraft, submarine, artillery, and anti-aircraft defense. (371/17)

---

<sup>14</sup>The use of numbers is a persuasive tactic frequently used by political speakers. According to Noam Chomsky, "calculations of dollar equivalents give a highly misleading picture of relative military strength," among other reasons because the Soviet Union had more soldiers but less advanced technology than the United States (193).



In both of these examples we can note the level of concreteness: Reagan speaks in tangible numbers, and even the forbidden word nuclear is mentioned, a collocation which Reagan avoids in connection with the U.S. military. It is surprising that the U.S.S.R. anti-aircraft system is designated by the appellation defense, but even a Soviet anti-aircraft system could hardly be offensive, since these systems are defensive by definition.

Reagan expresses his irritation over the Soviets' ocean fleet, which, according to him, they should not have:

- (63) Historically a land power, they transformed their navy from a coastal defense force to an open ocean fleet, while the United States, a sea power with trans-oceanic alliances, cut its fleet in half. (1275/17)

Reagan is here expressing a "go-away-from-my-sandpit" attitude. It is legitimate for the United States to have an ocean fleet because they have "trans-oceanic alliances" at the border of the Soviet Union, but the Soviet Union should not have a fleet, although they also have trans-oceanic allies such as Cuba. Reagan's logic is difficult to follow.

As we know, Reagan's two terms in office meant cuts in welfare programs, cuts in education, cuts everywhere but in the military. However, Reagan accuses the Soviets in the following way:

- (64) The Soviets have not built a society; they've built an arsenal. (1005/17)

Today they are literally starving their people

of consumer products in order to maintain this great military buildup. (182/18)

We are familiar with the "my-toys-are-better-than-your-toys" attitude from the behavior of children. Reagan was already in his late seventies when he uttered the following boasting threat:

(65) So we've got the chip this time, that if we show them the will and determination to go forward with military buildup in our own defense and the defense of our allies, they then have to weigh, do they want to meet us realistically on a program of disarmament or do they want to face a legitimate arms race in which we are racing. (1160-1161/17)

The message is clear: if you do not play according to our rules, we will be forced to begin the real arms race.

#### OFFENSIVE, DEFENSIVE, OR JUST PLAIN WEAPONS?

A stone is a stone, whether it is used as a paperweight or thrown at somebody to knock him senseless. You can smooth a sleeping child's hair with your hand, and you can also use your hand to hit somebody, but your hand still remains your hand, the name does not change. However, when Reagan speaks about weapons, he has two completely different sets of vocabulary from which he chooses his words, depending on whether he is talking about American weapons or Soviet ones.

As with stones and hands, weapons can be put to different uses, and we never know what will be done with them before they are actually used. Reagan, however, wanted



to divide the weapons of the world into benevolent and malevolent ones even before they were used. To one living in Europe, in the middle of the targeted missiles from both sides, it did not really matter whether they were good ones or bad ones; they were just plain weapons, destructive and scary.

Reagan's goal was a "strong America" and weapons were naturally part of that strength, but according to Reagan, it was not likely that the weapons were actually going to be used. In the early 1980's the neutron bomb was a current issue. The United States was going to deploy the neutron warhead in Western Europe, and Reagan wanted to reduce the significance of this deployment to an act of simply "storing" it there, since it had to be kept somewhere, after all. Besides, an American neutron warhead "is purely, as I say, a defensive weapon" (871/17):

(66) Our intention is to simply stockpile it, warehouse it, you might say ... in the event that, heaven forbid, there ever is a necessity, a war that brings them about. (871/17)

All we've done is simply say that we're going to continue warehousing this, but we're going to put that in the casing and warehouse it as a unit instead of two separate parts. (871/17)

The difference between an assembled and an unassembled neutron weapon is the same as that between a loaded and an unloaded gun. Reagan, however, manages to make it sound innocent enough with his careful phrasing and choices of

vocabulary. Even a new verb, to warehouse, is brought into use to euphemize the deployment of the neutron weapon to Europe. Reagan also calls the neutron weapon "a more moderate but more effective version" of other tactical nuclear weapons (873/17). Certainly a neutron bomb is "moderate" and "effective": it kills only people, leaving the enemy's buildings and other constructions unharmed for possible later use by, for example, the ones who dropped the bomb...

Since the word weapons is likely to generate unpleasant and frightening associations in the minds of listeners, Reagan, when talking about American weapons, uses highly abstract, euphemizing circumlocutions. The downplaying of one's "own bad" is at work. In the same way as the War Department long ago became the Defense Department, and Reagan speaks of "service academies" (564/17) rather than military academies, American weapons are not weapons but systems (1154/17), new elements (1074/17), strategic programs (1075/17), protective hardware (564/17), our technology (1156/17), deterrent for protection (700/18) equipment (1156/17) or vital security needs (1075/17). While the Soviets have concrete missiles (310/18), the Americans have corresponding systems (310/18). Nuclear weapons are nuclear capabilities (503/18), and the defense

budget is not for weapons but for high-level abstractions such as maintenance and readiness (201/18).

When Reagan does descend from the level of high abstractions, and comes down to more concrete concepts, the words are still carefully chosen according to the associations they create:

- (67) a. The American people expect their planes to fly, their ships to sail, and their helicopters to stay aloft. (309/18)
- b. These two ships lie anchored in peace and friendship, yet each is vigilant and ready to defend the other if threatened ... (1166/17)
- c. ... we intend that you shall find better working conditions, tools adequate to the tasks you're expected to perform ... (563/17)
- d. And the tools of your trade were given a very low priority. (563/17)

At least to me, example (67 a) brings to mind the beautiful song "I am flying ... I am sailing"; the sentence creates an atmosphere of tranquility in the hearers' or readers' minds, and they forget that the flying planes and the sailing ships carry with them destructive weapons.

In (67 b) also Reagan has chosen the neutral word ship to refer to American and French battleships. Generalization has here a euphemizing effect, as also in examples (67 c-d) where Reagan, speaking to soldiers, uses the everyday word tools, which are useful and constructive, instead of weapons--useful, but destructive. It is true that weapons

are soldiers' tools, but the avoidance of the direct mentioning of the word weapons is evident.

The "tools" of Soviet soldiers are called by different names: they are "machines of war" and "instruments of destruction" (2/18). The words which Reagan avoids when referring to American arms, such as military, weapon and nuclear, are used, as well as other concrete words with warlike associations, for example warheads, missiles (68 c) and tanks (68 d):

- (68) a. The Soviet Union ... is spilling over with military hardware. The Soviets have ... built an arsenal. (1005/17)
- b. And the SS-20's were not even considered a strategic weapon, because they didn't cross an ocean. (1160/17)
- c. ... the Soviet Union deployed more than 750 nuclear warheads on the new SS-20 missiles alone. (1275/17)
- d. ... the great superiority that the Soviet Union has on the western front against the NATO nations, a tank advantage of better than four to one ... (871/17)
- e. ... they outnumber us in every conventional weapon, thousands of tanks, more than the NATO defense can have. (1160/17)

In (68 e) Reagan makes a point of the Soviet Union having more conventional weapons. However, in this nuclear age, conventional weapons do not pose a threat comparable to that posed by nuclear weapons, no matter how many conventional tanks there are.

The noble purpose for Reagan's arming of Europe was to defend his trans-oceanic allies:

(69) ... we have our allies there who don't have an ocean between them, so it doesn't take intercontinental ballistic missiles, it just takes ballistic missiles of the SS-20 type. Well, the SS-20's will have, with what they're adding, 750 warheads--one of them capable of pretty much leveling a city. (1160/17)

The terms which Reagan uses are concrete, and the name of the armament game is "you have so much and I don't have any": "... there is no equivalent deterrent to these Soviet intermediate missiles" (1275/17). "We" should have a deterrent, "they" have missiles. Reagan did not want to acknowledge the SS-20's as the Soviet defense of their own borders. Besides, what was Reagan himself doing on the other side of the world? Would he have forgiven the Soviets' arming their trans-oceanic allies on the same scale that he was arming Western Europe? There was no obvious justification for it, and so Reagan had to make the Soviet threat to the other parts of Europe seem greater in order to legitimize his actions.

(70) ... 200 SS-20's, strategic nuclear weapons of medium range, that are aimed at the cities of all of Europe today ... (873/17)

The weapons are called by their own names, and at least unconsciously the point is made that these are nuclear weapons. If the phrase "the cities of all of Europe"

literally means all European cities, the claim is highly exaggerated. This claim is repeated elsewhere:

(71) ... they can sit right there and that's got all of Europe, including England and all targeted. (1160/17)

Reagan goes to considerable detail in making a list of the places targeted by Soviet SS-20's:

(72) Well, as this map demonstrates, the SS-20's, even if deployed behind the Urals, will have a range that puts almost all of Western Europe--the great cities--Rome, Athens, Paris, London, Brussels, Amsterdam, Berlin, and so many more--all of Scandinavia, all of the Middle East, all of northern Africa, all within range of these missiles which, incidentally, are mobile and can be moved on shorter notice. (1276/17)

No list of the names of the cities targeted by American missiles is given. It is also interesting that the Soviet Union is aiming at cities, while the United States is depicted as aiming only at tanks:

(73) At the moment, the only stalemate to them is the tactical nuclear weapon that would be aimed at those tanks, if they ever started to roll forward. (1160/17)

In the following statement Reagan claims that the Soviets are capable of destroying more than the United States:

(74) ... ours do not have the range to really reach the depths of Russia. Russia's too far expanded, and the rest of Europe is too concentrated, so they can destroy where we can't. (1160/17)

Notice the elision of the word missiles after ours. This statement also reveals an attitude that "we" would destroy

more if we only could. Of course this intention is not overtly stated, and a casual listener would probably not pay conscious attention to this implicit sense.

In (75) below, Reagan is asked a direct question about MX missiles. In the answer he elides the word missiles, partly for stylistic reasons, of course, but probably partly to avoid the repetition of a "dangerous" word as well:

(75) Question: What about the MX missiles?

Reagan: MX ... I don't know where we're going to put it. (910/17)

"Forbidden" words are sometimes used by Reagan even when he is referring to the United States' weapons, but the context is always restricted somehow. In my material I found three contexts where words such as weapons appear. First, when speaking to American soldiers, Reagan does not euphemize as much as when speaking to the general American public. A different rhetoric is chosen for different audiences. The words weapons (76 a), nuclear (76 b), missiles and bombers (76 b, c) can be found in Reagan's speeches to American soldiers. In example (76 a) Reagan is speaking to soldiers, and examples (76 b, c) are his remarks on the commencement of the U.S. Strategic Weapons Program. Euphemizing weapons in these contexts would have been ridiculous:

(76) a. The argument, if there is any, will be over which weapons, not whether we should forsake weaponry for treaties and agreement. (564/17)



- b. We will also deploy nuclear cruise missiles in some existing submarines. (1075/17)
- c. ... I have directed the Security of Defense to revitalize our bomber forces by constructing and deploying some 100 B-1 bombers ... while continuing to deploy cruise missiles on existing bombers. (1075/17)

Second, when Reagan speaks about arms negotiations where he wants to depict himself as the initiator, the direct word weapons is used. In this context it is glorifying to be the one to end "this nightmare that hangs over the world today of the strategic weapons" (873/17):

- (77) ... we're going to go forward with them and try to persuade them into a program of ... actual reduction of these strategic weapons. (1154/17)

Third, Reagan uses the word weapons metaphorically in non-military contexts:

- (78) ... putting people first has always been America's secret weapon. (722/17)

Exculpation is evident when Reagan is called upon to explain certain foreign relations issues to a questioning audience. Arms sales is one such issue, and the phrase arms sales is systematically avoided; instead, Reagan speaks of "improving relations" (639/17), "military co-operation ... in our search for peace and stability in the Middle East" (859/17), providing "security assistance" (1299/17), selling "defensive equipment" (641/17), "making certain technology and defensive weapons available to them" (639/17), or "our



dedication to the welfare of Israel" (194/18). Euphemistic circumlocutions replace the direct arms sales. Selling weapons is euphemized to "stand[ing] by our friends" (79):

(79) ...we are going to stand by our friends and allies there, both Israel and those nations like Egypt and the Sudan and so forth ..."  
(1155/17)

The subject of arms sales to the Middle East has always been controversial, due to the often conflicting interests of the Middle Eastern countries. A lot of explaining was required in the sales of AWACS planes to Saudi Arabia, because of U.S. ties to Israel:

- (80) a. ... the sale will greatly improve the chances of our working constructively with Saudi Arabia and other states of the Middle East toward our common goal--a just and lasting peace. It poses no threat to Israel, now or in the future. Indeed, by contributing to the security and stability of the region, it serves Israel's long-range interest. (1064/17)
- b. ... if we go forward with this AWACS deal, that we will have further strengthened our credibility with them and our peacemaking ability in the Middle East. (1153/17)
- c. ... this sale will significantly improve the capability of Saudi Arabia and the United States to defend the oil fields on which the security of the free world depends. (1064/17)

Reagan is exploiting the principle of end-focus here: positive things are mentioned last and are thereby emphasized. Also, arms sales are associated with such noble goals as peace (80 a, b), strengthening "our credibility"

(b), and "contributing to [the] security and stability" of the Middle East (a). In (80 c) a more concrete motivation is revealed, but it is veiled in the glorified terms of defending not only oil, but first and foremost "the security of the free world." The most concrete motivation for arms sales--to make money--is never even implied. When the U.S. Congress later approved the AWACS sales, a reporter in a question-and-answer session quotes Saudi Arabians as saying that it was "a victory against Zionism, a defeat for Zionism," but Reagan readily paraphrases this as "a victory for peace" (1202/17).

The sale of weapons to Jordan calls for some explanation because of the conflicting interests of Israel, a United States' ally, and Jordan, to whom the weapons were being sold:

- (81) The greatest thing that we can do for Israel is to bring peace to the Middle East....If we can persuade [Jordan] to acknowledge the right of Israel to exist as a nation ... that will be the greatest thing we can do. And in order to do that we have to show them that we're willing to be a friend other than just talking about it. (660/18)

According to this logic, a friend is one who sells you weapons. The following sequence of question and answer justifies this definition of "friend," raising it to the level of "a moral obligation":

- (82) Question: ... what are your plans for arms sales to Taiwan?  
Reagan: We are not going to abandon our long-

time friends and allies in Taiwan....  
It is a moral obligation that we'll  
keep. (966/18)

Question-and-answer sessions with the press often reveal a tendency to dysphemize on the part of the reporters, and a strong tendency to euphemize on the part of Reagan. In (83 a) the reporter asks about lethal arms sales shipments to China. In his answer, Reagan changes lethal arms to defensive equipment. In (83 b) Reagan is asked about "lethal weapons sales"; in his answer he talks about "improving relations" and "making certain technology and defensive weapons available":

(83) a. Question: ... lethal arms sales shipments to China ...  
Reagan: ... act, that provides for defensive equipment being sold ...  
(641/17)

b. Question: ... lethal weapons sales to the People's Republic of China.  
Reagan: ... all we have done is ... to improve relations with them, move them to the same status of many other countries and not necessarily military allies of ours, in making certain technology and defensive weapons available to them. And I think this is a normal part of the process of improving our relations there.  
(639/17)

Reagan emphasizes that the initiative for arms sales was taken not by him but by the allies (84 a) and that in El Salvador, for example, the United States is simply acting as a helpful neighbor (b):

(84) a. ... our allies have asked us for cruise

- (84) a. ... our allies have asked us for cruise missiles and Pershings as a deterrent to be stationed in those countries in Western Europe, to be deployed there. And we have agreed to do that. (442/18)
- b. Our economic assistance ... is more than five times the amount of our security assistance. The thrust of our aid is to help our neighbors realize freedom, justice and economic process. (222/18)

The division of the world's weapons into good ones and bad ones, and the legitimization of the United States' arms sales by reducing them to innocent acts of friendship, serve one and the same purpose: to allow the production of arms to continue. This, in turn, supports the economic growth of the United States, an important issue on Reagan's agenda.

#### PEACEMAKERS?

In the same way that Reagan glorified America, American military buildup, and American weapons, American soldiers receive their share of glorification as well:

- (85) a. The brave men and women who fought for our country ... (618/17)
- b. American fighting men who had obeyed their ... country's call ... (185/17)
- c. ... in a hostile world, a nation's future is only as certain as the devotion of its defenders ... (1239/17)
- d. ... while there may be some people who think that the uniform is associated with violence, you are the peacemakers. (888/17)

In examples (85 a, b) the words brave and fighting have a glorifying effect. Note that soldiers are not called soldiers but men and women (a) or men (b), defenders (c), or peacemakers (d). Peacemakers is especially glorifying because of its Biblical overtone: "Blessed are the peacemakers."

The word soldiers systematically gives way to euphemizing and glorifying circumlocutions: "those in uniform" (566/17), "those who are called upon to do the hard and sometimes thankless job" (564/17), "those who guarantee our safety" (566/17), or even "these gentlemen" (175/18).

Sometimes Reagan refers to the U.S. army directly as "our military forces" (566/17), and at other times attaches sentiment to it: "the Long Grey line that has never failed us" (959/17). The profession of a soldier is "the honorable profession that you have chosen" (563/17) and in the following example, U.S. military officers are glorified by being associated with Reagan's highest values:

(86) ... officers in the Armed Forces of the United States, guardians of freedom, protectors of our heritage ... the keepers of peace.  
(562/17)

Reagan explicitly praises his forces:

(87) We may not be the biggest navy in the world; we're the best. (911/17, 924/17)

Here he is implicitly referring to the Soviet Union, implying that their navy may be bigger, but that the U.S. navy is capable of defeating it.

The following example refers to American soldiers as an abstraction (Armed Forces), whereas the Soviet army is referred to in a concrete way, as consisting of actual men with weapons:

- (88) Consider the facts. Over the past decade, the United States reduced the size of its Armed Forces and decreased its military spending. The Soviets steadily increased the number of men under arms. (1257/17)

Consider the following example:

- (89) Foreign forces and armed factions have too long obstructed the legitimate role of government of Lebanon's security forces. (1183/18)

The soldiers of the opposite side are foreign soldiers or armed factions, whereas the soldiers who are on our side are security forces. The words foreign and armed carry some negative connotations of foreign belonging not to "us" but to "them," and armed having to do with weapons and violence, while security is a safe, positive word. Foreign soldiers may also be referred to with openly dysphemistic phrases, for example as guerillas:

- (90) ... the guerillas, with their terrorist tactics in El Salvador, have failed miserably in an attempt to bring the population over on their side. (1243/17)

### DID HE EVER CHANGE?

The early 1980's were frightening times because of the acceleration of the arms race on both the Soviet and the United States sides. This situation was naturally reflected in Reagan's speeches in his early years as President. Toward the end of the decade, the world political climate seemed to change, due in part to the new leadership in the Soviet Union. One might suppose that this change in external reality was reflected in Reagan's later speeches. Specifically, one might expect his rhetoric to become less aggressively dichotomous, and more compromising and diplomatic towards the Soviet Union.

I moved, then, from the speeches of the early 1980's, to a consideration of Reagan's speeches in 1987. In 1987 Reagan is still repeating most of his glorifying phrases in reference to America. It is "a great bastion of freedom" (51/23), "our blessed land" (83/23), "this great land of ours" (378/23), and "this land of freedom" (378/23). The Soviet Union and its allies are still referred to negatively, for example, as "the enemies of freedom" (528/23), "aggressive powers" (384/23), "our adversaries" (3/23), and "hostile powers" (579/23). The dichotomy between good and evil is still clearly present:

- (91) There is a power in the flame of liberty. It can melt the chains of despotism and change the world.... Today we must stand strong, because we are the keepers of that flame.  
(454/23)

In short, the United States is still glorified and the Soviet Union and its allies still vilified. However, while it is difficult to find examples of denigration, that is, the downplaying of anything positive on the Soviet side--or indeed any mention of anything positive there--in Reagan's speeches in the years 1981 and 1982, hedged positive statements about the Soviet Union emerge in the 1987 speeches. This is illustrated in examples (92) below:

- (92) a. In recent months we have heard hopeful talk of change in Moscow, of an openness. Some political prisoners have been released ... We welcome these positive signs and hope that they're only the first steps toward a true liberalization of Soviet society.  
(356/23)
- b. We think that it's encouraging--their whole attitude to arms--which has never before been true with any of the other previous Soviet leaders. (363/23)
- c. And this time they are actually suggesting, as we have been, let's do away with some of those weapons. (405/23)
- d. ... we've been encouraged by signs of Soviet willingness to remove the roadblocks that have been holding back progress.  
(403/23)
- e. In the months that followed Reykjavik, progress was slower than I hoped, but in recent weeks the Soviets have shown new seriousness. (382/23)



- f. ... I believe there's reason for optimism about the chances for better relations with the Soviets, but we also face some tough, contentions issues that require realism and strength of will on our part. (393/23)
- g. The United States remains pledged to sustaining this movement toward greater personal liberty and national self-determination and to resisting attempts to reverse it. (383/23)
- h. There is talk of changes in Soviet laws. There is talk of a less centralized approach to the Soviet economy, giving more scope to individual initiative. We'll see if these talks amount to anything. (382/23)
- i. This agenda ... [is] not based on false hopes or wishful thinking about the Soviets; it's based on a candid assessment of Soviet actions and long-term understanding of their intentions. (382/23)

Example (92 a) allows for the inference that since only "some" prisoners have been released, the majority of them are still in prisons. Example (b) tells us that the Soviet Union has not necessarily become better: Mr. Gorbachev may be just an exception. In (c) the United States is depicted as the one who has long been suggesting reducing arms. The word remove in (d) presupposes that the Soviets placed (or at least maintained) the roadblocks there. "Signs ... of willingness" invites the inference that they were previously unwilling to remove the roadblocks. The words new seriousness in (e) presuppose that previously the Soviets had not been serious about arms reductions; moreover, Reagan had hoped for faster progress, the Soviets had not. In (f) the adversative conjunction but implies contrast with

"reason for optimism"; in fact Reagan goes on to say that progress is not as easy as it might seem, and a lot is still required on the side of the United States. "Resisting attempts to reverse" the movement toward a better Soviet society (g) presupposes that there are indeed attempts being made to reverse the positive developments, and consequently implies that there are forces inside the Soviet Union which are still bad. In (h) Reagan lists several positive things about the Soviet Union, but nullifies the list by stating that it might be just "talk", and in (i) he again implies that the Soviet Union is still bad and that their intentions are not to be trusted. The Soviet Union may be changing, but it is still the adversary of the United States:

(93) If I had to characterize U.S.-Soviet relations in one word it would be this: proceeding. No great cause for excitement; no great cause for alarm. And perhaps this is the way relations with one's adversaries should be characterized. (383-384/23)

In short, although Reagan does find positive things to say about the Soviet Union in his 1987 speeches, the references are often somewhat denigrating.

At the same time, new areas for Reagan's dichotomies emerge. In the Western Hemisphere the battle between good and evil rages as hectically as ever:

(94) a. And this is the choice before Congress and our people, a basic choice, really, between democracy and communism in Nicaragua, between freedom and Soviet-backed tyranny. For myself, I'm determined to meet this

Soviet challenge and to ensure that the future of this hemisphere is chosen by its people and not imposed by Communist aggressors. (472/23)

- b. The choice is communism versus freedom ... (321/23)
- c. ... the choice remains the same: democracy or communism, elections or dictatorship, freedom or tyranny. (473/23)
- d. Well, that's the choice we face: between the light of liberty or the darkness of repression. (475/23)

While the Soviet Union is no longer directly depicted as being thoroughly bad, it remains the ultimate source of evil: the tyranny in Nicaragua is "Soviet-backed" (94 a). Note that in (94 b) Reagan unfairly compares a political system "communism" with an abstraction "freedom." The dichotomy is clear elsewhere as well. With reference to Angola, Reagan says:

(95) ... there was a communist faction and there was a group that wanted democracy. (279/23)

The United States has "allies" (404/23), which implies support and friendship, while the Soviet Union has "clients" (403/23), which indicates an impersonal, mercenary relationship between the Soviet Union and its "clients." Reagan speaks in direct terms about "Soviet spying" (380/23), "the huge, menacing apparatus of Soviet espionage and propaganda" (579/23), and "Soviet espionage outrages" which have "gone beyond reason" (403/23), while U.S. espionage is referred to as 'alleged U.S. intelligence

activities" (387/23), a "mission" which is "nothing less than the defense of liberty" (580/23), "our intelligence community" (579/23), and "the best intelligence service in the world" which is "staffed by honorable men and women who work within the framework of our laws and our shared values" (579/23).

Reagan still uses "us" and "them" when comparing the United States and the Soviet Union:

(96) ... they have preponderant advantage in the short-range weapons, much greater than we would have to offer as a deterrent on the side.  
(385/23)

The Soviets are causing "death or the severe injury of the children" in Afghanistan (585/23), they are making "the small country of Nicaragua an aggressor nation with the largest military machine in Central America" (472/23), backing Cambodia, "another tragic example of aggression and occupation" (383/23), and pursuing a "policy of global expansionism" (383/23). At the same time as "the freedom fighters" in Nicaragua--a euphemism coined by Reagan for the Contras--are fighting "against that totalitarian Communist Government" (592/23), Americans are extending "liberty to a world desperately in need" (354/23). As for the shooting down of airplanes in the Persian Gulf, the Americans are just "protecting the United States' interest" on "a vital mission" (555/23). Reagan actually encourages the American forces to shoot down approaching planes:

(97) Defend yourselves, defend American lives.  
(555/23)

Reagan also repeats the old phrases of earlier years, that we are being "confronted with a massive Soviet buildup," and that even today, "the annual Soviet output of nuclear missiles, tanks, and other ground equipment is still twice that of the United States and NATO combined" (507/23). He still talks about his "steadily determined effort" to redress "such a severe and dangerous imbalance" (507/23). However, in his 1987 speeches, Reagan is able to consider the Soviets as people, comparable to the people of the United States (98). A softer, more human side to the Soviet Union begins to emerge:

(98) [I've often talked about what would happen] if ordinary Americans and people from the Soviet Union could get together--get together as human beings, as men and women who breathe the same air, share the same concerns about making life better for themselves and their children. (266/23)

In short, it is clear that some development towards a less dichotomous view of the U.S.-Soviet relationship took place toward the end of Reagan's second term as President, but the battle between good and evil continued elsewhere: in Nicaragua, Afghanistan, and wherever Reagan sensed a possibility of communist take-over. Dichotomous rhetoric still flourished; a change in reality did condition a change in Reagan's rhetoric, but the dichotomies survived.

## SUMMARY

In this paper I have attempted to illustrate how language can be used to divide the world. Dichotomous rhetoric arranges reality into us versus them, into good versus bad; ex-President Reagan used dichotomous language to divide the world into the virtuous United States and the evil Soviet Union.

Reagan mainly used three rhetorical devices to effectuate this division: glorification, exculpation and vilification. Reagan glorified America and the American people, and vilified the Soviets. In the area of military buildup the dichotomies are clear: the American military buildup was euphemized, affiliated with positive associations, and thus exculpated, whereas the Soviet military buildup was vilified by means of explicit dysphemistic expressions. The arms of the world were divided into good weapons and bad weapons, and according to the same pattern, soldiers were either good or evil.

The linguistic manifestations of this battle between good and evil often took the form of abstract or vague expressions versus concrete and specific ones. When there was a need to glorify or exculpate, the referent was referred to by vague circumlocutions, whereas Reagan's vilification typically involved using concrete appellations for the referents. Certain words, such as weapons, military and nuclear, were systematically avoided in reference to the

United States in Reagan's speeches to the American public, while these words were used when Reagan referred to the Soviet Union. Positive and negative associations were constantly created, even when referring to essentially the same thing, such as American versus Soviet nuclear weapons.

The glorification of America and the exculpation of its military buildup and weapons on the one hand, and the vilification of the Soviet Union and its similar activities and arms on the other hand, are characteristic of the entirety of Reagan's presidency. Toward the end of his second term, denigration of the Soviet Union began to characterize his speeches as well. The changing external reality probably conditioned this change. Vilification, however, was still evident, and although the Soviet Union received less dysphemizing vilification, new areas of dichotomies arose wherever Reagan felt the need to vilify the "communist menace." The battle between good and evil was waged in Reagan's rhetoric until the end of his presidency.



## CONCLUDING REMARKS

The world political climate in the 1980's was strongly influenced by the powerful rhetoric of President Reagan. He gave speeches on a frequent basis and shared considerably more with the news media than, for example, the Soviet leaders. Reagan was in large part responsible for aggravating the Cold War atmosphere, and later, for glorifying himself as the initiator on the world's path to peace.

During his eight years of presidency he first divided the world in two with his language, creating a deep gap between East and West. He then slowly began the process of at least pretending to bring the edges of this gap closer together, being careful, however, not to bring them too close. Towards the end of his presidency, the Soviet Union could no longer be represented as the ultimate incarnation of evil. However, the dichotomous world-view reflected in Reagan's rhetoric remained basically intact: new dichotomies were created wherever Reagan sensed a possibility of communist takeover, and we were always reminded that the evil was still Soviet-backed. While it is obvious that Reagan noticed the emerging good in the changes inside the Soviet Union, he chose to present it in a way that would denigrate it, in order to maintain the dichotomy between the "good" United States and the "bad" Soviet Union. By presenting the positive changes in the Soviet Union as

merely cosmetic, Reagan emphasized the view that deep inside the Soviet Union still remained, and probably would always remain, evil.<sup>1</sup>

This paper has attempted to describe the dichotomous worldview reflected in Reagan's speeches, and in particular, it has attempted to demonstrate how this worldview was structured in his references to the military. However, it has not answered the question of what lay behind Reagan's dichotomies. There are basically two hypotheses we can make. The first hypothesis is that Reagan's rhetoric reflected his personal worldview, that he really believed in the battle between good and evil as represented by the two superpowers. The second possibility is that Reagan had a specific reason or reasons for depicting the world as black-and-white, independent of his personal worldview.

The first hypothesis renders Reagan fairly simple-minded, but, on the other hand, absolves him of charges of being manipulative. In fact, it is possible that he himself was being manipulated, i.e. by cunning advisors whose specific goals Reagan's simple message would have served.

---

<sup>1</sup>A quantitative study of Reagan's rhetoric would reveal the changes that took place in his references to the Soviet Union more clearly: a comparison of the number and frequency of his vilified remarks of the Soviet Union during his earlier and later years as President would show this change in a more tangible form, and this remains an interesting subject for further research.

According to the second hypothesis Reagan (or his advisors) would have consciously manipulated his audience by means of his dichotomous message, not personally believing in the simplified reality as depicted by his language, but rather using it as a means to an end. Naturally, one can only speculate about the relationship between Reagan's worldview as presented in his rhetoric and his personal beliefs, but I am inclined to believe that he actually did not see the world as dichotomously as one is led to think on the basis of his speeches. I think rather that Reagan's dichotomous view of the world served his other ends, especially, his concrete goal of reviving the United States' economy by providing employment for the military industry of the country. The maintenance of the dichotomy "communism" versus "freedom" was necessary for the legitimization of United States military buildup. The military buildup in turn might have been necessary for other, e.g. financial, reasons. The explicitly stated noble goal of Reagan's dichotomous rhetoric was to safeguard the western economic system and protect the "freedom" of the ordinary American. However, a less noble, but more concrete, goal was simultaneously achieved: arms sales bring money to the United States; the production and maintenance of war machinery provides work for many, and perhaps more

importantly, money to a select, but influential, few.<sup>2</sup>

Dichotomies helped to achieve these ends. Reagan's powerful and relentless rhetoric persuaded many to subscribe to his dichotomous view without questioning what lay behind his rhetoric, or how it was used.

The question I raised in the first pages of this paper was: what happens to dichotomous rhetoric when there is a challenge to that rhetoric caused by external developments, a change in the reality which this rhetoric is depicting. It is obvious that external changes in reality can and do produce changes in the rhetorical styles of politicians, as happened in Reagan's case when his references to the Soviet Union became less vilified and he began employing denigration. One might ask why this change took place; the most plausible answer would probably be that a speaker who has authority and influence cannot close his eyes to the changes in the world around him, for if he had closed his eyes and continued with the same type of dichotomous

---

<sup>2</sup>Chomsky (1982) writes: "... the Reagan Administration is seeking to raise the level of international tension and to create a mood of crisis at home and abroad, seizing whatever opportunities present themselves.... the reasons are not difficult to discern. They are implicit in the domestic policies that constitute the core of the Reagan Administration program: transfer of resources from the poor to the rich by slashing social welfare programs and by regressive tax policies, and a vast increase in the state sector of the economy in the familiar mode: by subsidizing and providing a guaranteed market for high-technology production, namely, military production." (17)

rhetoric that he had earlier employed, the result would evidently have been a loss of credibility. In order to be successful, a speaker has to adapt his rhetorical style to the changing reality.

If we consider the nature of the changes, however, we notice that they were essentially superficial: the Soviet Union came in for fewer vilified remarks and more denigrating ones, but the basic dichotomy between good and evil survived; it simply found expression elsewhere. This is understandable since the need to maintain the dichotomy did not disappear with the emergence of external changes.

Although this paper has concerned itself solely with dichotomies as expressed in Reagan's language, I do not wish to imply that dichotomous rhetoric is a phenomenon unique to him or to any other American politician; it is found in the Soviet Union as well<sup>3</sup>, and indeed we all express ourselves dichotomously at times. This is a matter which should not be taken lightly. The danger of dichotomous language is that it oversimplifies; in the case of politicians, it also pulls us apart. It is vital that the people of the world, Reagan's "ordinary Americans" as well as ordinary Soviets, become more aware of the dichotomies that are being fed to

<sup>3</sup>A fascinating area for further research would be to compare the speeches of a Soviet politician, for example Leonid Breznev, with those of Reagan. My hypothesis is that the same dichotomies that I have found in Reagan's language would be mirrored in the speeches of Soviet politicians.

them by their leaders, and fed to us all by politicians, and even by people around us. I feel that we would be less susceptible to dichotomous rhetoric if we consciously tried to think more for ourselves, rather than passively accepting what we are exposed to e.g. via the media. We live among weapons which have the capacity to destroy the whole of humankind. Language is also powerful, however. Attending to and re-evaluating some existing dichotomies may eventually help us to, if not eliminate, at least lessen the threat of the possibility of mutual destruction.

#### WORKS CITED

- Adams, Robert M. "Soft Soap and the Nitty-Gritty." Fair of Speech: The Uses of Euphemism. Ed. D.J. Enright. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1985. 44-55.
- Aristotle. "Rhetoric." The Rhetoric and the Poetics of Aristotle. Trans. W. Rhys Roberts. New York: The Modern Library, 1984. 19-218.
- Barber, C. L. The Story of Language. Rev. ed. London: Pan Books, 1975.
- Barnes, Fred. "Speechless." New Republic 16 Feb 1987: 8-10.
- Bennett, James R. "National Power and Objectivity in the Classroom." College English 51 (1989): 805-824.
- Bolinger, Dwight. Language--The Loaded Weapon: The Use and Abuse of Language Today. London: Longman, 1980.
- Boxmeyer, Don. "Euphemisms: Just a way of avoiding reality." Boston Globe 12 Jan. 1982: 36-37.
- Brook, G. L. Varieties of English. Reprinted. London: Macmillan, 1974.
- Brown, Robert McAfee. "The Debasement of Language." Christian Century 5 Apr. 1983: 313-315.
- Chomsky, Noam. Towards a New Cold War: Essays on the Current Crisis and How We Got There. New York: Pantheon, 1982.
- Dallek, Robert. Ronald Reagan: The Politics of Symbolism. Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 1984.
- Erickson, Paul D. Reagan Speaks: The Making of an American Myth. New York: New York University Press, 1985.
- Fairlie, H. "The Decline of Oratory." New Republic 28 May 1984: 15-19.
- Gerber, Philip L. Effective English. New York: Random House, 1969.
- Hart, Roderick P. The Sound of Leadership: Presidential Communication in the Modern Age. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.



- Hayakawa, S. I. Language in Thought and Action. 4th ed. New York: Harcourt, 1978.
- Hofstadter, Richard. The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays. New York: Knopf, 1965.
- Hook, Glenn D. "Militarization and Language: The Case of Japan." Current Research on Peace and Violence 7 (1984): 90-104.
- Howard, Philip. The State of Language: English Observed. New York: Oxford UP, 1985.
- Jespersen, Otto. Growth and Structure of the English Language. 9th ed. Oxford: Blackwell, 1962.
- Knodracke, Morton. "Speech, Speech! Author, Author!" New Republic 5 July 1982: 21, 24-25.
- Lasswell, Harold D. "The Language of Power." Language of Politics: Studies in Quantitative Semantics. Cambridge, Ma.: MIT P, 1968. 3-19.
- Leech, Geoffrey. Semantics. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977.
- Leinfellner, Elisabeth. Der Euphemismus in der politischen Sprache. Berlin: Duncker, 1979.
- Luckham, Robin. "Of Arms and Culture." Current Research on Peace and Violence 1 (1984): 1-64).
- McDonald, Daniel. The Language of Argument. 4th ed. New York: Harper, 1983.
- May, Derwent. "Euphemisms and the Media." Fair of Speech: The Uses of Euphemism. Ed. D.J. Enright. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1985. 122-134.
- Orwell, George. "Politics and the English Language." The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell. Ed. Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus. Vol. 4. New York: Harcourt, 1968. 127-140. 4 vols.
- The Oxford English Dictionary. 2 ed. Oxford: Clarendon, 1989. XX vols.
- Perry, Roland. Hidden Power: The Programming of the President. New York: Beaufort, 1984.

- Philbrick, F. A. "Bias Words." Exposition and the English Language: Introductory Studies. Ed. James L. Sanderson and Walter Gordon. New York: Appleton, 1963. 333-339.
- Postman, Neil. "Demmeaning of Meaning: Or, What's the Language-Pollution Index Today?" Language in America. Ed. Neil Postman, Charles Weingartner and Terence P. Moran. New York: Pegasus, 1969. 13-20.
- Quotations From President Ron. Comp. Morton and Margaret Mintz. New York: St. Martin's, 1987.
- Rank, Hugh. The Pep Talk: How to Analyze Political Language. Park Forest, Ill.: Counter-propaganda, 1984.
- Shapiro, Walter. "Of Mice and Metaphors." Newsweek 3 Feb 1986: 20, 22.
- Skorov, Georgij. "Rejganomika v nasledstvo: nepredvzjatyj analiz ekonomiceskoj politiki republikancev." Novoje Vremja 15 Jun 1988: 22-24.
- Smith, William Raymond. The Rhetoric of American Politics: A Study of Documents. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1969.
- Sproule, J. Michael. Argument: Language and Its Influence. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1980.
- Stengel, Richard. "How Reagan Stays Out of Touch." Time 8 Dec 1986: 34.
- Stern, Gustaf. Meaning and Change of Meaning: With Special Reference to the English Language. 2nd pr. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1965.
- Stuckey, Mary E. Getting Into the Game: The Pre-Presidential Rhetoric of Ronald Reagan. New York: Praeger, 1989.
- . Playing the Game: The Presidential Rhetoric of Ronald Reagan. New York: Praeger, 1990.
- Swift, Jonathan. "The Art of Political Lying." The McGraw-Hill Reader. Ed. Gilbert H. Muller. 2nd ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1985. 426-429.
- Talbott, Strobe. "Behind the Bear's Angry Growl." Time 21 May, 1984: 24-25.

- Tulis, Jeffrey K. The Rhetorical Presidency. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1987.
- Ullmann, Stephen. Semantics: An Introduction to the Science of Meaning. Rpt. Oxford: Blackwell, 1967.
- Wagner, Geoffrey. "The Language of Politics." Language in America. Ed. Neil Postman, Charles Weingartner and Terence P. Moran. New York: Pegasus, 1969. 22-37.
- Wander, Philip. "The Rhetoric of American Foreign Policy." The Quarterly Journal of Speech 70 (1984): 339-361.
- Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents 17.4-7, 9, 11, 13-53 (1981).
- . 18.1-23, 26-40 (1982).
- . 23.1-52 (1987).
- Wills, Garry. Reagan's America: Innocents at Home. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1987.
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig. Tractatus Logico-philosophicus. Reprinted Transl. by D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness. London: Routledge, 1972.
- Yakobson, Sergius and Harold D. Lasswell. "Trend: May Day Slogans in Soviet Russia, 1918-1943." Language of Politics: Studies in Quantitative Semantics. Ed. Harold D. Lasswell et al. Cambridge, Ma.: The MIT Press, 1968.
- Zemtsov, Ilya. Soviet Political Language. London: Overseas Publ. Interchange, 1985.