FROM: Phyllis Schlafly

68 FAIRMOUNT, ALTON, ILLINOIS 62002 / (618) 462-5415

RELEASE: JULY 10, 1986

REAGAN'S VICTORY OVER TIP O'NEILL

The two men squared off. In the left corner, supported by a comfortable margin in the House, nearly all the news media, and possibly even a majority of the American people with their traditional suspicion of international entanglements, was that veteran of years of legislative fights, heavyweight Tip O'Neill.

He had chosen the battleground to fight on, he had selected the weapons for the showdown, and even the timing was his. He was the odds-on favorite to win.

In the right corner, lean and trim, was the underdog, Ronald Reagan. His political advisers discouraged him with the old axiom: he who runs away from a hopeless fight lives to fight another day. But Reagan bounced onto the mat with the fervor of a Galahad who believes his strength is as the strength of ten because his soul is pure. Besides, he wore the armor of truth.

Reagan asked for leave to speak to O'Neill's House, but O'Neill said no, and was even ungracious about it. Was he afraid that Reagan was a magician whose wizardry could cast a spell on House members? The media supported O'Neill's refusal, implying darkly that Reagan might have made an unconstitutional (i.e., indecent) proposition.

Could Reagan, then, speak to Congressmen via the electronic media? The big networks said no. Only CNN carried the speech. On the evening news, the big networks gave their customary 20-second clip of the President, accompanied by their interpretation of what he had said and their prediction that O'Neill would win by a knockout.

It was easy for the media moguls to believe that O'Neill would win; after all, he held all the aces. It was easy to believe that Reagan would lose. No sooner had he been reelected in 1984, carrying 49 of the 50 states, but the commentators chorused, "Forget the landslide. Reagan is a lameduck President and he won't be able to get anything through Congress."

But Reagan won a stunning 221-209 roll-call victory when the House approved the $100 million in military aid to the Nicaraguan Freedom Fighters. The liberals were in shock.

Considering the advance buildup, the stage was set for Reagan's achievement to be a first-rate news story. All the more so because the vote was an upset. Funny thing, though, the next morning the networks gave top news billing to the weather and low-keyed the Reagan victory.

The following day, the networks made a major news story out of <u>how</u> President Reagan persuaded the majority of Congressmen to vote yes. Dan Rather explained that "Congressmen were herded to the White House" to hear the President's salestalk. Tip O'Neill was given precious network time to bemoan his conclusion that some Congressmen were more impressed with meeting the President than they would have been to meet the Pope. Imagine!

The dictionary defines the verb "to herd" as "to tend, drive or lead (cattle or sheep)." The Congressmen who were invited to the White House would, indeed, be surprised to learn that they had been "herded." There is no evidence that any went unwillingly.

Of course they were impressed! Ronald Reagan is an impressive man, especially because he is so genuine, so dedicated to doing the right thing for America.

However, it wasn't Reagan's charm or sincerity that swayed votes. It was the power of the message he delivered to each Congressman who listened. The issue of military aid to the Contras in Nicaragua is the issue of U.S. national security. We just can't afford to have another Soviet military base in the Western Hemisphere.

There is no question about the Communist nature of the Nicaraguan Sandinista regime. Knowledgeable people recognized it as Communist even when President Jimmy Carter gave it $75 million of American aid. Today, that's obvious. Daniel Ortega has been leading a Communist revolution, and he can call on his Communist friends everywhere in the world, from the Kremlin to Castro.

Surely America must stand with the Freedom Fighters against Communism. Surely our conscience will not allow us to turn a deaf ear when valiant men call for help in their fight for freedom.

The liberals thought they had a psychological weapon to answer that argument. They cried "Vietnam, Vietnam" the way a toreador tries to excite the bull with a red flag. But the liberals have cried "wolf, wolf" too often. They cried "Vietnam" when we sent aid to El Salvador, but our help turned El Salvador into a free country instead of a battleground.