

American Hubris

I am going to speak for no more than eight minutes and so leave seven minutes for questions. Let us see if I can keep this promise.

Given such parameters, I will restrict myself to assertions. The first is that I love my country. And this love is selfish. America has accorded me the incomparable freedom to say what I think, which is one of the finest of all human freedoms. Have I also been appalled by my country?

Yes. Very much so, when it is at its worst.

Here, I can offer a metaphor. I would say that America has become comparable to a handsome, seven-foot giant who weighs 300 pounds, is all muscle, and yet has to be reassured every few minutes that the odor of his armpits is splendid. It seems we Americans have a

desperate need to love ourselves outrageously, and this has become so compelling a sentiment that I must conclude that the most powerful religion in America is now America itself. We are exceptionalists. At least half of this nation believes that God created America to be exceptional, to be superior to all other earthly alternatives in order for the U.S. to be able to show others the way. It is a vanity so immense that I will call it hubris, and this American hubris has produced tragic blunders in foreign affairs. If we have had successes like the Marshall Plan, we have also had our ten years in Viet Nam with two million Asians killed as a result, and so little to show for it but our national shame.

Over this last week, our media with the all-out assistance of the Bush Administration, has been deifying Ronald Reagan. Our media prospers by way of its built-in capacity for hysteria that tends to make every big story larger than it is. Last week—can it have been visceral response?—I told an Italian interviewer for La Stampa that in my opinion, Ronald Reagan was the most overrated President America has ever had, and that he was also our second-most ignorant Chief Executive, after which I said: "Guess who is first?"

That is an ungracious response to a former President's death, a man much beloved by half my country, but I do believe in what I said. To begin to explain the ferocity of this opinion, permit me to accelerate

through a good part of our American history over the last four decades.

I promise to do this in three minutes.

Shortly after the Second World War, we entered into a Cold War with Russia. Our religious belief in ourself as a nation encouraged us to be certain that Communism was all evil and we were all good. We could believe nothing less. Our minds were not open to finer distinctions. We lived, after all, with a profound contradiction in ourselves. We were a Christian nation who believed in love. But we were also capitalist. We also believed in the beneficent powers of greed. Inhabiting such opposites was antipathetic to reason. So, we chose to rely on super-simplicities. To repeat: Communism was all evil, and we were all good. Ergo, we had to defeat Communism. Otherwise, being

evil, it would certainly destroy us. Richard Nixon, who had built his early career on this kind of patriotic dogma, was also wily enough, cynical enough, politically skilled enough, and never in the least embarrassed by his past to recognize that in the aftermath of Stalin and Khrushchev, the USSR had begun to decline and was eager to seek for peace. Its economic and social problems had become so ineradicable that everyone in Russia, the Politburo and the people, knew that Communism was not going to conquer the world for ages to come, if ever. The most they could hope for was the possibility that they could refashion their economy if the armaments race ended. Then, perhaps, they could begin to compete economically with America, a faint hope at best, but theirs.

Nixon liked the odds. He had made peace with China. Now, if he could make peace with Soviet Russia, he was bound to go down in history as a great President. To gain that laurel, he was ready to discard American exceptionalism. For a man as politically oriented as Tricky Dick, our good versus their evil was not a belief you had to bleed for, no, it was just another useful tool for a smart public man. So he and Henry Kissinger began preliminary peace talks with Brezhnev. Serious changes were in the air. Then, Watergate came along. We may never know if Watergate was a fluke, or a successful operation originated by American exceptionalists who were damned if Nixon was going to play footsie with the Politburo. Doing it with China had been bad enough, by God. However it came about, Watergate arrived with perfect timing

for the exceptionalists. Watergate proceeded to render Richard Nixon politically impotent. So, there was no peace, no dramatic reduction of the Cold War, and by the time Ronald Reagan came along, the old religion that America is the most exceptional nation on earth was back in full strength. Communism, by Reagan's logic, was not only ruthless and growing in power, but was, indeed, The Evil Empire.

I remember visiting the USSR for the first time in 1984. I came back enraged at my own country. The USSR was more depressed than any land I had ever visited. There was no hope on the faces one saw in the street, and certainly no confidence that their system would ever inherit the world. The gloom was so palpable you could taste it. The so-called Evil Empire was instead the largest and most depressed Third

World nation on the globe. Nonetheless, Reagan chose to intensify the arms race. Promulgating the threat of Star Wars, America entered into a new spending contest with the Russians. At the end of this spree, the U.S. succeeded in bankrupting the Soviet Union. Big money cleaned the smaller stake off the table. We called it winning the Cold War. That magnified our notion that the U.S. was not only the most powerful country in the world but now had a moral duty—or so the Exceptionalists saw it—to run the world. Our vanity was that we were the only ones who knew how to.

Contemplate the fury of these exceptionalists when George Bush, Sr., and Bill Clinton chose not to make such bold and preemptive

moves. How the exceptionalists raged within. We had lost an opportunity to install ourselves as overlords to the world.

This is, I believe, the best explanation for why the Republicans came in good time to choose George W. Bush even if the wisest of them had to know that he could well be the most unqualified candidate ever to run for President. However, the exceptionalists also knew that if you were obliged to characterize half of the population of the United States by one sentence, that sentence might be obliged to declare that we Americans hate any question that takes longer than ten seconds to answer. I repeat: we hate any question that takes longer than ten seconds to answer. I would add that we now have the President we deserve. Thank you. I am ready for your questions.

American Hubris

11:06 - 11:14

~~Speak for Hubris~~
I am going to proceed on the ~~assumption that~~

~~I will be speaking for~~ no more than eight minutes to an

and so }
~~exceptionally intelligent group of people~~

~~that~~ which will leave seven minutes for questions. I

Let us see if I can keep this promise.
Given such parameters, I will

~~will speak with my stopwatch in hand. I will try to~~
restrict myself to assertions
~~that~~ The first is that I love my country,

~~to explain my conception of my country, which I~~

~~love. Let me be the first to say:~~

~~I have loved at its best and this love is selfish.~~

~~I Love America. And this~~

And this love is selfish.

that ~~they~~ its leaders knew that Communism was not going to ~~win~~ the world. (5)
 They wanted to
 exercise the faint possibility that they
 could re-fashion their economy in
 such a manner that it could begin to
 compete with America, a faint hope at
 best, but there it was.

Khrushchev knew the possibility. He had
 made peace with China, knew if they
 could make peace with the USSR, he
 would have to go down in history as one
 of the great Presidents of all time.
 He was ready to discard American
 exceptionalism. Religion too was
 as functionally oriented as true religion
 was, not a belief you had to triumph in
 or kill yourself for, no, it was one
 more useful tool for a smart politician
 no more. So he began preliminary talks
 with Brezhnev. Detente was in the air,
 then Watergate came along. We ~~could~~ ^{may}
 never know if Watergate just moved
 or less happened, was a fluke, or
 whether it was successful operation
 originated by American exceptionalism
 whom damned if we were going to
~~go~~ make peace with those ~~of~~ ^{old} China
 was enough to ~~stop~~ Watergate

Jun. 09 2004 2:01 AM F4

rendered Nelson Mandela. No peace. No
no dramatic resolution of the Cold War
and by the time Ronald Reagan came
along the old religion that America is the
most exceptional nation on earth
was back in full strength. Conservatism,
by Reagan's logic, was ~~unflinching~~
strong, inflexible and evil, was
indeed, The Evil Empire.

I remember visiting the USSR in 1984,
I went as a tourist, and came home
amazed at my own country. The USSR
(at least as far as Moscow and its
proxies and powerfully) was not
the most depressed country I had
ever visited. There was no hope in the
face we saw on the street and in the
no happiness, no confidence that their
system would ever liberate the people.
It was so palpable you could ~~feel~~
~~the~~ ^{the} ~~evil~~. I hated Reagan and was of the
view that the Evil Empire was a hell of a palpable. That
USSR was instead the largest and
most depressed nation in the world
nation that ~~the~~ ^{at the time} Reagan intensified
the arms race. Reagan was a
financial and rather ~~the~~ ^{the} war
like bankrupted the Soviet Union
and thus his bankers' victory was
our nation that the U.S. was not only
the most powerful country in the world

but now had a moral duty - or so (5)
said the Exceptionalists, see it - to, in
this week. Our country was that of
we were the only one who knew how to

Contemplate the rage of these
exceptionalists, which are had not
passed to do just that, but to the
contrary would be held forth,
between international cooperation
and preemptive injection of democracy
à la Kosovo. Now the Exceptionalists
regard that we had lost an opportunity,
to make ourselves as a ~~superior~~ ^{superior} an
overlord to the world.

This is, I believe, the best explanation
for how the Defablicians came to choose
George W. Bush. They knew that if
you were to a marriage ^{for another state} half of the
population of ~~America~~ ^{in one direction},
it would be that we Americans
have any question that takes longer
than ten seconds to answer. I can
~~only~~ add that we now know
the President is ~~decide~~ ^{decide}.

1

American Hubris

~~Double speed~~1-5 (6-9 are unchanged)
und-const

Since a short speech ~~must be~~ which looks
I am going to speak for no more than eight minutes and so leave
 to say as much as a long speech must,

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by saying

Like most selfish love, it is largely
 and self-protective

that I love my country, And this love is selfish. America has accorded

me the incomparable freedom to say what I think, which is one of the

finer

(But have)

finest of all human freedoms. Have I also been appalled by my country?

Yes. Very much so, when it is at its worst, very much so.

It is one I have used in the recent past.

Here, I can offer a metaphor. I would say that America has

become comparable to a handsome, seven-foot giant who weighs 300

pounds, is all muscle, and yet has to be reassured every few minutes that

the odor of his armpits is splendid. It seems we Americans have a

desperate need to love ourselves outrageously, and this has become so compelling a sentiment that I must conclude that the most powerful religion in America is now America itself. We are exceptionalists. At least half of this nation believes that God created America to be exceptional, to be superior to all other earthly alternatives in order for ^{the} U.S. to be able to show others the way. It is a vanity so immense that I will call it hubris, and this American hubris has produced tragic blunders in foreign affairs. If we have had successes like the Marshall Plan, we have also had our ten years in Viet Nam with two million Asians killed as a result, and so little to show for it but our national shame.

FROM : nm

FAX NO. : 5084872135

Jun. 15 2004 05:05PM F3

FROM : JMWORDCRAFT

FAX NO. : 17186243782

Jun. 14 2004 03:54PM P3

3

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That is an ungracious response to a former President's death, a man much beloved by half my country, but I do believe ^{it.} in what I said.

To begin to explain the ^{background to} ~~force~~ of this opinion, permit me to accelerate

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Shortly after the Second World War, we entered into a Cold War with Russia. Our religious belief in ourself as a nation encouraged us to be certain that Communism was all evil and we were all good. We could believe nothing less. Our minds were not open to finer distinctions. We lived, after all, with a profound contradiction in ourselves. We were a Christian nation who believed in love. But we were also capitalist. We also believed in the beneficent powers of greed. Inhabiting such opposites was antipathetic to reason. So, we chose to rely on super-simplicities. To repeat: Communism was all evil and we were all good. Ergo, we had to defeat Communism. Otherwise, being

evil, it would certainly destroy us. Richard Nixon, who had built his early career on this kind of patriotic dogma, was also wily enough, cynical enough, politically skilled enough, and never in the least embarrassed by his past to recognize that in the aftermath of Stalin and Khrushchev, the USSR had begun to decline and was eager to seek for peace. Its economic and social problems had become so ineradicable ^{that} ~~but~~ everyone in Russia, the Politburo and the people, knew ~~that~~ ^{the truth} Communism was not going to conquer the world for ages to come, if ever. The most they could hope for was the possibility that they could refashion their economy if the armaments race ended. Then, perhaps, they could begin to compete economically with America, a faint hope at best, but theirs.

~~slogans and~~ super-simplicities. To repeat:

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Ergo, we had to defeat Communism. ~~Richard~~

Otherwase being

*Evil, it ~~could~~ would ~~destroy us~~ *at least* *certainly destroy us**

(Richard) Nixon, who had built his early career on this

kind
~~variety~~ of patriotic dogma, was also wily

enough, cynical enough, politically skilled

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in the aftermath
his past to recognize that ~~with the death of~~

of) and Khrushchev,
Stalin, the USSR had begun to decline and was

eager to seek for peace. Its economic and social

had become ^{so} inextricable that everyone's
problems were so entrenched that its leaders ~~and~~,
~~in Russia, the Politburo~~ and the people, knew that
~~know~~ (Communism was not going to conquer

~~these leaders~~
~~these Communists~~
the world for ages to come, if ever. ~~They did~~
The most they could hope for was

~~And~~ wish, however, to keep their faith in the faint

the
possibility that they could refashion their

economy if the armaments race ended. Then,

perhaps, they could begin to compete ^{economically,} with

America, a faint hope at best, but theirs.

Nixon liked the ^{odds.} ~~possibility~~. He had made

peace with China. Now, if he could make peace

^{Soviet Russia,} with the ~~USSR~~, he was bound ^{as I expect} ~~at least as he saw~~

↙ ^{a great} ~~it~~, to go down in history as ~~one of the greatest~~

^{To gain that laurels} ~~Presidents of all time~~ So, he was ready to

discard American exceptionalism. ~~Religion, to~~

For
(a man as politically oriented as Tricky Dick, ~~was~~
our good versus their evil was
bleed/ ~~even perish for~~
not a belief you had to fight for, and certainly ~~you~~
~~didn't wish to perish for it~~
~~die for~~
not kill yourself for, no, it was just another ~~most~~

useful tool for a smart public man ~~no more~~

So he and Henry Kissinger began preliminary *peace*
changes were
talks with Brezhnev. Serious ~~détente~~ was in the

air. Then, Watergate came along. We may
never know if Watergate was a fluke, or a

successful operation originated by American

exceptionalists who were damned if Nixon was

going to ^{play footsie} ~~make peace~~ with ^{the Politburo,} ~~those Russian Reds~~

Doing it with) (However, it ^{came about} ~~originated~~)
(China had been ^{bad} enough, by God.) (Watergate ~~came~~
^{arrived} with perfect timing ~~and proceeded~~
for the exceptionalists. Watergate ~~proceeded~~
to render ~~Richard~~ Richard Nixon politically impotent.

So, there was no peace, no dramatic reduction of

the Cold War, and by the time Ronald Reagan

came along, the old religion that America is the

most exceptional nation on earth was back in

ⁱⁿ full strength. Communism, by Reagan's logic,
^{ruthless and}
~~strong and~~ ^{growing in power,}
was not only ~~strong and implacable,~~ but was,

indeed, The Evil Empire.

^(for the first time)
I remember visiting the USSR in 1984. ~~I~~

~~but I~~ ^{I came}
~~went as a tourist, and came back~~ enraged at my

~~own~~ country. The USSR ~~(at least as seen in)~~

~~Moscow~~ ^{land} was more depressed than any country

I had ever visited. There was no hopeⁱⁿ on the

faces one saw in the street, and certainly ~~no~~

~~happiness~~ no confidence that their system

would ever inherit the world. The gloom was so

The so-called
palpable you could taste it. I ~~hated~~ how Reagan[?]
~~had been able to put-foot it~~
~~politically with his catch-phrases~~
~~The Evil Empire was~~
~~galloped along with The Evil Empire as a sure~~
Evil Empire was)

~~fire catch-phrase. For the USSR was no longer a~~
~~much of an Empire.)~~
had become
longer

threat. It was instead the largest and most
depressed Third World nation
on the globe. Nonetheless Reagan
chose to intensify the arms race,

depressed Third World nation in the world. ~~All~~
~~You could sense it everywhere. They~~
~~were no longer a threat. A~~
~~(Chose to intensify)~~
 the same, Reagan intensified the arms race, and

→ Promulgating the threat of Star
 wars, ~~a new arms race~~ ^{spending contest}
 America entered into a financial contest ~~At the~~
 with the Russians. At the

~~this mutual~~ ~~at this~~
 end of the spending spree that is a mutual arms

end of this) ~~mutual spending spree~~

~~spree~~ ^{succeeded in bankrupting,}
 race, the U.S. had bankrupted the Soviet Union (stake

Big money cleaned the small-
~~cleaning of the table~~
~~take over~~

and this big banker's victory magnified our
~~money~~ off the table. We called
 it winning the Cold War. That
 magnified our
 notion that the U.S. was not only the most

powerful country in the world but now had a

moral duty—or so the Exceptionalists saw it—

to run the world. Our vanity was that we were

~~And of course,~~
the only ones who knew how to, ~~and God~~
~~himself. They were positive forces for~~
~~total agreement on our side.~~

Contemplate the fury of these exceptionalists
~~and~~ when George Bush, Senior, and Bill
~~Clinton did not choose to make~~
~~Clinton chose not to make~~
exceptionalists when we did not proceed to do
such bold and preemptive moves.
How the exceptionalists
just that. ~~How they~~ raged within. ~~We had lost~~
As they saw it, we had lost a
~~fabulous~~
an opportunity to install ourselves as overlords

to the world.

This is, I believe, the best explanation for

why
~~how~~ the Republicans came *(in good time)* to choose George W. Bush even if the wisest of them had to know that he could well be the most unqualified candidate ever to ~~Bush~~. They know that if you were obliged to run for President. However, the exceptionalist also knew that if you were obliged to ~~test~~ characterize half of the population of the United

States *by* in one sentence, *that sentence might be* ~~it would be that we~~ *obliged* ~~have to~~ declare that we

(Americans hate any question that takes longer than ten seconds to answer. I repeat: we hate any question that takes longer than ten seconds to answer. I ~~can~~ *would* only add that

we now have the President we deserve. Thank you.
I am ready for your questions.