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**Ronald Reagan: Hero or Villain?**

**By Arthur Zulu**

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D-e-a-t-h. The mention of that five-letter word instills fear into many. Only a few mortals could dare death like the poet John Donne. When his beloved brother died, he wrote death these damning lines: Death do not be proud/ Though some have called thee mighty and dreadful/ But thou art not so/ Nor yet canst thou kill me/ and Death shall be no more/ Death thou shalt die.

The poet was audacious. However, one year after writing his poem, Death killed John Donne. So, "Pale Death, with impartial step, knocks at the poor man's cottage and the palaces of kings" says Horace. Because man likes deceiving himself and because man does not want to think that he ever dies, he has crafted euphemisms to describe death. Like kicking the bucket. Going to the great beyond. Answering the call to glory.

So Ronald Reagan has joined his ancestors (to use another euphemism). And encomiums are pouring in. One of such is from George Bush: "Reagan is a hero. He brought peace to the world." It is good to say kind things about the dead, so that when we die, the living will say good things about us too. Everyone wants to be remembered at death for his virtues, not his vices. It was for this reason that Solomon, the wise man said: "A good name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one's birth."

Other graveside orators in some settings have however tried to strike balance. Consider Mark Antony's funeral discourse for Julius Caesar; "Friends, Romans lend me your ears. . . I have come to bury Caesar, not to praise him. . . The evil that men do lives after them. So let it be with Caesar." You may give the speech any interpretation that suits you. Meanwhile, let us exit the Shakespearean stage and enter the real world.

I am suffering from memory lapse these days. Who started the star wars program? What about the telepathic guided missiles initiative? Who befriended Saddam Hussein and trained Osama bin Laden? Who tolerated Botha and Mugabe? I cannot remember exactly. All I can ell is that during Reagan's regime, it seemed that the world would go up in flames the next moment. Leaders of rogue states wet their undies. Ask Muammar Ghadaffi. Or is it Momar Qadaffi? Gorbachev, yes, I mean the gentleman

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from Russia saw Roman Catholic hell fire.' And the freedom fighters, no, I want a better world. Terrorists yes, the terrorists ran into caves.

But this compliment about Reagan bringing peace to the world is what I do not understand. Is this the new world order? Hear William Pfaff: "The new world order has arrived. It is well and truly new, consecrating invasion, aggression and ethnic purge as acceptable international conduct." In the words of Dr. Walker Percy, we have been in "a state of suspended animation" since World War I. It is no wonder that Helmut Schmidt, former German Chancellor said, "we have never governed [the world] in total peace."

Now, the threat of a nuclear Armageddon' is more imminent. (The Doomsday clock is getting closer to midnight.) The once frightened terrorists' are out from their hideouts and are plotting the end of the

world. And despite two prayers for peace at Assisi Italy (never mind the pope and his prayerful multitudes), twelve wars are going on around the world this hour. It is for this reason that The Daily Yomiuri' says that "the balance between peace and war is becoming ever more precarious."

But it seems that all of us drank the waters of River Lethe and suddenly forgot the past. Hear this earlier statement of George Bush: "The new world could, in time be as menacing as the old." Where then is the peace that Reagan brought to the world? Contradiction most foul! I did not however forget everything when I drank that water of oblivion. Because I know that there is no peace in the world but pieces of peace. (No pun intended.)

I could dare any living man the poison of my pen. But not the dead. Because I do not want a poor poet who does not know his lines to indite an inglorious epitaph on my tombstone when I too pass to the great beyond. (I want to write a book titled "The Praise Singers.") What amazes me however is the transience of power and the vanity of life. Today a great ruler is ordering the sacking of a sovereign nation, and the next day he is gone. Like a mist. Or sparrow.

Here I am reminded of the great king, Oxymandias, who ruled a mighty empire. The mention of his name made his subjects and people of surrounding lands shiver. In order to affirm his supremacy on minions, King Oxymandias had his great statute erected on a busy trade route for all passersby and posted these words below: "This is Oxymandias. Lord of lords and king of kings." So, lily-livered men would pass and gaze in awe at the gigantic image of Oxymandias from a safe distance. But after many years, the mighty king answered the call to glory and his great image collapsed from the effect of the elements leaving only a pair of impotent legs. When lesser mortals who had dreaded this image passed along the road, they now ventured close and mocked at the pair of legs above the inscription that reads: "This is Oxymandias. Lord of lords and king of kings."

But accursed is he that mocks the dead. Because death is tolling his unwelcome bell at his door. The American humorist Mark Twain said it all: "In this world nothing is certain than death and taxes." The good thing about death is that the dead pays no tax. (Sorry, some Church priests tax the dead.)

So the best thing about dying is that the dead is free from terrorist attacks. If therefore Ronald Reagan waged war against violence (or was violent) because he feared the evil when he was alive, he does not need to worry about terror anymore. As to whether he was a hero or villain, leave Historyor

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Posterity to judge. The words of American statesman, Patrick Henry, however make me uncomfortable. He said: "I know not of a better way to judge the future than by the present." So is the world peaceful today? Or is it still at war?

I am not a composer of verses. But I venture these lines for the former president:

Sleep well the great communicator  
Sleep well lord of lords and king of kings  
My dear cowboy, sleep well  
Our beloved Ronnie Reagan, sleep well

ARTHUR ZULU, an editor and book reviewer, is the author of the controversial book, CHASING SHADOWS! (A book that reveals the terrorists' master plan to finally set the world on fire!)

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## THE HERO IN YOU

By Onaefe Umenu Edebi

So much we look up to higher places for help and encouragement. We all want someone who comes to us when we fall, when we are down. Someone to hold on to. But this hero is not always there, and as a thought "an angel has broken my heart".

But there's a hero, who's always there in joy, sadness, laughter and pain. Always there, he comes through for me. It's funny, when within me, I say "I don't see my hero", because though I may not see Him, I know He is there. Like an angel, He watches over me.

But you know what? We all have that hero. He is available to all of us – including you. We see Him, on the dawn of each new day; when we look through the image in the mirror. Even at night when we lay our head to sleep, our hero is always there; forgetting the past, concentrating on the present and seeing a bright future.

It's really simple.

"The Hero Lies in You"

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