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(Parvin-9/21/87))

MRS. REAGAN: VOA WORKSHOP  
SEPTEMBER 24, 1987

Thank you, Charlie. I'm very pleased for the chance to speak to such an influential audience--the journalists from around the world who are participating in this workshop on drugs.

I believe that of all the weapons we have in the battle against drugs, truth is the most powerful.

You, as journalists, have the power to tell that truth.

You have the power to reach people.

You have the power to protect our young people from a terrible fate.

Now I know that the journalist's job is not to advance a cause, no matter how good and right that cause may be. So I'm not asking you to undertake a crusade. I'm not asking you to spread propaganda. I'm simply asking you to do what you do best--report. You can save lives by simply covering the drug story--I don't mean just the arrests and the seizures, I mean covering the drama and damage that drugs do to individuals and to society and to the values and pillars of civilization.

There are riveting, compelling human stories, stories of lives ruined by drugs, that will never make headlines. Yet what drugs are doing to the fabric of our countries is a

headline. Drugs are a more immediate threat to our people than nuclear war. Drugs are more destructive to the foundations of our societies than earthquakes or floods.

As journalists, you can bring to your readers or listeners or viewers an understanding about drugs. And that is what so many people need--they need to understand just how harmful drugs can be. They need to know the perils. They need to know the extent to which drugs have infiltrated our way of life.

Although they're now an ally in the fight against drug abuse, for ~~too~~ many years, <sup>too many of us, including the U.S. media</sup> the U.S. media ignored it. They would report on the drug busts and the drug smuggling, but they didn't focus on what was happening to the people those drugs were intended to reach. They didn't accept the miseries and dangers our young people were facing. I think they now realize the frightening story that is there and that's continuing, and they realize they have a very real role to play in educating this country.

To help you play that role in your country, the Voice of America has developed these workshops, which bring together those who know the truth about drugs with those who can spread the truth. The Voice is helping to create a network of journalists well-informed on the drug issue, well-connected to the leading authorities on the subject, and committed to telling the facts about the drug menace.

We now have more than thirty senior journalists around the world who can write and broadcast with authority on the dangers of drugs to society.

I hope you can educate your countries more quickly than we educated our's. For many years, we didn't know what was happening to our young people. We didn't want to admit to ourselves that we had a problem. And by the time we learned what was going on, well, for too many young people it was too late. We were facing an epidemic, and we still are. I hope your countries can be spared the same fate.

I was delighted to hear that you're already sending stories back home. I hope the stories and the commitment will continue long after you leave.

Finally, as I see you here today, I see you not only as journalists, but as individuals. So I have a personal plea to you that has nothing to do with your profession. I hope you'll apply what you've learned at this workshop to protect those you love, because drugs strike the families of journalists just as surely as they strike other families. No family is immune.

So, in closing just let me say, I urge you to get the truth out--to your families and to your fellow countrymen. Thank you.

REMARKS FOR VOICE OF AMERICA WORKSHOP  
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 1987

-- THANK YOU, CHARLIE. I'M VERY PLEASED FOR THE CHANCE TO SPEAK TO SUCH AN INFLUENTIAL AUDIENCE -- THE JOURNALISTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD WHO ARE PARTICIPATING IN THIS WORKSHOP ON DRUGS.

-- I BELIEVE THAT OF ALL THE WEAPONS WE HAVE IN THE BATTLE AGAINST DRUGS, TRUTH IS THE MOST POWERFUL.

-- YOU, AS JOURNALISTS, HAVE THE POWER TO TELL THAT TRUTH.

-- YOU HAVE THE POWER TO REACH PEOPLE.

-- YOU HAVE THE POWER TO PROTECT OUR YOUNG PEOPLE FROM A

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TERRIBLE FATE.

-- NOW I KNOW THAT THE JOURNALIST'S JOB IS NOT TO ADVANCE A CAUSE, NO MATTER HOW GOOD AND RIGHT THAT CAUSE MAY BE. SO I'M NOT ASKING YOU TO UNDERTAKE A CRUSADE. I'M NOT ASKING YOU TO SPREAD PROPAGANDA. I'M SIMPLY ASKING YOU TO DO WHAT YOU DO BEST -- REPORT. YOU CAN SAVE LIVES BY SIMPLY COVERING THE DRUG STORY -- I DON'T MEAN JUST THE ARRESTS AND THE SEIZURES, I MEAN COVERING THE DRAMA AND DAMAGE THAT DRUGS DO TO INDIVIDUALS AND TO SOCIETY AND TO THE

VALUES AND PILLARS OF CIVILIZATION.

-- THERE ARE RIVETING, COMPELLING HUMAN STORIES, STORIES OF LIVES RUINED BY DRUGS, THAT WILL NEVER MAKE HEADLINES. YET WHAT DRUGS ARE DOING TO THE FABRIC OF OUR COUNTRIES IS A HEADLINE. DRUGS ARE A MORE IMMEDIATE THREAT TO OUR PEOPLE THAN NUCLEAR WAR. DRUGS ARE MORE DESTRUCTIVE TO THE FOUNDATIONS OF OUR SOCIETIES THAN EARTHQUAKES OR FLOODS.

-- AS JOURNALISTS, YOU CAN BRING TO YOUR READERS OR LISTENERS

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OR VIEWERS AN UNDERSTANDING ABOUT DRUGS. AND THAT IS WHAT SO MANY PEOPLE NEED -- THEY NEED TO UNDERSTAND JUST HOW HARMFUL DRUGS CAN BE. THEY NEED TO KNOW THE PERILS. THEY NEED TO KNOW THE EXTENT TO WHICH DRUGS HAVE INFILTRATED OUR WAY OF LIFE.

-- ALTHOUGH THEY'RE NOW AN ALLY IN THE FIGHT AGAINST DRUG ABUSE, FOR MANY YEARS, TOO MANY OF US, INCLUDING THE U.S. MEDIA, IGNORED IT. THEY WOULD REPORT ON THE DRUG BUSTS AND THE DRUG SMUGGLING, BUT THEY DIDN'T FOCUS ON WHAT WAS HAPPENING TO THE PEOPLE THOSE DRUGS WERE

INTENDED TO REACH. THEY DIDN'T ACCEPT THE MISERIES AND DANGERS OUR YOUNG PEOPLE WERE FACING. I THINK THEY NOW REALIZE THE FRIGHTENING STORY THAT IS THERE AND THAT'S CONTINUING, AND THEY REALIZE THEY HAVE A VERY REAL ROLE TO PLAY IN EDUCATING THIS COUNTRY.

-- TO HELP YOU PLAY THAT ROLE IN YOUR COUNTRY, THE VOICE OF AMERICA HAS DEVELOPED THESE WORKSHOPS, WHICH BRING TOGETHER THOSE WHO KNOW THE TRUTH ABOUT DRUGS WITH THOSE WHO CAN SPREAD THE TRUTH. THE VOICE IS HELPING TO CREATE A NETWORK OF JOURNALISTS

WELL-INFORMED ON THE DRUG ISSUE, WELL-CONNECTED TO THE LEADING AUTHORITIES ON THE SUBJECT, AND COMMITTED TO TELLING THE FACTS ABOUT THE DRUG MENACE. WE NOW HAVE MORE THAN THIRTY SENIOR JOURNALISTS AROUND THE WORLD WHO CAN WRITE AND BROADCAST WITH AUTHORITY ON THE DANGERS OF DRUGS TO SOCIETY.

-- I HOPE YOU CAN EDUCATE YOUR COUNTRIES MORE QUICKLY THAN WE EDUCATED OUR'S. FOR MANY YEARS, WE DIDN'T KNOW WHAT WAS HAPPENING TO OUR YOUNG PEOPLE. WE DIDN'T WANT TO ADMIT TO OURSELVES THAT WE

HAD A PROBLEM. AND BY THE TIME WE LEARNED WHAT WAS GOING ON, WELL, FOR TOO MANY YOUNG PEOPLE IT WAS TOO LATE. WE WERE FACING AN EPIDEMIC, AND WE STILL ARE. I HOPE YOUR COUNTRIES CAN BE SPARED THE SAME FATE.

-- I WAS DELIGHTED TO HEAR THAT YOU'RE ALREADY SENDING STORIES BACK HOME. I HOPE THE STORIES AND THE COMMITMENT WILL CONTINUE LONG AFTER YOU LEAVE.

-- FINALLY, AS I SEE YOU HERE TODAY, I SEE YOU NOT ONLY AS

JOURNALISTS, BUT AS INDIVIDUALS. SO I HAVE A PERSONAL PLEA TO YOU THAT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH YOUR PROFESSION. I HOPE YOU'LL APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED AT THIS WORKSHOP TO PROTECT THOSE YOU LOVE, BECAUSE DRUGS STRIKE THE FAMILIES OF JOURNALISTS JUST AS SURELY AS THEY STRIKE OTHER FAMILIES. NO FAMILY IS IMMUNE.

-- SO, IN CLOSING JUST LET ME SAY, I URGE YOU TO GET THE TRUTH OUT -- TO YOUR FAMILIES AND TO YOUR FELLOW COUNTRYMEN. THANK YOU.

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