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December 7, 1983

The Editor, News-Post

Based on my experience as a Latin American expert in intelligence in World War II, I want to add to Professor Harry Prongas' excellent and thorough analysis of the shameful evil of what President Reagan did in Grenada. He has actually accomplished the exact opposite of what he says he set out to do, regardless of what he and those who support his unconscionable attack on one of the smallest, weakest and poorest countries of the world say now. There is no stratum of Latin American society that will forgive or forget this cruel, crude and harsh practice of what for generations Latin American Communists and others have condemned as "Yanqui imperialism." It is not the poor alone who see it this way. It is all except perhaps a few who were happy with Hitler.

It is not possible to describe Latin American poverty in terms the average American can understand. To a large degree the United States is responsible for much of their suffering today because, if usually with less than Reagan's dishonesty, our governments have forced on and supported in those troubled lands a series of repressive and murderous military dictatorships, first for selfish economic reasons and more recently because they are supposedly anti-Communist. (As was Hitler, as was Mussolini.)

After two generations Nicaragua finally kicked out the long-lasting, U.S.-established and protected Samoza dictatorship. Our Marines put the first Samoza in, and when I was in grade school I was taught that the Nicaraguans who opposed this imposed dictatorship were "bandits." Those who got rid of the Hitlerian Samozas call themselves "Sandinistas" after the man who led that unsuccessful effort, the first resistance to the Samozas. Sandino was to them a George Washington. Captured Italian foreign office records that passed through my hands include the request of the Samoza of four decades ago that Il Duce take a few minutes to teach him Il Duce's way. Who can blame the Nicaraguans for throwing out those evil men who also robbed the country of most of its wealth? Now Reagan actually organized and finances the military operations against them using Samoza remnants that he has all of us paying for (with the money he takes from the elderly and poorest of us).

Most of the leaders of the many Latin American military dictatorships were trained and indoctrinated by our military. It is impossible to find any Latin American land that has not been impoverished by the wealth taken out by foreign corporations or their own wealthier people, leaving each country with inadequate capital. There are few Latin Americans too uneducated or too unsophisticated to understand this gut truth. It controls their lives.

The more repressive the regime the more popular it is with paranoids like Reagan who regard anti-Communism as the only measure of any government. All the military dictatorships meet his standard. The world is not quite this simple and the cost is too great, aside from our lost self-respect and the decent

concern of mankind. This paranoia, in the end, serves Communist, not anti-Communist, interests. Those who drive out those who oppress them get help only from the left; and when the United States makes itself their enemy, they turn elsewhere for friends. The Reagans give them no choice.

If you give impoverished, oppressed people the choice between the oppression they know and anything else, there is no alternative they will not choose over their oppression.

In the end, Reagan will have been the most effective recruiter for the Communists, especially in Latin America. He has already undone the limited good accomplished in varying degrees by all administrations beginning with Franklin D. Roosevelt and his "good neighbor" policy.

If any of Professor Prongas' students has free time and an interest in research, I suggest two projects. One is to collect all the administration statements relating to Grenada and all that came to light after the news could no longer be controlled and suppressed. I am confident that this will show that Reagan and all administration spokesmen never once told the truth and that all their allegations will be shown to be lies to serve improper political ends. A second project is to check standard press sources, like the New York Times and the Washington Post, and count the Americans murdered by the dictatorships the United States government supports. Even for a limited period of five years the results will be astounding. It will also show that none one of these bloody regimes for which the United States in varying degrees is responsible was punished in any way or lost a penny of the largess of the United States taxpayers that keeps them in power.

Reagan and his like-minded are dominated by fear, have shamed us all in perpetuity and haven't the slightest notion of how to be effectively anti-Communist. Their acts help the Soviet Union.

Unlike the News-Post, which does not impose political preconceptions or its own point of view on what it prints, for which it cannot be praised too highly, in these times of great crises the major papers just fall in line behind the government until it is too late for truth to be effective. Then, to a degree, they cover their abdications by limited, belated publication of some of the truth. By then the harm is done and beyond immediate remedy.


Harold Weisberg

Letters to the editor—the readers write

'Gunboat diplomacy'—Reagan style

According to President Reagan, the invasion of Grenada was America's finest hour. A good bet is that history will judge it as one of America's foulest hours.

In human terms, it resulted in the totally needless loss of at least 300 lives. In addition, the invasion reflected international lawlessness at its worst, it called into serious question the fitness of the United States to lead the free world in peace, it did violence to the Constitution, it earned the scorn of even our closest friends abroad as well as the condemnation of the United Nations, and it provided the Soviet Union with a propaganda windfall. Even more, it exposed President Reagan's capacity for deceit. Collectively, the episode just about boxed the compass of everything that is unworthy of a great nation. In particular, a great nation with rule of law and moral pretensions.

America, in sharp contrast to Russia, has never accepted the proposition that might makes right in international affairs. Traditionally, it has been committed to the rule of law, not the law of the jungle. It is umbelically tied to our heritage.

The world is used to seeing the Soviet Union throw its might around whenever it thinks it must or whenever it feels that it can get away with it. The United States, on the other hand, could generally be counted to exercise restraint and moderation even when greatly provoked. In the eyes of the world community, we could be relied on to protect an international order in which the weak nations could feel safe.

If the United Nations reflects world opinion at all, the Grenada invasion has shattered America's image as a law abiding nation. The General Assembly of this body condemned the invasion by a vote of 108 to nine. Even our closest allies in Europe, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East gave us thumbs down on this one. Only Israel, El Salvador, and six Caribbean countries that participated in the invasion supported us. By way of comparison, when Russia occupied Afghanistan in 1979, the U.N. General Assembly denounced it by a vote of 104 to eighteen.

There is not a scintilla of doubt that by invading Grenada the United States violated a host of international laws. In specifics, the non-intervention principals of the United Nations Charter, the Charter of the Organization of American States, and the Rio Treaty of 1947. The United States is not only bound by these conventions, it was the primary architect. The Organization of American States Charter, for example, declares: "No State or group of states has the right to intervene directly or indirectly, for any reason in the internal affairs of any other state, whether by armed force or otherwise."

Indeed, Reagan himself invoked the

Rio Treaty provisions in denouncing Argentina for invading the Falklands. What is more, his justification for trying to destroy the government of Nicaragua is that the Sandinistas are violating the OAS Charter by interfering in the affairs of El Salvador.

By invading Grenada, we abandoned the high moral ground the Soviet Union had granted us following the occupation of Afghanistan and the destruction of Flight 007. Our hands now also have blood on them. As Willy Brandt, former Chancellor of West Germany observed, after Grenada American criticism of the Russians loses credibility.

Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher of Britain, Reagan's closest European ideological soulmate, echoed Brandt's sentiments. The Western democracies, she said, do not march in and change governments of other countries just because these governments are bad. To do so, would be to establish our own Brezhnev Doctrine.

The invasion, furthermore, has revived world fears that Reagan is a belligerent and trigger-happy cowboy. Those Europeans who regard American missiles less as protection than a threat to their security, now feel that their anxieties have been validated.

Two friends and foes alike, the Grenada episode has demonstrated that the United States has no more respect for laws and borders, and for codes of civilization than the Soviet Union. In their judgment, we both belong in the same swamp.

Because the White House was engaged in grand scale deception, it had a difficult time keeping its stories straight. At times it seemed that it had invaded Grenada to seek evidence that would justify the invasion. The bottom line is that Reagan had been long spoiling for a fight and Grenada, a flyspeck island with a population that would just about fill a football stadium, was an easy target.

When the invasion was announced Oct. 25, it was called a "rescue mission." The paramount purpose and single minded goal, Reagan said, was to rescue the American medical students on the Island. Later events, however, revealed that the students had been in no danger. The Sunday before the invasion, Kenneth Kurze, a state department representative stationed in the Caribbean, returned from Grenada after a visit with the students and said: "We have not recommended that they leave." Even more, the government of Grenada had offered to arrange charter flights for all Americans that wanted to return home.

That same evening, Oct. 23, when Secretary of State Schultz announced that the president was so distraught by the threat to the students that he made tentative arrangements to intervene, the parents of more than 500 of these students, meeting in New York, were

assured by their children of their safety. They were also given assurances by the Grenada authorities. With this, the parents sent a telegram to Reagan imploring him not to take any precipitous or provocative action.

The Grand Anse campus of the American Medical School, furthermore, was a mere 20 meters from the beach. If the Invasion involved only a rescue, then it is not unreasonable to ask why it took our armed forces three days to reach the campus.

Americans lives were in danger indeed but only after the shooting started. We were most fortunate that they took no casualties. It could have been a bloodbath. And if the invasion was only to rescue the students, why are we still there? And why are we making plans for a long occupation?

Subsequently, as further justification, the White House claimed that Grenada posed a threat to the other Eastern Caribbean states and that their governments had pleaded with us to intervene. This turned out to be no more of a replay of the Russian invasion of Afghanistan. Moscow too claimed at the time that it had been invited. We have since learned that this request for intervention on the part of Eastern Caribbean states was incubated in Washington, and the very wording of the request was drafted by the state department.

Grenada had no means of threatening any of its neighbors even if it was disposed to do so. It had no navy, no army, no airforce, and no amphibious or airlift capabilities. Even if the situation had been otherwise, there were other alternatives we could have implemented short of an invasion. A naval blockade for example.

Also, this explanation would carry more credibility if President Reagan responded with equal alacrity to the appeals of the Central American Contadora democracies, led by Mexico, to join them in reaching an equitable and peaceful resolution in El Salvador and Nicaragua. He has not done so because the sort of settlement they have in mind is not what Reagan wants.

The explanation that we were invited to intervene by the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States should be dispised for what it is. The Organization is made up of eight members, and the United States is not one of them but Grenada is. More to the point, it deals with collective security against external aggression, and stipulates clearly that all decisions taken by the Organization should be unanimous. Three member states did not vote. And two of the Caribbean countries that participated in the invasion were not even members of the Organization. So much for legality.

Much more fundamental, what right

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does a small group of states have to request a great power to intervene in the internal affairs of a neighbor whose government they do not happen to like. As the U.N. ambassador of Guyana, whose country is a close neighbor of Grenada observed, "when states arrogate to themselves the right to seek to destroy the government of those states whose policies they find disagreeable, then who among us can feel safe." It's sure road to international anarchy if the Grenada invasion sets a precedent.

Another reason for the invasion given by President Reagan was the murder of Prime Minister Maurice Bishop. If not the most cynical, this is certainly the most squalid and most obscene. Via diplomatic and private initiative, Bishop had made several efforts over the past two years to open a dialogue with the Reagan administration. All to no avail. In desperation, he came to Washington this past summer but neither Reagan nor Secretary of State Schultz would consent to talk to him. On the contrary, they viewed Bishop's efforts as proof that their policy of hostility, mingled with periodic threats of an invasion, was working. "We have him running scared and that is our policy."

We have also learned since the invasion that the state department began exploring the possibility of military action against Grenada with several Caribbean states at least as early as October 15, four days before Bishop was murdered. By scorning Bishop, he was not only pushed into further Cuban dependence, but it may have cost him his life as well.

As for the airport, a project over which Reagan made a big issue, The Grenada government had insisted right along that it was intended only to permit jets to land on the Island for the first time and hence boost tourism. The British government was helping with the financing and had seen nothing sinister in the project. Several other Western European countries also contributed funds. And an English firm was the prime contractor. Another English firm supplied telecommunications and radar equipment. The airport had no provisions for facilities found on bases for warplanes, such as, protected fuel dumps and hardened plane shelters.

Even the most conservative and pro-American businessmen the congressional investigating committee met in Grenada supported the airport as essential to the country's economy.

Actually, Castro has no need for military airfields in Grenada. He can operate planes out of Cuba with much greater facility and less distance.

President Reagan also claimed that Cuba and the Soviet Union were on the verge of turning Grenada into a massive forward outpost for the spread of ter-

rorism in the Caribbean. We got there in the nick of time he declared. But up to the very eve of the invasion, there had been no sign or evidence of such a build-up, and none had been mentioned by the Administration. Nor was there anything found in the captured documents to support such a conclusion. Realistically, Grenada could serve no useful purpose as a transshipment point for arms or as a military base. Cuba itself is much more suitable for either such purpose. The huge Cuban-Russian arsenal that

Reagan headlined turned out to be mostly rifles and machine guns. And some of the rifles were of World War I vintage. Having been spurned by Washington, and fearing invasion, Prime Minister Bishop had turned to Havana for arms to create a people's militia. There was nothing found in the captured documents to even suggest that the military preparation of Grenada was anything but defensive in character. There were no provisions for Grenada to be supplied with amphibious or airlift equipment. And as one commentator on the islands, who was to have worn the 12,000 uniforms called for in the agreement? Terrorists do not normally wear uniforms, militia units do.

Furthermore, if the United States presumes the right to invade nearby states whose forces are equipped with Russian weapons, would not the Soviet Union have the same right to invade such neighbors as Turkey, Greece, Pakistan, Japan and South Korea? They all bristle with American arms, and not with just rifles and machine guns.

Still another explanation given for the invasion was that the Grenada government was made up of "leftist thugs." Those who assumed power following the murder of Bishop were indeed thugs, and their departure from the scene is not at all to be lamented.

More people would take this justification more seriously if Reagan was not so selective. The area is full of even more ugly thugs such as the ones who rule nearby Haiti, Guatemala, El Salvador and Chile, to mention only a few. Especially El Salvador, where, according to Amnesty International, the thugs that rule have murdered 37,000 civilians in the past four years. About one-third of the population of Grenada. One will wait in vain, however, for Reagan to liberate these countries. These thugs, however corrupt and bloody they may be, they are Reagan's kind of people because they fly the anti-Communist banner. This is vintage Reagan double standard, and the sort of foreign policy that is making the world safe not for democracy but for hypocrisy.

"We blew them away," boasted the admiral commanding the invasion. And in soaring rhetoric, Reagan trumpeted

the invasion as a glorious test in arms. Some glory and some deed. Seven thousand highly trained marines, rangers and paratroopers, backed by a powerful fleet launching airstrikes, pitted against an untrained and poorly armed melt-away militia of about 1,000 Grenadians plus a few hundred Cuban construction workers with some military training. Clark Clifford, former Secretary of Defense, more accurately described it as a game between the Redskins and the Sisters of the Poor.

If it were not so tragic, and if the times were less perilous, it would provide prime material for a Jerry Lewis or Peter Sellers movie. The trouble with this sort of public relations hyperbole is that it demeans the truly heroic deeds of American arms. Are we to place the invasion of Grenada on a par with landings on Anzio, Normandy or Okinawa?

The danger with Reagan's foreign policy is his tendency to look at the world standing on his head. The premises upon which it is based more properly belong on the fiction shelf.

In the peasant revolutions in Central America, in the fighting between Jews

and Arabs, Christians and Moslems, in North Africa, and in unstable countries such as the Philippines, he sees the footprints of Russian dragons and a flash-point of East-West confrontation. This is not only oversimplistic nonsense, but also attributes to the Soviets a cunning and sophistication that is just not there.

The peasants of Central America are rebelling against generations of injustice, exploitation and grinding poverty. Such rebellions would be going on even if Cuba and Castro did not exist. Animosities and bloodletting over religion in the Middle East are woven into the history of the region. They would be there even if Karl Marx was never born.

Since in Reagan's reasoning the Soviets are responsible for all of the evils that torture the contemporary world, it makes it futile if not downright dangerous to negotiate with them. Consequently, he has crafted no policy for dealing with them other than name calling. It is this frame of reference that has friends and foes alike abroad sitting at the edge of their seats. For if the United States and the Soviet Union cannot resolve their problems via diplomacy, then the only remaining option is force. So the nuclear arms race goes on and the world edges ever closer to Armageddon.

The invasion of Grenada illustrates the point with eloquence. If the President had problems with Grenada, he had ample opportunity to attempt to resolve them via diplomacy, when, as already noted, Prime Minister Bishop was in Washington begging to negotiate. Instead, military action became the first and not the last resort.

Our President has yet to learn that being a great power is a responsibility. It

is not just an opportunity to twist arms, especially those of small countries who cannot fight back. Military force should be the last resort in settling international disputes. The benchmark of a great power is not whether it has the will to use its power, but the wisdom and patience to avoid having to use it.

We can only pray that Reagan, intoxicated by the success in Grenada, will not come to believe that military force can be equally effective in Lebanon and Central America. In Lebanon, he will be flirting with World War III. And if he involves American troops directly in El Salvador or Nicaragua, the casualties could well match those of Vietnam.

Disturbing too is the revelation that most Americans know so little about what constitutional government is all about, and even less about the role of a free press under such a government. We all celebrate the Constitution and the Bill of Rights in the abstract but few of us are prepared to give them meaning in the flesh.

Precisely, constitutional government means that our basic document is the supreme law of the land. There is no legal or legitimate authority higher than the Constitution. No one, not even the president, is exempt from its restraints. Indeed, it is the president who is bound by solemn oath to obey and to protect it.

There is no blinking the fact that President Reagan violated the laws of the land when he ordered the invasion of Grenada without consulting Congress. Yet instead of reacting with outrage to this transgression, most Americans cheered him. And the cheers became

tagion. We heard only what the government wanted us to hear.

What was there to hide? We were told of thousands of Cuban troops, massive Soviet arsenals, mass graves, and that there were no civilian casualties. When reporters were finally permitted on the Island, all these stories were sharply contradicted. There had indeed been civilian casualties, such as the bombing of an asylum. And the thousands of Cuban troops turned out to number about 200, and they were there to train the Grenada militia. No mass graves existed. And, as noted earlier, the weapons found were mostly rifles and machine guns.

Warts and all, and there are plenty of warts, a free press is indispensable to a free society such as ours. To paraphrase Thomas Jefferson, it is the citadel against despotism. The Founding Fathers understood this verity so well that they guaranteed it in the very first amendment to the Constitution. Were it not for a free press, for example, we would have never known about the crimes of the Nixon administration.

As David Broder of *The Washington Post* observed, a censored press gives the government control over the minds of its citizens. That is a power no government of a democracy should have.

is not communism but the people who cannot trust their government to tell them the truth. In a dictatorship rule is based on fear. In a democracy it is based on faith. Faith in the government to do the right thing. When that faith is dissipated, then democracy is in deep trouble.

According to the American Civil Liberties Union, the Reagan administration poses the gravest threat to our civil rights and civil liberties since the Civil War. The entire Grenada episode can only provide more substance to this indictment.

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