

January 5, 1987

The Editor
Frederick News-Post
Frederick, MD 21701

Dear Editor:

How fortunate are we yokels to have your self-depicted Omniscience in Residence, Roy Meachum, to give us his unique understanding of complicated political affairs, foreign and domestic, to teach us that up is down, black is white, in is out. And with his usual modesty, so lucidly expressed in his saying that "Lord Acton was wrong" - without repeating what Lord Acton said. It is, after all, merely one of the most enduring and widely believed wise sayings of the ages, and how can its universal acceptance and confirmation by so much of man's most painful experiences begin to compare with the simplistic ideas that pop in and out of the murk of Meachum's mind, in from nowhere and out in your pages?

"Power corrupts; absolute power corrupts absolutely," what Lord Acton said, is what Meachum says is wrong; and fear that it might be lost is more corrupting than having and wielding absolute power is what Meachum says in his column, "Amoral Acts."

This absolute power, according to Meachum, is not Reagan's. In his "Amoral Act" column's lengthy portrayal of the present incredible scandal, Reagan is detached from all of it. This absolute power, Meachum version, is Reagan's flunkies', those "White House men" who are "white knights" in American eyes."

Meachum's wiser-than-truth version limits this scandal to Reagan's backfired and in-secret yielding to Iranian blackmail to pay ransom in arms for the release of kidnapped Americans. Those of us who read the newspapers Meachum denounces for their reporting of this wretched business know that there is in it what your Omniscience does not mention, illegal acts in siphoning off taxpayers' money for further illegal acts, financing the Contras in their effort to overthrow a government with which the United States maintains diplomatic relations and which is recognized as a legitimate government by the rest of the world, no matter how much (unmentioned in Meachum's "Amoral Act" version) Reagan dislikes it.

Naturally Meachum did not have space had he the thought, overwhelmed as he appears to be with his usual shallowness and superficiality, for reporting actuality. He required that space for such sophomoric explanations of this great national and international disaster as that these "white knights," Reagan's flunkies, "had as their objective from the start, securing "an energizing advantage in the selection of the GOP's 1988 presidential candidate."

That they already have this "energizing advantage" by control of the party and its machinery is immaterial to Meachum when he gets one of those brilliant flashes in which he flaunts his insatiable ego and his lack of understanding of the real world and

how it works. This is succinctly illustrated in his description of what he never gets around to explaining by those he never gets around to identifying, as "the lead-off on the[ir] plan to wrest domestic gain from fishing in 'safe' Middle Eastern political waters."

Now if there is one thing I've learned from my reading of Meachum, aside from his compulsion to proclaim his unique wisdom and understanding, it is that he considers himself a real expert on the Middle East. How in the world even a political infant who has any knowledge of what is going on today can describe having anything at all to do with Khomeini and his government as "safe" is not apparent. There could hardly be anything more the exact opposite of "safe" for an American president when they stormed our embassy and kept its staff hostage for so long and for so much longer have supported, if not also directed, that insane crew of terrorists (usually defended by Meachum) who, among their other accomplishments, murdered hundreds of American Marines and foreign-service personnel.

As usual, perspective is also missing in Meachum. He defines all that these Reaganites did, all that is wrong, as "selling arms" to Teheran. And that, he suggests, "may not turn out to be illegal." (To hurt our nation seriously, as it has, need it be only illegal?) These sales of arms entail government property and payment for those arms involves government money. There thus are additional questions lost upon your Omniscient in Residence. He proclaims his "strict constructionist's view of the Constitution," which merely requires that all public moneys be accounted for. In secret, numbered Swiss bank accounts? In siphoning off this public money for Reagan's private, undeclared wars? In stealing it and sliding it under the table to Reagan's mercenaries, those Contras? Strict constructionist indeed!

In all of Meachum's amateurish mishmash of pretended punditry, in more than a full column of type, not inconsiderable space, there also is lacking - and is required for genuine understanding - asking, if not reporting, who conceived this disastrous nightmarish affair to begin with? By whose authority was it and that large spending of public moneys implemented? If it was not Reagan's idea, was there any authority other than in his name? And if Reagan, having praised those Samocista murderers as the moral equivalent of our founding fathers, a description in which I take no pride, did not conceive and/or authorize this disgraceful and, contrary to Meachum, clearly illegal catastrophe, when did he first know and what did he then know and do about it?

Perhaps the most basic questions are: is Reagan the most ignorant president we've ever had or is he the most dishonest one? "Amoral" if Meachum prefers.

In this sad display of his ego and ignorance, Meachum did find space for defaming us all, inherently and explicitly, the latter in sneaking in this explanation of how these unnamed Reaganite ideologues, who confuse ideology with running a government, "figured themselves 'smarter,'" and thus could "coattail themselves into continuing power": "they knew most Americans view all Arabs as subhumans, unworthy of human consideration." If Meachum actu-

ally believes this, then he lives in a place other than Frederick, a country other than the United States. But then there is Meachum's other compulsion, to propagandize for Arabs on any and every occasion, regardless of inappropriateness or truthfulness.

Nobody is safe from Meachum's vitriol. Despite his oft-proclaimed dedication to a free press, he begins this flaunting of his own immaturity and ignorance by denouncing those who had told the nation what it knows of this sordid business, the press - to him "the media pack" which will soon again "be in full cry once more."

I hope so, for we can ill afford a Watergate ending to a worse-than-Watergate abuse of our nation, its principles and laws, and of common decency.



Harold Weisberg
7627 Old Receiver Road
Frederick, MD 21701