

January 5, 1987

The Editor  
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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?

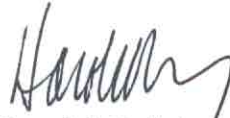
Perhaps the most basic questions are: is Reagan the most ignorant president we've ever had or is he the most dishonest one? "Amoral" if Meachum prefers.

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

# Roy Meachum

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## Amoral act



The holidays stutter through their final hours, extended by the fortunate happenstance that makes this a bridge-day into the weekend. In most offices working hours this Friday will be honored more in the breach than in the observance.

For the past two weeks the media cut back to half-speed their swarming all over the latest White House scandal. They had little choice. Eggnog makes a lousy chaser for political blood. Moreover, both their targets and their informers ducked behind Christmas trees.

By Monday the media pack will be in full cry once more. Americans, and the world, can expect more exposes, a continuation of the unhappy spectacle of a president and all his men trapped up to their waists in the tangled web woven by their own amorality.

The problem I find with most reporting on the dealings with Iran lies with editors' failure to restrain reporters' natural bent to deal with our national crisis as gossip. They bombard the public with persiflage which serves to obscure the fundamental issues.

Nowhere have I seen an attempt to focus on those aspects which are most laden with portents which should cause the greatest concern. It is not the reporter's function to look into the future, but editors have the responsibility to demand stories that help readers understand what lies behind every major event.

Instead, the nation's major newspapers have wallpapered their pages with fragments and bits-and-pieces; allegations, innuendoes and, in the currently popular phrase, who-struck-John. *The New York Times* and the *Washington Post* compete with each other, like small boys at a game, in racing to make the latest revelation which reigns only until the next day's editions.

Jumping into the middle of the editorial chaos come various special-interest groups seeking to gain points for their causes. Obviously the Democratic politicians stand to win the most; for this reason they are practicing the greatest caution in their moves to exploit the damage to the Republican presidency.

Unlike Watergate, a strictly domestic affair, the current crisis embraces a multi-national cast, individuals as well

as nations got caught up in White House efforts to manipulate the recent elections. No player comes away with clean hands.

The only clear winner is Iran. The Khomeini regime scored a major moral victory by exposing the duplicity of the leading Western power; its twisted perversion of Islam added a notch in its historic struggle to supplant orthodox (Sunni) teachings, affecting directly those Muslim nations that seek to live in harmony with the world. Egypt has already had to suppress a major uprising by its fanatics, in the wake of the Iran arms-dealing revelations.

Moreover, the fresh supply of weaponry and parts threatens directly to open up the entire Middle East to an invasion by Tehran's hordes; with a population of 37 million, Iran outnumbered the combined totals for all the countries east of the Suez. Given the firepower, Khomeini has the capability

of establishing a new "Persian empire."

This was the tiger the men in the White House chose to ride in pursuit of their illusion a deal could be struck to bring home the American hostages, an event reportedly timed for the last weekend in October. Had the ploy worked, a celebrating nation might have retained a Republican majority in the U.S. Senate, rewarding Ronald Reagan for another "famous victory" over terrorism.

Had Iranian political in-fighting not blown the secret dealings, would Washington have gone on courting Teheran's "moderates," in the hope a few more arms packages might succeed where earlier pay-offs failed? Most likely.

According to the time-tables wallpapered in the nation's major press, not even the kidnapping of more hostages deterred the White House dealers. They were willing to sell-out the entire Middle East for domestic political gains. The November set-back at the polls figured to make them more eager to recoup their losses.

Lord Acton was wrong: more corrupting than total power is the fear it might be lost. This was the operational mentality behind the Iranian arms sales.

Bringing home the American hostages

could have restored luster to the presidency, made of the White House men "white knights" in Americans' eyes and still given them an energizing advantage in the selection of the GOP's 1988 presidential candidate.

This was their objective from the start. Securing the Senate in November was intended to facilitate four more years during which the U.S. government would still be run by Reagan's management team. They shared the same objective as the men who authorized the Watergate break-in under circumstances that made no apparent sense.

In June 1972, Richard Nixon's reelection already shaped up as a question of how large his majority with the electorate. At the beginning of the current imbroglio, Ronald Reagan enjoyed unprecedented popularity, which only increased with the disinformation campaign against Libya's Gadhafi — the lead-off in the plan to wrest domestic gain from fishing in "safe" Middle Eastern political waters.

Reagan's team sought to coattail themselves into continuing power as had Nixon's men; they figured themselves "smarter," because they knew most Americans view all Arabs as sub-humans, unworthy of human consideration. The non-Arab Iranians are lumped into the same category. Certainly, few Americans would lose sleep if the Arabs and Iranians killed each other off. Indeed, many would cheer.

The Watergate burglary was a crime, absolutely; the law is very plain. Selling arms so Teheran can slaughter its enemies may not turn out to be illegal, given a strict constructionist's view of the Constitution. But it was an amoral act committed by immoral men, who acted for reasons of personal gain against the best interest of these United States.

Keep that truth in mind; it will help you dig behind the media's penchant for wallowing in the details of the latest White House scandal.

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