

opinion

Grenada: Reagan's actions 'supported'

by Helen Thomas

WASHINGTON — President Reagan and his top aides are smiling. They feel they have a success story on their hands from the Grenada invasion and all good things may flow from that — such as Senate passage of the MX missile and, judging from public opinion polls, overwhelming support of the American people.

The administration officials are leaving up in the air whether Reagan's euphoria will prompt more military moves in the Caribbean. When Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger is next on the hit list, he smiles and says nothing is open and nothing is closed.

But top officials have refused from the start of the administration to rule out overt action against Marxist-led Nicaragua and Cuba. In the Middle East, administration officials also hedge on the possibilities of reprisals against Syria, the bet-

noire at the moment in the continuing turmoil in that region.

Reagan, Weinberger and Pentagon officials believe they have made the quan-

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tum leap and the United States no longer has a "Vietnam syndrome," or apprehension over deep involvement again in a land war thousands of miles away.

But few doubt the Vietnam syndrome would reappear in the populace if the president starts spreading the troops far and wide where they would meet more of a fight from native forces than they did in

Grenada, where a ragtag leaderless army was in disarray.

Whether that victory will be a temptation for Pax Americana in other places where U.S. authority is being challenged by the Soviets will be a question in the presidential campaign, no doubt.

Reagan, who has been criticized for not having foreign policy goals, except in terms of the East-West struggle, may decide that the military option can be used to recover some of the political ground lost over the last few decades. Since he believes that all the political turmoil in the world emanates from Moscow, he may decide to draw a line in the dust.

So far he has succeeded in making an already wary Kremlin wonder if any chance of a peaceful rapprochement is possible.

The wait won't be long. Next month will be the watershed in nuclear arms negotiations with the United States bent on deploying intermediate-range missiles in Europe, and the

Soviets threatening to match them in Warsaw Pact countries.

Reagan has said he is willing to keep talking even after the missiles are placed in Germany and other European countries. The Soviets have threatened to break off talks if the missiles are deployed.

There are reports that U.S. negotiator Paul Nitze has urged the president to make one last pass at trying to break the impasse before the deadly missiles go in.

A big question mark is over the health of Soviet President Yuri Andropov and whether he is well enough to make major decisions.

Reagan is in the driver's seat. He can try to change the vocabulary and call an invasion a rescue mission and publicly charge his critics.

"It is very easy for some smug, know-it-all in a plush protected quarter to say that you are in no danger," he told a welcome-home gathering of more than 400 medical students who were evacuated from Grenada.

"I have wondered how many would have changed places with said.

Aides said that Reagan was about his congressional critics "changed their tune now that the facts."

Before they left the White House Reagan enlisted the students to shout, about the courage and commitment of the military men who risked their lives to evacuate them from Grenada.

Despite the growing violence in the world, Reagan takes a pessimistic view of events in recent days.

On the eve of his Asian swing, Japanese television interviewer, there is more of an awareness in order to have peace we need strength, so I am not discouraged. is going on."

Military strategists battle with words

by Dick West

WASHINGTON — This being Veterans Day, let us give some thought to precision in military terminology.

Although President Reagan once used the word "invasion" to describe the U.S. landing on Grenada, he now says that is not the proper way to refer to the operation.

Actually, he says, the venture was a "rescue mission" by American "liberating" forces.

Any World War II veteran who spent time in the European Theater of Operations can readily understand the quoted language.

The argument that some Grenadians were unaware they were captives does not, of course, hold water.

A blanket liberation is about the only sort a military force can effectively carry out. If troops are required to be selective as to what they are liberating, they are likely to lose interest.

When I was in the ETO, GIs were liberating just about everything in sight. Particularly if it was small enough to carry or load onto a jeep or weapons carrier.

In case you can't recall the chronology in that part of the world, American liberating units first landed in North Africa. That rescue mission, incidentally, was commanded by Dwight Eisenhower, about whom more was to be heard later.

Later, U.S. troops rescued Sicily and Italy. Then came the big rescue missions in Normandy and Southern France.

Terminology, as Reagan has indicated, was strategically important.

When American soldiers first began arriving in North Africa, liberation was virtually an unknown science. So the practice was called other things, such as scrounging. The results were discouraging.

On the European continent, however, World War II types quickly learned that

goods and services not issued by the government usually could be liberated. Some poker players even liberated pots from each other, although that might have been carrying the terminology too far.

Liberation also served as a substitute for fraternization, which initially was for-

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bidden. Any Europeans, particularly female, we boys couldn't fraternize with, we would proceed to liberate.

One memorable day, my unit liberated a cellar full of French wine that must have been confiscated by the enemy. We rescued bottle after bottle of champagne, sparkling burgundy and, oh, I don't know what all.

Strategically, or maybe it was tactically, there was nothing we could do but drink it as quickly as possible, lest a sudden counterattack cause the cache to revert to unfriendly hands.

"I regret I have but one liver to cirrhose for my country," cried one latter day Nathan Hale.

That patriotic spirit, I'm proud to say, was prevalent among my comrades-in-arms.

At a party given to commemorate the wine's liberation, a Red Cross girl, backing away from the advances of a hot-blooded young Texan who shall here be nameless, toppled into a soggy compost pit we had liberated from the previous occupants of the farmhouse.

I hope nothing that messy marred the rescue of Grenada. But such are the fortunes of war.



Gas prices: People vs. industry

by Bruce B. Bakke

DALLAS — Strong opinions abound, but no agreement is close, on the question of what would happen to natural gas prices if Congress should pass decontrol legislation.

Industry organizations, lobbying hard for decontrol, are fervent in their belief that under decontrol prices would be held in check by natural forces of supply and demand.

Suspicious consumer organizations counter that the only reason the industry wants decontrol is that it would lead to higher prices and greater profits.

"Consumers who use natural gas could reap significant savings on their monthly gas bills if Congress would enact decontrol legislation now before the Senate," a news release from the Natural Gas Supply Association in Washington claims.

"Under decontrol all of the gas would rise in the first year to prices between \$3 and \$3.50 (per thousand cubic feet)," says Ed Rothschild of the Citizen-Labor Energy Coalition in Washington. After the first year, he said, prices would climb even higher.

Suspicion and distrust between the two sides, built up over the past volatile decade, makes agreement almost impossible on this or any other issue.

The NGSA says if a bill now before the Senate is passed, consumer savings could amount to more than 90 cents a thousand cubic feet in five states — California, Maryland, Michigan, New Hampshire and Virginia. Savings of at least 30 cents per thousand cubic feet would occur in 42 states by one year after enactment, it says.

"This bill has a tremendous amount of consumer protection in it," said Nicholas J. Bush, president of the NGSA. "It would have a strong downward trend on the important cost components of gas prices. If this legislation is enacted, consumers would then be in a position to demand that state utility commissions force pipelines and local gas distribution companies to pass these savings on

through the system to the household."

Of course, the Citizen-Labor Energy Coalition has an entirely different view. "Our bottom line is that if you deregulate all gas the cost will go up over the

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next few years, because most gas flowing is old gas. Almost half the gas being sold today in interstate pipelines is pre-1977 gas. The average price is about \$1.50," Rothschild said.

The price of gas from wells drilled before 1978 is regulated under present law.

Industry leaders have said present regulation of gas prices is a factor inhibiting drilling and exploration for new gas sources. But Rothschild said it is the current gas glut that has caused drilling activity to drop.

Economist Stephen Brown of the Federal Reserve Bank in Dallas says consumer fears that elimination of controls would cause higher prices is a formidable obstacle to total deregulation of natural gas prices.

"Decontrol will not lead to both a higher consumer price and increased production," Brown wrote last summer. "Decontrol will yield a higher consumer price only if supply contracts. If decontrol increases supply, a lower price will result."

It is the position of many in the industry that old gas is being held off the market because of low controlled prices. In some areas, such as Kansas, pipeline companies are letting old gas stay in the ground because they have newer take-or-pay contracts which compel them to take gas from other sources.

Although this is a different issue, it is related to any question of gas availability. The bill now before the Senate has a con-

troversial provision which would price burden of take-or-pay contracts pipelines.

Congressmen approach legislation involving gas prices with the caution hunter approaching a trapped animal. The potential exists to enrage millions of voters.

In 1979 42.5 million households, 30 percent of the homes in America, used natural gas for heating. Another 10 million households used natural gas for other purposes. With almost two-thirds of all U.S. households involved, a congressman wants to be accused of raising gas prices to consumers.

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