

opinion

How the U.S. press was routed in Grenada

by Art Buchwald

The swift, bloodless victory by our armed forces over the entire American press corps in the Battle of Grenada will go down in history, as far as many Americans are concerned, as President Reagan's finest hour.

Government officials have lifted the lid of secrecy as to how it was accomplished.

One of them told me, "We couldn't have done it without the support of the American people. For some time our intelligence sources indicated the media was vulnerable to a surprise attack. There was great dissatisfaction in the country with the constant drumbeat of bad news the people were getting from their press and electronic sources. The so-called 'free press' forces were perceived as a bunch of thugs hiding

behind the 'people's right to know' liberal Marxist doctrines."

"So your people decided it was the right moment to overthrow the First Amendment."

"It wasn't that simple. We needed an excuse to take on the press. If the administration could dramatize the media threat to the country, and prove the government was a much more dependable source of information, the Reagan administration could win the hearts and minds of the people. Of course every administration has wanted to launch a preemptive strike against the media, and it's been war-gamed in the White House situation room for years. But President Reagan was the first one willing to take the risk."

"It must have been a tough decision for him."

"When you're dealing with the news, there are no easy ones. For example, we knew an all-out frontal assault on the American media would not work in a peacetime environment. The American people tend to get very nervous if you launch an attack on the media when no lives are at stake."

"Don't tell me you invaded Grenada just to give the American press a bloody nose?"

"No, Grenada fell into our laps. We had to go in there anyway, so we decided we might as well mop up the media at the same time. We used as our textbook the British military operation in the Falklands. Maggie Thatcher was able to rout the entire British press corps with minimal casualties to her government. A secret study by Her Majesty's Forces indicated the British people were far more content to hear the news of the fighting from the government officials

than they were to read eyewitness dispatches in their paper and see television film of the action.

"But," he continued, "we also knew we had to complete the Grenada action fast, because the American people would only stand for a news blackout for just so long before they would start asking questions. Once we worked out the policy we turned it over to the military for execution."

"The Joint Chiefs must have been elated with the assignment."

"They were thrilled. The Navy was assigned to prevent all press landing by sea. The Air force was ordered to send back chartered planes. The Rangers were instructed to knock out any shortwave radios operating on the island. Not one television crew managed to get ashore. We held the information high ground for three days. It

gave us time to put out the story we wanted it told. When the president gave the air Thursday to give his report, American people bought the whole thing."

"Apparently by going into Grenada, not only sent a message to the Soviets, Cubans, but to the American press as well."

"You might say that. The Reagan administration is no longer a paper tiger as far as the media in this country is concerned. It proved for the first time a well-armed, disciplined military force can rout a demoralized press corps without being fired."

"Then from your standpoint, the free invasion was worth it."

"This is only the beginning. You have seen anything yet."

Letters: Old South and what it implies

Editor:

Mr. Stephen Weiss has once again come out with ridiculous charges of severe premeditated acts of racism at Texas A&M. The statement that the Confederacy (with a capital "C") stood for only one thing — slavery — is ridiculous! The following should help Mr. Weiss to understand the true picture of the South and slavery.

Robert E. Lee not only freed the slaves under his control, but he had declared that slavery was "a moral and political evil." This great man was convinced that in time, "the mild and melting influence of Christianity," rather than war, would solve the problem.

What about the soldiers who marched behind Lee? Remember, only one in fifteen of the Southern whites ever owned slaves. There were fewer than 350,000 Southern slave owners, but there were some 600,000 soldiers in the Confederate army.

When the Southern states were finally forced to assume their separate and equal stations in the world and secede from the U.S., they did not sacrifice unity for slavery, but for the principle of self-government!

Abraham Lincoln was correct when he said, "This country, with its institutions, belongs to the people who inhabit it. Whenever they shall grow weary of the existing government, they can exercise their constitutional right of amending it, or their revolutionary right to dismember or overthrow it."

This man, who is credited with the emancipation of the Negro (which he did not do) should also be known for his public feelings towards blacks, "I will say that I am not, nor ever have been in favor of bringing about in any way the social and political equality of the white and black races... and inasmuch as they cannot so live, while they do remain together there must be the position of superior and inferior, and I as much as any other man, am in favor of having the superior position assigned to the white race." (September 18, 1858 in his fourth debate with Stephen A. Douglas)

We do not deny you your heritage, nor do we support racism or slavery, but we do love our heritage and to this day support the expression of guaranteed freedom denied to our forefathers.

Please do not remove the traditional symbol of a magnificent and noble way of

life and freedom just to pacify those ignorant to the lessons of history.

Mark A. Brown

(Editor's note: This letter was accompanied by 67 signatures.)

History lesson

Editor:

The Nov. 21 letter from Stephen Weiss and his co-signers concerning the slave sales at bonfire time, the Confederacy, and the Rebel flag is more racist than the traditions they oppose.

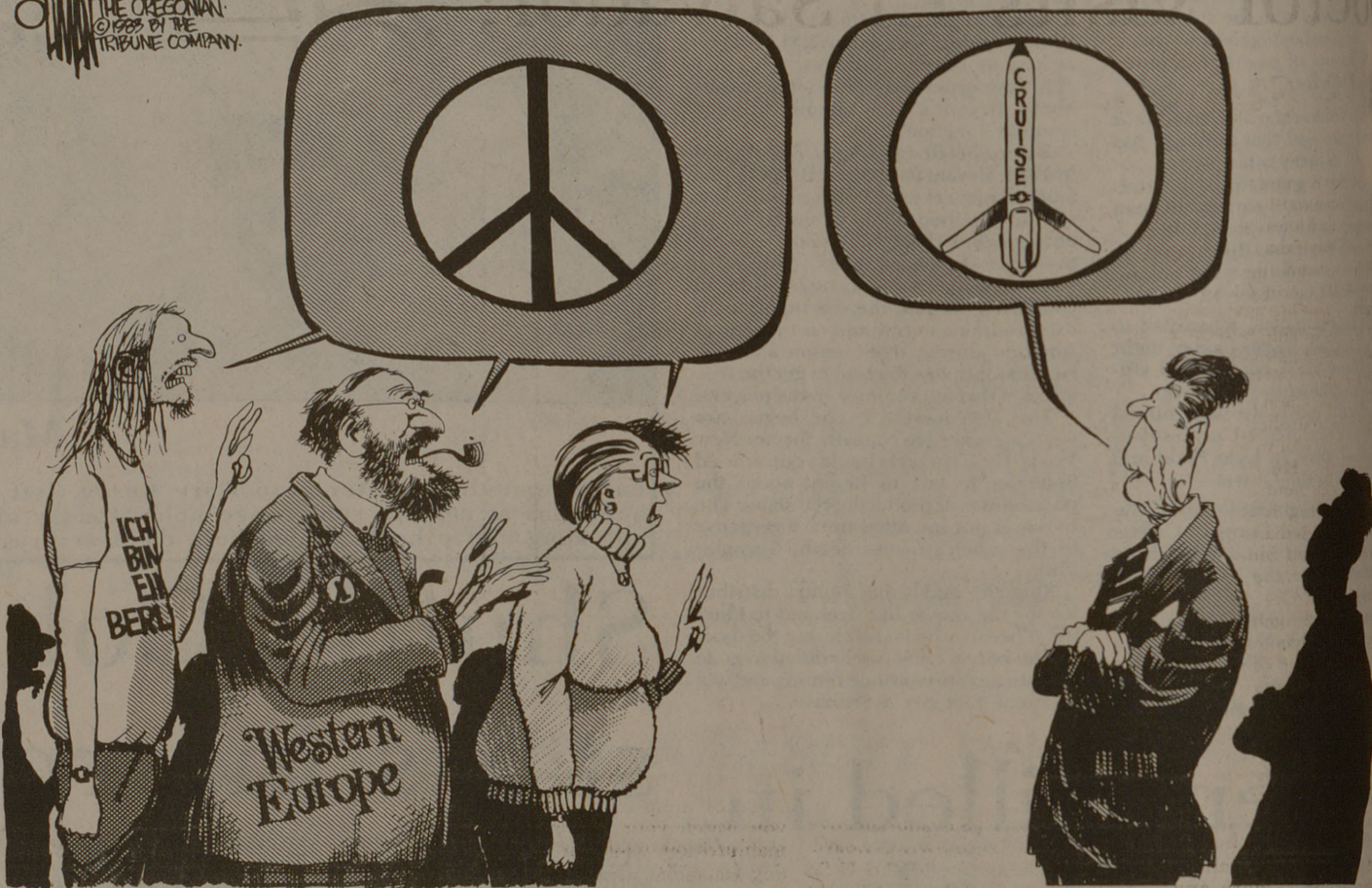
I have never before heard an educated person, in particular a history major, insult the Confederacy by saying that it stood for slavery. The Confederate States of America did not stand for slavery. I have been taught that it stood as the separation of the agricultural Southern states from a system that was encroaching on and attempting to destroy the only way of life ever known by them because parts of it were morally wrong. Slavery was a major issue, but it was actually destined to be short lived anyway. Very few Southern citizens could even afford to have slaves. This was reserved for the wealthy plantation owners, who instituted chattel slavery in order to make their farms profitable. Technological advancement in agriculture would have eventually done away with the need for slave labor in the South, just as industrialization did in the North.

The Confederate battle flag waves as a symbol of the struggle and determination put forth by men who fought and died to preserve their rights and to defend their land, their families, and their way of life. And this is something to be damn proud of. The Confederacy and the Civil War were just as important to Texas history as any other event, and the Rebel flag should fly just as high and just as long as any of the other five flags over Texas.

As a native Texan, born and raised here in Dixie, I hope to see the Confederate spirit live a long time, and the Rebel flag forever fly... even in the traditions at Texas A&M.

James Elzner '87

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Reagan's challengers look weak

by Maxwell Glen and Cody Shearer

WASHINGTON — Americans paused briefly last week to gather together, give thanks and eat heartily. Inevitably, they'll also have chewed the fat.

As sure as Macy's pneumatic Bullwinkle floated down Fifth Avenue on Thanksgiving morning, talk of politics certainly crept into the discussion at many dinner tables around the nation. And, with less than a year before the next election, that talk revealed that many Americans still haven't made up their minds about the president.

Ronald Reagan has been a favorite topic for debate at any time of year. His irrepressible good nature and penchant for banker's hours have set a new standard for national leadership that is, if nothing else, curious.

But on the eve of a presidential election season, the Reagan record is perhaps more debatable than ever. Inflation and interest rates are down markedly since 1980, but their improvement may have more to do with cyclical demand than supply-side economics. While Reagan has worked to cut domestic spending, defense dollars have climbed through the roof. Though the president has won a clear political victory in Grenada, U.S. policy in the Middle East and Central America — two places where U.S. troops seem destined for ongoing police duty — suggests far less certain success. Reagan's own coyness about 1984 is itself a metaphor for his record.

Such paradoxes are natural fodder for the homespun "Turkey Caucuses" on Thanksgiving weekend. Though these annual discussions among friends and families often go overlooked, this year's could prove crucial to many a political fortune.

Pollsters of all stripes agree that Reagan currently has much for which to be thankful. They point out that his approval rating, calculated by some to be upwards of 70 percent, is at its highest level in two years. Tracking reaction to his Oct. 28 speech on Lebanon and Grenada, they found that it reversed a slight downward trend and, in a single stroke, earned him as much as 20 percent in new support (though almost entirely male).

In only four weeks, they add, Reagan successfully turned his greatest liability —

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handling of foreign policy — to his advantage. He enhanced his image as a strong, effective leader and gained a windfall as public approval spilled over into other areas, a phenomenon that pollsters call the halo effect."

Yet, two of every three Americans believe that the Marine engagement in Beirut is doomed to fail. Meanwhile, according to the ABC News polling unit, a majority (54 percent) says that Reagan is trying to do too much militarily. An even larger segment disapproves of overthrowing Marxist regimes overseas, a fact which weakens the domestic appeal of other Grenada-like operations.

Reagan's vulnerabilities in foreign policy widen with women voters, who since early last year have shown less inclination than men to support the president. The gender gap, which according to one White House study has more than 22 different roots, has in fact evolved into a resilient creature, widening to 18 points after the president's Lebanon-Grenada speech. Planning to take full advantage of this discrepancy during the next year, feminists say that a margin of only 15 points would mean Reagan's defeat. Pollsters agree that such talk is not mere bravado.

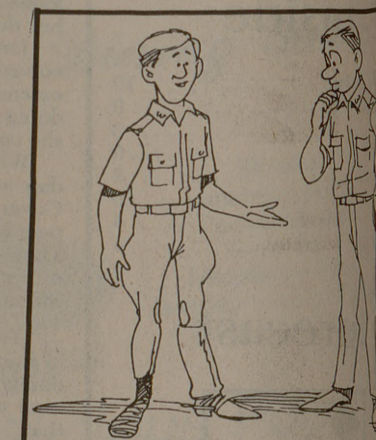
At Turkey Caucus time, however, the president's goose is hardly cooked. The alternatives, after all, aren't exactly appetizing: front-runner Fritz Mondale remains about as appealing as yams; John Glenn lacks the right stuffing; Alan Cranston, despite all his jogging, looks like the traditional main course. According to polls, Reagan

could easily make mincemeat out of lesser-known contenders.

Indeed, Reagan's record may be more important at this juncture than his past. F. Kennedy have just underscored, Americans like their leaders self-confident, bold, and sometimes bold. Reagan has affirmed the old idea that one man can make a difference, restoring for many a faith in the political process and the president as a whole.

For better or for worse, Reagan "made a difference" on a number of occasions. That accomplishment, more than anything else, may be his meal ticket to four years in the White House.

Slouch



"I think I made a mistake. I wish I had done better if I had done them as a pair."

The Battalion

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Letters to the Editor should not exceed 300 words in length, and are subject to being cut if they are longer. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit letters for style and length, but will make every effort to maintain the author's intent. Each letter must also be signed and show the address and telephone number of the writer.

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