

# Opinion

## Ollie North has the lead in fooling America

Ollie North is not a national hero.

Last summer, Americans couldn't get enough of the charming lieutenant colonel who so stoutly defended his motives in the Iran-Contra affair. "Ollie for President" shirts sprouted overnight. At the *Kansas City Star*, where I was working, a few decidedly middle-America-type picketers showed up to protest the paper's coverage of the Iran-Contra hearings.

But last week, North was indicted on charges ranging from obstruction of justice to conspiracy to defraud the IRS — 16 counts in all. And the patriotic glow that once surrounded him is wearing thin despite the not guilty plea he entered Thursday.



Sue Krenek

Many Americans will buy North's claim that he's a mere pawn in a large and unsightly chess game between Congress and the president. But that claim, like much of Ollie North, is mere theater. For proof, you need only look as far as *Time* magazine, where North's voice was reported to tremble with emotion as he told a press conference:

"I have been caught up in a bitter dispute between the Congress and the president over the control of foreign policy, the power of the president to deter communism in Central America, and his duty to protect our citizens from terrorist acts abroad. . . I intend to fight allegations of wrongdoing for as long as necessary."

You gotta give the guy credit: He knows how to work a crowd. North discarded his familiar Marine uniform and chestful of ribbons for a plain blue suit — even though his resignation doesn't take effect until May 1. Proper costuming and all that, I suppose.

But underneath the costumes, more

changes appeared to be in the works. Last summer, North trumpeted his willingness to be the fall guy if Congress was determined to punish someone for the shipment of arms to Iran and unauthorized diversion of funds to the Contras. At his press conference, though, he said he was resigning because remaining in the Marines would be incompatible with defending himself against the charges. His lawyer, North said, may subpoena the "highest-ranking officials of our government." Some fall guy.

Ronald Reagan and George Bush may or may not be quaking in their boots at the prospect of testifying in North's trial, but North definitely has cause for concern. He wavers between saying, as he did at the press conference, "I did not commit any crime" and maintaining that such frolicsome misdeeds as document shredding took place only because he was trying to protect the president's foreign policy.

North must make up his mind. He

seems to be saying that he didn't do anything wrong — but that if he did, it was only because Congress had unfairly usurped the president's foreign policy role.

It seems fairly clear that North *did* do something wrong. Quite a few things, actually, beginning with embezzling \$4,300 in travelers' checks given to him by Contra leader Adolfo Calero. Then there's the matter of the \$13,800 home security system North accepted. And the infamous document-shredding with Fawn Hall, intended to keep as many secrets as possible. The list goes on.

And no matter which side of the foreign policy debate you come down on, it appears that North's activities were indeed illegal. If Congress is justified in setting policy, it had every right to cut off funding to the Contras. And North was an integral part of a covert plan designed to undermine that decision.

You say foreign policy powers rest with the president? Fine. But according

to all the testimony, North and his allies at the National Security Council never bothered to mention the diversion of funds to the president. The president authorized the arms-hostages trade. Yes, he made it clear that he supported aid to the Contras. But underlings who take the statements and, without telling the president, start an illegal supply network, not supporting the idea of a foreign policy run by the president. They are reporting the idea of a foreign policy by low-level goons in the administration's considerable bureaucracy.

North no doubt will continue to be the patriot. It's a good role, one that public likes (just look at Ronald Reagan). But if North supported the funding, his decision to turn tail and run in the face of indictment bodes ill for his patriotic pose.

And what a pose it is.

Sue Krenek is a senior journalism professor and editor of *The Battalion*.

## Just what is the deal in Central America?

Mark my words, the Sandinistas' attack on Honduras will go down in history as the worst military blunder since Poland invaded Germany in 1939.



Donald Kaul

Because NOW we all know that the Sandinistas can't be trusted and that negotiating with them is futile.

Because NOW the United States can send troops into area to protect freedom and democracy with a clean conscience.

Because NOW Republican congressmen have license to foam at the mouth and roll around on the floor of the House of Representatives in support of more aid to the Contras.

Because NOW everybody will realize that Ollie North and John Pondexter and the rest of that crowd were right and all right-thinking Americans will united behind their cause.

It was a bad mistake all right. But even Washington cynics marvel at the coincidence of the invasion coming right on the day that North, Poindexter, et al were indicted for their roles in the apparently illegal diversion of funds from Iran to the Contras. The odds on that happening must have been tremendous.

But it did. By accident. Of course it did. Hey, would the White House lie?

The thing you have to wonder is whether this is the best we can do to defend freedom and democracy in Latin America.

I was in Mexico last week. While I was there the Mexican economy got some good news; inflation dropped to 8.3 percent. That was for February. Inflation in January had been 15.5 percent. For the 12-month period ending last month it was 180 percent. Whoopie.

But the news wasn't all that rosy. Here are some other headlines I saw in Mexico City papers:

• "Businessmen See A Dim Future For Job Seekers" — Mexico, a nation of 80 million people, has 6 million unemployed. In the next year business leaders hope to create 500,000 jobs, leaving 500,000 new job seekers without prospects.

• "Low Earners Affected By Growing Malnutrition" — A recent survey revealed that 80 percent of the children in low-income households — those earning the minimum wage, \$120 month — show signs of acute malnutrition.

• "Mexican Creativity Aids Learning" — A happy headline, but the guts of the story was that the collapsing Mexican economy has made it all but impos-

sible to provide teachers with teaching tools; not audiovisual equipment with computers, mind you. Books.

There were other stories involving Latin America: "Lower Oil Income Means Austerity for Venezuela," "Argentina Debt Crisis Looms," "Peru's Economy on War Footing" and "The Mess in Panama."

When he took office more than seven years ago (and isn't it funny how time flies when you're in a dream world?) President Reagan announced a plan that would help them share in our prosperity and stabilize the region politically.

If such a plan ever existed outside the imagination of a White House speech writer, it has been a dismal failure. Latin America stands poised on the edge of economic ruin and we, the giant of the north, stand aloof.

No, not entirely aloof; we protect them from the scourge of Nicaragua.

A year ago Mexico devised a plan by which it would buy back some of its debt at discounted rates and refinance it with bonds backed by the U.S. treasury. It had hoped to buy back as much as \$15 billion at 60 cents on the dollar. The banks didn't go along with the deal. The Mexican government was only to buy \$3.67 billion of its debt and was forced to pay more than 69 cents on the dollar to get even that. After the refinancing, the total reduction in debt was barely more than \$1 billion.

It seems that much of our national political debate is taken up with the wisdom of sending arms to a rag-tag group of rebels in a small, poor country of small consequence. We do it, when we do it, to fight communism in Latin America. In the meantime we ignore the volcano that is building to an eruption everywhere else in the continent.

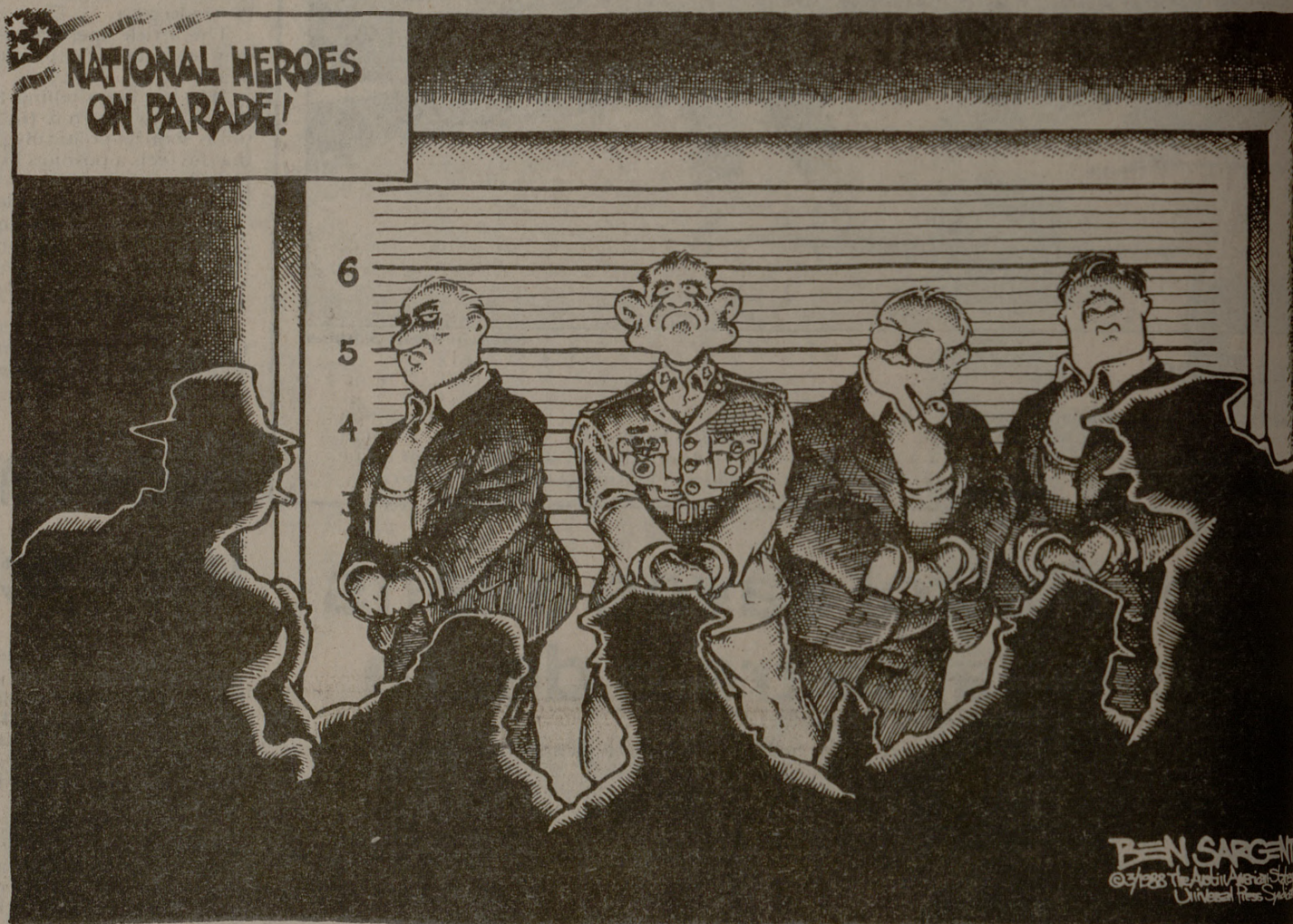
Here is the deal:

Communism does not spring forth out of a prosperous people. It does not feed on justice. It is a political and economic philosophy that is fueled by despair and poverty and malnutrition and ignorance. It is a false god — it does not deliver what it promises — but when hope vanishes almost any god that offers change will win converts.

We can give the Nicaraguan Contras \$30 million in "humanitarian" aid or \$100 million in "lethal" aid or we can give them gold-lame Elvis Presley outfits in hopes that they can sing the Sandinistas to death. It won't work. We are not losing Latin America to the International Communist Conspiracy; we are losing it to poverty and drugs. Sending troops down there is just plain stupid.

How many times do we have to learn the same lesson?

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## Mail Call

### We're a peaceful people

EDITOR:

As a member of Students Against Apartheid, I would like to clarify a few points made by Brain Frederick on March 22. In his article, he claims that the South African Government is making sincere efforts to dismantle apartheid. Though some reforms have been instituted, the government has taken several steps backward, resulting in further restrictions. Among these are:

1. A 21-month old state of emergency.
2. A press ban on anti-apartheid media.
3. A ban on the political activity of 18 anti-apartheid organizations.
4. An effort to end foreign humanitarian aid to oppressed South Africans, as well as increased violence toward blacks by government police and soldiers.

Mr. Frederick feels that sanctions and political pressure will result in a bloody revolution. This is not true. These are means of PEACEFUL, NON-VIOLENT change and are a stimulus to prevent a revolution. He instead, feels we should tolerate slow change. However, one must realize that this results in prolonged imprisonment, torture and murder of blacks, with no guarantee of real change. Furthermore, the reforms already implemented may not have been enacted without pressure from the West.

Students Against Apartheid does not advocate violent change, instead we advocate peaceful change through political pressure, economic sanctions and racial harmony. We operate in the spirit of Nelson Mandela, who, though in his 26th year of imprisonment for opposing apartheid, still opposes violence as a means of change. Additionally, we are not advocates of the ANC, whom Mr. Frederick,

with the fervor of Joe McCarthy, labeled as communist. Instead we are advocates of all oppressed South Africans. The ANC is only one of many anti-apartheid organizations.

Finally, Mr. Frederick, despite your ethnocentric beliefs, South African blacks are just as capable of promoting democracy as are Americans.

Jeff Dyess '89

### Ugly for a purpose

EDITOR:

Many people are upset about the Students Against Apartheid's anti-apartheid shack: "I blemishes the campus." They are not concerned with what the shack stands for — but with the way it looks: ugly. What they fail to comprehend is that APARTHEID is ugly. The shack is not meant to be a beautiful addition to the campus — it is meant to make people aware of the ugly situation that exists in South Africa: legalized segregation and violence.

Removing the shack would remove the "eyesore," but it would also make apartheid easy to ignore — out of sight and out of mind. Instead of trying to get rid of the shack through complaints and vandalism, these "concerned" students should attack the root of the problem and work with S.A.A. for divestment and ultimately the abolishment of apartheid.

Margaret Dominguez '91

Letters to the editor should not exceed 300 words in length. 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 be signed and must include the address, address and telephone number of the writer.

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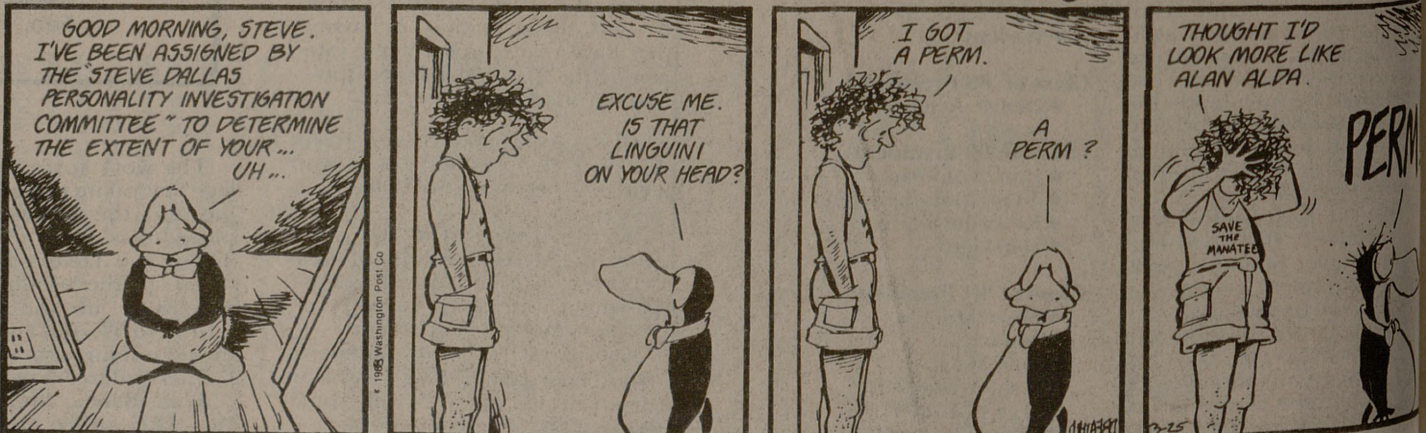
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