

EDITORIAL/OPINION

Manipulating news from Nicaragua

by Bill Bigelow

It comes as no surprise any longer when the corporate-controlled national and local media cover events in Nicaragua with a blatant disregard for truth. Sometimes activities there which might reveal a positive image of the Sandinistas or indicate their widespread support, such as the 20-mile march of 70,000 Nicaraguans last June are simply ignored. Other times the media become mere mouthpieces for the Reagan Administration, as in the viciously distorted coverage of last year's election.

More recently we were treated to a somewhat more subtle manipulation of the news. Recall the Witness for Peace activists who were fired upon, then captured by contras as the group's boat motored up the San Juan River on the Nicaraguan-Costa Rican border. This kidnapping came on the heels of the hijacking of the TWA jet with Americans aboard in the Middle East and the killing of U.S. Marines by guerrillas in San Salvador. Both these events were attacked in the media and by the administration as "terrorist" outrages committed by power-mad thugs.

But what of the kidnapping of unarmed American religious activists by Nicaraguan contras? You can imagine possible headlines, especially given the emotional climate in the U.S.: "Contra Terrorists Kidnap Unarmed Americans", or "Contras Hold U.S. Church-people Hostage," or how about, "Terrorists Strike at Americans Again." The press had a decision: Do we or don't we link the contras to international terrorism?

But the press had no intention to discredit the contras. Instead, they adopted a tone of skepticism and "it ain't no big deal." Thus from the very beginning it was the "claimed" or "alleged" kidnapping, even though it was apparent that the Witness for Peace travellers were, in fact, being held at gunpoint against their will. Faithfully reported were contra leader Eden Pastora's assertions that the incident was a

"show" staged by the activists and the Sandinistas. Evidence? Who needs evidence?

Time and again the press quoted without comment State Department spokespeople scolding Witness for Peace for going into an area that the U.S. government had warned was unsafe. The *Washington Post* suggested they were "looking for trouble." This blame-the-victim reporting was distinctly absent during coverage of the attack on the Marines in San Salvador. What editorial writer would have been so bold as to assert that the U.S. government was guilty of murder for sending U.S. soldiers into a country at war?

The contra kidnapers were always referred to with respect by the media. They were an "independent anti-communist group of Nicaraguans," "Nicaraguan rebels," "U.S.-backed rebels," "rebel forces" or, perhaps to stir the patriotic juices, "Pro American Nicaraguan rebels." Never once were they called terrorists. Of course not, for that might leave the impression that the contras were the bad guys.

Significantly left out of most coverage (The *Oregonian* never mentioned it; the *New York Times* buried it in the 12th paragraph of a long article) was the Nicaraguan government's suggestion that the kidnapping incident demonstrated once again the need for an internationally supervised demilitarized zone between Nicaragua and Costa Rica. Was this not reported because it would tend to challenge the carefully nurtured image of the Sandinistas as the aggressors in Central America?

Of course all these distortions and omissions were to be expected. The corporate-owned press in this country has proven that it can stand mute while the U.S. carries out against El Salvador the heaviest aerial bombardment in the history of the Western Hemisphere, and that it can watch as thousands of civilians are slaughtered in Nicaragua by U.S.-backed marauders. Is this the institution we should look to for truth and objectivity? I think not.

EDITORIAL/COMMENTARY

President Reagan should stop constructive engagement policies in South Africa

by Jerry Garner

The Reagan Administration should cease its policy of Constructive Engagement with the government of South Africa. The daily violence and killings in South Africa we are viewing on our local news is partially the result of the President's policy towards Pretoria.

This nation should be ashamed for supporting the most inhumane, racist, and repressive government since the time of Adolf Hitler. Constructive Engagement has strengthened this evil regime by financing the system of Apartheid, resulting in millions of people having no basic human rights such as the right to vote, to live and work where they chose, to own a business or trade, to live with their families, just because their skin happens to be black.

For any nation, especially the United States, which regards itself as the keeper of Democracy throughout

the world—a nation whose Constitution states that all men are created equal and claims to support human rights—to be on the side of a government which does not respect any of these beliefs is hypocritical.

Instead of supporting the repressive regime, the President should cut off all ties with South Africa and impose a total trade embargo. This can be done by executive order. This is what Reagan did when he slapped a trade embargo on the elected government of Nicaragua. A trade embargo was put on Nicaragua because of the alleged attempts to export their revolution elsewhere in Central America and the establishment of military ties with Iran.

The President ignores or fails to realize the fact that the racist policies of the South African government are worse than the alleged charges made against the Nicaragua government. The President only needs to review the history of South Africa to see that

this government has always used violence as a means of denying the basic human rights of non-whites. From 1799 to 1900, whites and non-whites have fought nine major wars in South Africa. The Afrikaners, in a single battle during the Great Trek, killed 3,000 Zulus at Blood River. At the present, the tenth war is occurring in South Africa. The United States, so far, has supported the Afrikaners in the war against the non-whites.

The Reagan Administration should follow the advice of Winnie Mandela, wife of the Black leader Nelson Mandela who has been imprisoned since 1964. Mrs. Mandela stated, "We are tired of being well-fed slaves. We want to fight for our freedom on empty bellies. Stop sustaining and maintaining Apartheid. Again, the white man prescribes for us. He tells us we will suffer, as if we have not been suffering." President Reagan, are you listening?



Reagan and apartheid: rhetoric vs. reality

Along the Color Line by Dr. Manning Marable

Part One of a Two Part Series.

Has Ronald Reagan finally repudiated his cordial relationship with the white minority regime in South Africa? Certainly that's the general impression the Reagan Administration has tried to convey to the American public during the past two months.

The state of emergency initiated by the apartheid government, escalation of violence and mass arrests since July have shocked the world, and have heightened American concerns about U.S. economic and political links with South Africa. At the forefront of the anti-apartheid "rhetorical assault" have been Reaganites.

"Apartheid is abhorrent to the government and the people of the United States," declared Maureen Reagan before the U.N.'s international women's conference in Nairobi. "In addition to its demeaning and destructive effect on the Black people of South Africa," she stated, "its effects upon women are especially severe."

"Apartheid is an affront to everything we believe in," said Secretary of State George Shultz at a Foreign Policy Conference for Leaders of National Minority and Women's Organizations, held in Washington on July 24. Speaking with the fervor of a late convert, Shultz affirmed that the apartheid system would be destroyed. "The only question to be determined is how it will come about. What we are trying to achieve is an end point of change, of citizenship, of freedom."

When South Africa President P.W. Botha rejected a call by Nobel Prize winner Bishop Desmond Tutu for constructive negotiations on July 29, the U.S. government was quick to

voice objections. "We believe South Africa's internal situation is such that a meeting between the State President and important Black leaders is imperative," declared Charles Redman, a State Department spokesman. "Dialogue is the only way out of the crisis South Africa faces."

There is an old tradition among American politicians of both parties to say one thing and to do the opposite. The Reagan Administration has not abandoned its economic alliance with Pretoria—termed "constructive engagement." Rather, it has been forced to accommodate itself to the general anti-apartheid sentiment of domestic and international opinion through rhetorical diversions.

The United States government was shocked when France suspended all new investments in South Africa and recalled its Ambassador. It was less stunned, but still upset, when the conservative British Foreign Secretary, Sir Geoffrey Howe, demanded that South Africa halt its state of emergency, free African National Congress leader Nelson Mandela, and all of its political prisoners. Shultz indirectly criticized the French government, maintaining that U.S. corporate investment was essential for "influence and leverage." Economic sanctions, he insisted, would not lead to racial reforms inside South Africa. Not coincidentally, this is exactly the position of P.W. Botha. To call for disinvestment inside South Africa is a crime, punishable with imprisonment. Less than two percent of South Africa's entire nonwhite labor force is employed by American firms. However, the total U.S. financial connections with apartheid, including U.S. bank loans, amounts to nearly

\$15 billion. The Reagan Administration's actions are designed to protect corporate profits, not to save lives or to achieve democracy in South Africa.

In June, the House of Representatives voted by a margin of 297-to-127 to accept the Gray-Kennedy bill. The measure would ban all new loans and investment in South Africa, stop the importation of krugerrands, and halt the sale of computer equipment to the regime. The response of the Reaganites was two-fold. The Republican-controlled Senate came up with an attenuated measure which proposed limited sanctions, subject to the President's judgement. Republicans hinted that Reagan might veto the House bill. And to back up this threat, party veteran Barry Goldwater was prompted to declare: "It is a blight on the United States for us to take this action against a friend, an ally in every war we fought."

Goldwater's assertion was, at best, an historical distortion. The founders of apartheid's ruling party were openly sympathetic to Hitler. Former South African prime minister B.J. Vorster was a leader of a pro-Nazi terrorist group, and B.W. Botha was a leader of the Pro-fascist Afrikaner National Party. The political economy of apartheid today, including its secret police and systemic uses of terror, closely approximates Nazi Germany. Despite its anti-apartheid rhetoric, the Reagan Administration clearly prefers fascism over democracy in South Africa.

Dr. Manning Marable teaches political sociology at Colgate University, Hamilton, New York.

Letters to the Editor

To the Editor,

Thank you very much for your thoughtful coverage of the Portland Community College election. I personally appreciate the assistance you have given the college in getting information to the public about our programs as well as our elections.

As you know, the college offers many opportunities to members of this community. The newspaper plays an important role in letting people know about the classes and activities of the school.

Portland Community College is an excellent institution and one in which our community should take pride. It has played an important role in my personal and professional life. I have gained much from my six year involvement in this community and leave many good friends. I have grown professionally and now look forward to a new challenge.

Sincerely,
JOHN H. ANTHONY
President

To the Editor,

A local group called SAVE has begun collecting signatures on a lobby-statement urging the Portland City Council to take action which will reduce the number of abortions which occur out of economic necessity.

The fact of the matter is that the economic systems of Portland and this nation leave many in a constant life and death struggle. Women and minorities are especially hard hit, with discrimination adding injury to injury. One result of this is that the economically deprived must do without. Sometimes it's do without new shoes for a child, sometimes it's do without contraceptive gel (at \$3.49 a tube), sometimes it's do without an adequate diet during pregnancy, and sometimes it means getting an abor-

tion because there are no other choices.

Here are some striking facts. According to the Oregon Health Department whites have the highest rate of abortions for initial pregnancies. Blacks have the lowest. Nonetheless, Blacks end up with the highest overall rate of abortion because many second and third pregnancies are terminated. Such statistics may indicate that many whites use abortion as a form of birth control, whereas many Blacks have abortions in reaction to the costs of pregnancy and child care.

This city spends tens of millions of dollars building music-halls and courthouse squares. By comparison nothing is done to prevent abortions, or undercut the economic causes of abortion. SAVE is urging the City Council to declare Portland a Pro-choice/Abortion-free Zone. The plan calls for a resolution against laws restricting the woman's right to choose abortion as well as for City funding of birth-control programs, pre-natal care, crisis counseling, adoption services, and child support, all of which are directed at reducing the number of abortions in Portland.

JEFFREY J. LIDDICOAT

To the Editor,

This is to inform your readers of a petition to be launched across the state this month.

The "Save Antelope Committee" is organizing a petition drive to disincorporate the City of Rajneesh (formerly Antelope).

A 20-person advisory board makes up the Committee, consisting of residents, property owners, former Antelope Council members and concerned citizens throughout the state.

The petition would place an issue on the state ballot to repeal the Rajneesh's City Charter and dissolve the city's assets.

Chief sponsors of the Initiative are State Representative Wayne Fawbush, State Representative Dave McTeague and John Silvertooth Stewart, former Antelope Councilman. William Gatchel is executive director of the "Save Antelope Committee."

Presently funds are being raised for this petition effort. Contributions may be sent to P.O. Box 66, Antelope, Oregon 97001.

Sincerely,
DARLEEN OSBORNE

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Bishop Desmond Tutu greets superstar Stevie Wonder on his visit to Los Angeles after Wonder's music was banned by the South African Broadcasting Corporation. [Photo: Nareshimah Osei]