

THE

# Libertarian Forum

— Double Issue —

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## New Airline Massacre: Where's the Outrage?

Remember 007? It wasn't so long ago. Remember the wave after wave of hysteria that permeated the media, led by the cries of outrage from the Reagan Administration? Remember all the howls about the "massacre," and about how this "proves" that the Soviet system is barbaric and evil? Remember the righteous wrath of Reagan on nationwide TV, of the Dragon Lady Kirkpatrick at the UN, of ordinarily mild-mannered Shultz in yelling at Gromyko? Remember the outcry from the entire right-wing, smelling blood at last, yowling for retribution for vengeance against the evil Russkies? Remember the full-page ad of the orthodox Randians grouped around the *Intellectual Activist*, urging the United States to treat the Soviet Union as neighborhood police treat local murderers?

Emotions ran high in the United States, and nothing that the Reagan Administration or the right-wing has done in years has been so successful at heating up the Cold War. Within our movement, it was *Reason* magazine's refusal to print my revisionist Viewpoint column on 007 and editor Robert Poole's calling it "monstrous" for me to equate the U.S. and Soviet lies on this issue, that sparked my resignation from *Reason* as columnist and Contributing Editor (see below).

Well, folks, how many of you know that sometime in November an Angolan civilian jetliner, carrying 126 people, was shot down *deliberately* by the "pro-Western" southern Angolan UNITA guerrilla movement, headed by Dr. Jonas Savimbi? I say deliberately because there is no question about it, because Dr. Savimbi "proudly claimed credit for shooting it down" (*Washington Monthly*, January 1984, p.6.)

Well, now. How come *not one word* of this, as far as I know, appeared in any of our august media? There was no Reagan, burning with indignation, denouncing Dr. Savimbi's deliberate butchery and mass murder. No outraged Dragon Lady. No call from any right-wing for retribution and vengeance. No clamor saying that this mass murder proves that Dr. Savimbi and UNITA are thugs and monsters, running an evil system in southern Angola. No calls for ending all covert U.S. aid to UNITA, or even for reproving South Africa for its continuing aid to what is virtually a client guerrilla movement of its own. No Randians taking full page ads urging the U.S. to treat Dr. Savimbi and his guerrillas as police treat local mass murderers. No clamor from *Reason* magazine.

In our July-August 1983 issue, ("Ronald Reagan, War-

monger") I denounced Americans for being very selective in their moral indignation, noting that there had been no cries of outrage when Israel shot down a Libyan airliner in February 1973. A reader noted that Israel apologized the next day. Okay. It is now admitted by U.S. intelligence experts that the Soviet downing of 007 was probably a bumbling mistake on their part. But in the case of Dr. Savimbi, there is no mistake, and certainly no apology. Quite the contrary, UNITA is proud and happy at their accomplishment. So therefore the cries of outrage against UNITA should be far greater than they were against Russia. Yet the silence is deafening.

So silent has the media blackout been in the U.S. that I had to write "sometime in November" above because I don't know the specific date that this barbarity occurred. The only notice I have seen was the aforesaid paragraph in the *Washington Monthly*, and it gave no further details. If any readers know anything more about the Angolan butchery, I would appreciate their letting me know.

So there we have it. Anyone willing to bet that the orthodox Randians, in their consistent devotion to moral principle, will take out an equivalent full-page ad denouncing Savimbi and UNITA in the same terms? If anyone is willing, I have a Brooklyn bridge, in mint condition, I'm ready to sell you.

As for *Reason* magazine, this was the second column they had killed out of the last three, the first one suppressed being about the growing legend of tax-rebel Gordon Kahl, who was at large and had not yet been killed by the authorities. In my letter of resignation to Bob Poole, I pointed out that I had originally taken on the column in order to bring the radical libertarian viewpoint to their conservative readers. At the time, he appeared enthusiastic about this idea, but clearly times have changed. I also told Bob that he wouldn't have to worry any more about my columns disturbing the somnolence of himself or his readers, since no new or disquieting idea is likely to be offered them by the likes of the columnists that remain.

And so I leave *Reason* magazine, with its instructive lessons on how to demunicipalize government services. Ideologically, *Reason* has always been somewhere in that murky zone where extreme-right-wing Libertarianism and extreme-left-wing Reaganism meet and overlap. Let's hope that the unwillingness to bring a radical or anti-war message to its readers does not presage a glitch rightward out of libertarianism altogether. ‡

# The Bergland Campaign

The Bergland campaign is off to a seagoing start. While Dave Bergland intends to campaign full-time starting in February, he has really been campaigning almost full-time ever since the convention.

## 1. Hard-Core Principle

It was evident from the very beginning that this is going to be a Presidential campaign devoted to hard-core principle. A few days after the PresCon I happened to flip on the tube to C-Span Cable, and there, as luck would have it, was Dave Bergland on a call-in show. Dave was magnificent, answering questions about the LP's aims clearly and candidly: Yes, we want to abolish the income tax, and yes we want to privatize everything, including defense. Wow! What a joy! and all this explained patiently and calmly in a non-inflammatory manner.

This, our glorious goal, is what libertarianism is all about. Sure we should have transition demands, but *this* is what we're aiming for, this is why we're here. Eat your heart out, Crane Machine!

## 2. Setting Priorities on Issues

The Bergland for President Committee has issued a Campaign Statement that is highly important, for it sets out the *priority issues* for this campaign as Bergland and his team see them. Bergland will be hard-core on all issues, but every candidate must select those issues that he will particularly stress during the campaign.

The goal of the campaign, the Statement begins, "is to continue to spread and implement the ideas of individual rights throughout American society." *Rights*, not some utilitarian cost-benefit calculus. By being on the ballot in all 50 states, Bergland and the other LP candidates "will give every American the opportunity to expand their freedom by voting to cut back the federal government, the principal source of oppression within our country."

After this preamble, the Statement specifies the four basic goals of the LP in this campaign: (1) to "remove all controls on the peaceful, voluntary and honest actions of all Americans;" (2) "to abolish draft registration and the threat of the draft;" (3) "to repeal the federal personal income tax;" and (4) "to reform American foreign policy so as to promote peace and better defend Americans." At long last: A Presidential campaign that says flat out and urges repeal of the monstrous income tax! Tax rebels and other anti-tax folks take heed! What *other* candidate can you vote for, to send an anti-income-tax message to Washington?

In the next paragraph, the Bergland Statement makes clear that we seek not only repeal of the income tax, but of *all* taxes! I quote in full: "We seek as quickly as possible the end of all government violation of individual rights, including the end of the seizure of the wages and savings of the American people by income, excise, property, gross receipts, capital gains, or any other taxes." Note that we are pledging ourselves not only to seek repeal of all taxes, but that, at long last, we are doing what radicals in the LP have long been urging: that we don't

set up our own self-imposed roadblocks on the path to our goal. Lord knows that there will be roadblocks enough without adding to them. In short, we are no longer hobbling ourselves by adopting obligatory gradualism, but stating that other considerations are more important than the achievement of liberty. And so we seek these goals "as quickly as possible." In short, the Bergland campaign has adopted a specifically "abolitionist" stance toward the ills of statism.

The Bergland Statement then goes on to set forth specific immediate demands on the road to the above goals. In economic affairs, these are: repeal of all minimum wage and licensing laws; an end to federal expansion of the money supply, "the cause of inflation"; the establishment of gold or other commodity money; the elimination of all subsidies; and "major reductions in social and military spending so as to reduce the federal deficit at the same time the personal income tax is eliminated."

In foreign policy, specific programs are: "immediate and permanent withdrawal of the United States from all entangling military alliances;" pulling all U.S. military personnel out of foreign countries; "development of adequate defensive weapons to protect the United States against nuclear attack" (In my view a chimera, but certainly laudatory for a non-tax-funded goal); "establishment of a 'no first strike' nuclear policy;" reductions in U.S. nuclear arms as part of arms reduction negotiations;" and "free trade with all nations."

In social policy, the basic goal is "the right of Americans to control their own lives and to educate and protect their families." As interim reforms, the Statement calls for a large income tax credit for private tuition, for one's own children or anyone else's; and abolition of the "compulsory and deficit-ridden Social Security System" and replacing it "with voluntary alternatives while providing present beneficiaries with payments from private annuities purchased with the proceeds of the sale of land and the assets of the federal government."

The Statement thus implicitly repudiates all pseudo "voluntary" plans that are voluntary only in the sense that one is not forced to join them, but *not* voluntary for the long-suffering American taxpayer (e.g. the much hyped but sellout Ferrara Plan pushed by the Cato Institute, which, even worse, would retain compulsion for older citizens.) And finally, firm support for the "natural and constitutional right to keep and bear arms as a necessary means of self-protection." It is great to see our Presidential candidate come out squarely and fully against gun control, even though this will anger the liberal media. Tough crackers!

The Statement ends in an eloquent concluding passage: "A Libertarian vote will be the strongest statement that can be made that we all want to be free of the crushing burden of taxation, free of social control and free of the U.S. government's dangerous foreign policy with its resultant risk of war. Every vote for every Libertarian candidate will be a powerful message that millions of Americans demand respect for their right to keep their earnings, their right to exercise control over

and responsibility for themselves, and their right to have their federal government adopt a foreign policy that will provide a growing hope for peace."

Ideologically, the Bergland campaign is in superb shape. We can all support the Bergland/Lewis ticket—physically, morally, and financially—with a high heart.

(Send money or inquiries to Bergland for President, Suit 105 West, 1525 Mesa Verde Drive East, Costa Mesa, CA 92626).

### 3. Non-support by Alaska

At the NatCom meeting on Dec. 3-4 at New Orleans, it was reported by the Bergland Campaign committee that three state LPs have been reluctant to support the Bergland/Lewis ticket. One is Delaware, a virtually non-existent party headed by a flaky state chair. Another is Kansas, the heartland of the Kochtopus. Most important is Alaska, where Craniac state chair Dick Randolph told the Bergland campaign that the Alaska party doesn't want Bergland to appear in their state. This announcement understandably shocked the NatCom members, who grilled the Randolphian Alaskan rep, Steve DeLisio. DeLisio explained that there is "nothing personal" involved, but that the Alaskan Party feels that Bergland is not sensitive to the special needs of Alaska. On the other hand, they would love to have Ed Clark up there at any time. (If this pronouncement is not "personal," then what *is*?)

DeLisio never specified exactly what the Alaskan LP feared about a Bergland speaking engagement. After all, usually citizens of states are enthusiastic about Presidential candidates appearing there, especially in a place so far off the beaten path as Alaska.

One of the LP's top political Mavens later explained what the DeLisian gobbledygook was all about. The problem was Dave Bergland's critical review in *frontlines* in 1982, of Randolph's pussyfooting campaign book written for his race for governor. Bergland had criticized Randolph for failing to oppose the major source of revenue for the Alaskan government. It turns out that the reason why Randolph was easily able to spark the repeal of the Alaskan income tax is because the bulk

of Alaskan revenue comes from a tax soaking the oil companies. Like Third World countries living off confiscation of Yankee investments, Alaskans apparently love this tax by which they can finance goodies from government by socking it to Big Oil. According to the Randolphian Party, it would be "political suicide" for the LP to come out for repeal of the oil tax. Apparently what the Randolphians are worried about is Bergland coming up to Alaska, and being asked by the media what he thinks about the tax on oil. And by the patently obvious fact that Bergland, bless him, would answer that he favors its abolition. And there would go all "credibility" for the Alaskan LP!

Well, tough cookies, Alaskans. Libertarianism never promised you a rose garden. Did you become LP members because you thought that the majority of the public would automatically support us? Are you for free markets and against tax theft, or are you not? Are you Libertarians, or are you just, after all, Republicans in Libertarian clothing? Isn't it best that we all find out now, before it's too late?

And, dear readers, now how do you feel about all the money you gave to Randolph-for-Governor?

### 4. Response of the Crane Machine

The Bergland campaign did precisely what it said it was going to do at the PresCon: it asked each and every Crane Machine member to work in the campaign. In contrast to the Unity hoaxers at the PresCon, Dave Bergland is a man of his word. And what has been the Craniac response? In every case, an angry refusal, with the honorable exception, according to reports, of Howie Rich.

The Libertarian Party membership will duly note this sour-grapey response, this refusal to cooperate after the vote ran against the Machine. One defeat, it seems, and they're out. Well, OK, that's their privilege. But let them not think that the LP will ever again take them seriously, or consider them for positions of influence. The Machine has decided to walk away from the campaign, and their walk will, whether they like it or not, be a permanent one. Good riddance to bad rubbish. ‡

## Life In "1984"

**1. Of All Time.** Recently, one Dan Lurie, publisher of Muscle Training Illustrated magazine, decided to search for someone whom he could dub "the best physically fit President of all time." After an exhaustive search, Lurie came up with, lo and behold!, Ronnie Reagan.

Ronnie Reagan? But how about George Washington, a strapping 6'2" in a world where most male Americans hardly poked up above 5'5"? How about Abe Lincoln? Or Ike Eisenhower? No, he couldn't pick people like that, Lurie explained, because "You can't go back and honor a President who's no longer there." Oh. Well, that takes care of *that*.

**2. The Shortest Time Period.** It is an old New York quip that the definition of the shortest perceivable interval of time, is the time it takes between the change of the traffic light to green and the moment when the car behind you honks its horn. I offer a new definition of the shortest period of time:

the length of any given cease-fire in Lebanon.

**3. Unemployment in Grenada.** In the last days of the Marxist Bishop regime, unemployment in Grenada was severe, at 14 percent. The United States invasion—oops, "rescue mission," as Lew Lehrman's Citizens for America managed to have it called—had the effect of more than doubling that unemployment, which is now about 30 percent. Why? Because of the "sudden unemployment," imposed not by wicked capitalists, but by the U.S. military occupation regime: i.e. on former members of the People's Revolutionary Army, former officials in the Bishop government, former members of Bishop's ruling party, the New Jewel Movement, and workers building the famous airport.

Comment by a 19-year old Grenadian who hasn't had a job yet: "They call it a rescue mission, but they haven't rescued me yet." To each his own, on Grand Fenwick. ‡

# Living Liberty, And All That

For many years I have heard the injunction that it was not enough to "merely" (?) be a libertarian, i.e. to favor and work for a society resting on non-aggression. What we should all be doing instead, these people imply, is to "live liberty."

Now I confess that I have been unable, even with the best will in the world, to understand what these people—and there are many of them—are talking about. Until now, "living liberty" has seemed to me a congeries of egregious fallacy, including: attacking all organization *per se* as "unlibertarian", denouncing the political process (that is, the process of running an ideological organization) on the same grounds, and berating as unlibertarian kicking one's dog or yelling at one's neighbor. "Living Liberty" has also extended to the horror of voluntarily sharing one's energy and worldly goods with anyone who shows up proclaiming his libertarian credentials—a sort of voluntary libertarian communalism.

All this, however, has been so vague and amorphous as to scarcely deserve rebuttal. As far as I am concerned, if I were ever to use this odd phrase at all, "living liberty" implies two things: (a) *not* robbing banks or hitting people over the head, and (b) doing one's best to promote the doctrines of libertarianism. If *this* were all that the "living libertarians" were talking about, then fine, but it is pretty clear that this is *not* what they mean. Whatever they do mean is far fuzzier and more grandiose. Their fuzziness, however, hardly prevents them from adopting a smug air of moral superiority to the rest of us peasantry who have not been clued in to the message.

Lately, the Living Liberty concept has been sharpened, and the message is getting a bit clearer—much to my regret. Somewhere in an Ayn Rand novel one of the villains whiningly complains to one of the heroes or heroines: "You don't understand me." And the hero replies, in a marvelous riposte: "I am trying very hard *not* to understand you." As the Living Libertarians etch their position more clearly, I am beginning to get a similar reaction.

Two recent items highlight this problem. One was an episode where I appeared at a state LP convention, and someone came up to us and insisted that the LP Presidential candidate should be Irwin Schiff. Our lips curled, and he bristled. We pointed out to him that, *inter alia*, Mr. Schiff was weak—to put it kindly—on civil liberties. All this was dismissed by our LP comrade as of no account. "No, no," he expostulated. "Irwin Schiff is a better libertarian than any of you. He *lives* liberty. He doesn't pay taxes."

A second item: I received an anguished letter a few months ago from one of the best and most dedicated libertarian activists I have ever met. She had a moral problem and asked my advice. Taxes were criminal and immoral, and therefore paying taxes was immoral, and so wasn't it incumbent upon her to drop out of libertarian activism altogether, and head for the hills, so that she would not have to participate any longer in an immoral system?

I was rather astonished, and wrote back pointing out to her that it was absolutely vital to libertarianism to preserve a clear and crucial distinction: between the *criminal* and the *victim*. The criminal is the guy who *inflicts* taxes; the victim is the person who is forced to pay it. Inflicting taxes is immoral; *paying* taxes is not. The mugger is the criminal, *not* the muggee; the rapist the criminal, not the person being raped.

After the episode of the exhausted activist (which is what she turned out to be) and the odd Schiffian, I was one day raising my standard question: "What do these people *mean* by 'living liberty'?", to a keen analyst of the current movement, and he answered immediately: "not paying taxes, not possessing a driver's license, not getting married." At that point, the Living Liberty puzzle fell into place, and its ramifications appeared grave indeed. For what *this* breed of living libertarians, at any rate, are doing is systematically fuzzing over or obliterating altogether the crucial distinction of libertarianism: between the criminal and the victim. For if it is equally or even partially immoral to *pay* taxes, then the victim, too, is implicated in the crimes of the State apparatus. The distinction between criminal and victim also implies the crucial difference between freedom and coercion. For libertarianism holds that only voluntary actions are moral or immoral, and that therefore if one is coerced into an act it cannot be considered either voluntary or immoral. But this means that the Living Liberty libertarians, who have adopted a superior moral pose to the rest of us, are not simply wrong but ironically 180-degrees wrong; for in obliterating the criminal-victim, or voluntary-coercive distinction, they are slipping out of libertarianism altogether.

On the libertarian "left", Voluntaryist literature is redolent with the living liberty fallacy. Sometimes they refer explicitly to "living liberty" in hushed tones. But more often their crucial error is placing undue emphasis on the La Boetie-Hume insight that, in the long run, any government, no matter how dictatorial, rests on the majority consent of the governed. By riding hard on this insight and distorting its lessons, the Voluntaryists implicitly attack the rest of us who do *not* disobey laws or resist taxes as being immorally implicated in the continuing existence of the State. From being victims of coercion according to libertarian theory, we non-Voluntaryists have suddenly been transmuted into people who consent voluntarily to State coercion; we have become criminals rather than victims. A crucial flaw in the Voluntaryist embrace of La Boetie-Hume is that they forget two key aspects of their insight: *long-run* and *majority*. Consent is not unanimous but by a majority, and individuals cannot be implicated in any collective guilt; furthermore, this is only a *long-run* insight, because in the short-run even a highly unpopular government has the guns and can use them successfully. Overthrowing even such a government will take many years of bloodshed, suppression, and revolution. Exercising long-run majority preferences against a State is emphatically *not* a dinner-party.

There is another crucial point here: if paying taxes is really voluntary, as left-libertarians and Voluntaryists seem to maintain, then what's wrong with the State after all? For if taxation is voluntary, then the archists are right, and we can have no complaint against taxation or against the State itself as a criminal enterprise. In short, while loudly proclaiming their "living" of liberty, our left-libertarians and anarchists have unwittingly abandoned libertarianism altogether. By making victims into criminals they are also transforming genuine criminals into non-criminals. Vociferous anarchists wont to sneer at the rest of us as only half-libertarians, they have become, in the last analysis and in a bizarre way, objective apologists for statism and the State apparatus.

Right-wing libertarians, on the other hand, erase the crucial distinction between criminal and victim, between coercion and the voluntary, in a different way. One delegate to the national LP platform committee at Austin, Texas this spring, for example, kept maintaining that it is *not* murder of innocent civilians to wipe out Russia in a nuclear attack. There *are no* innocent civilians in Russia, he declared, because since the government exists, they must be consenting to its rule. Hence, all Russians are implicated in the crimes of their Communist rulers. This standard right-wing (and also Randian) line is the flip side of the left-anarchist-Voluntaryist reliance on La Boetie. In both doctrines, the very existence of a government or of taxes means that those who obey the State or pay its taxes are

implicated in its crimes. The victims have become murderers.

Note that the only real difference between the right-wing and left-wing libertarian approaches is that the former confine their melding of criminal and victim to *Communist* regimes, whereas the left consistently applies this confusion to all governments and all countries.

The final irony is that the left-libertarian, Voluntaryist-anarchist tendency, in its eagerness to assume moral superiority to the rest of us by Living Liberty, by not engaging in any State activities or State contamination, by not paying taxes, not getting drivers' licenses, et al., yet necessarily fail *even on their own terms*. For I bet that they are willy-nilly still enmeshed in the State and "giving it their sanction" by, e.g. paying sales taxes through buying products, flying in government-regulated planes that take off from and land in government-owned airports, sending letters through the evil U.S. Post Office, and walking and driving on evil government roads. *I* do not consider them statists for engaging in these activities, but *they should*. If they cannot bring themselves to rethink their negation of libertarianism's pivotal distinction between the coerced and the voluntary, they should at least get off their high horses and acknowledge what *they* should consider their own voluntary enmeshment and adherence to the Leviathan State. ‡

## Reagan War Watch

### I. Escalation in Lebanon

As we predicted in our July-August issue, the conflict in the Middle East continues to escalate dangerously, with the U.S. leading the parade. Reagan's reaction on learning of the truck-bombing of Marine headquarters is that the most unthinkable of all the hard options is to pull out. And so, as Lebanon becomes more and more of a Vietnam, the Marines stay on the flat at the Beirut airport, establishing a hunkered down symbolic presence at the now closed airport, while snipers in the hills use them for target practice and Muslims take dramatic action to try to remove the hated U.S. presence from their country.

And no one seems to know why in hell the Marines are there. First they were supposed to be part of a small International Peace-keeping Force to interpose symbolic bodies in between fighting forces in the permanent floating Lebanese civil war: mainly between Christian militia and the Palestinian refugees. Like the handful of British and Italian troops, the troops were supposed to be smiling and visible, handing out candy to Lebanese kiddies, and generally making ourselves visible and universally beloved. Since then, the supposed role of the Marines has been changing every month. "Peacekeeping" has been transformed into maintaining and extending the rule of a minority government of Maronite Christians and thug Phalangists over the majority Muslims of Lebanon. But as "peacekeepers"—an Orwellian term in itself—the Marines can hardly be expected to run amok and slaughter the civilian population. But step by step we are

beginning to do so. First, we began to shell and bomb Muslim villages in order to defend the Marines against snipers. Then, we began to bomb Muslims in order to extend Maronite rule over them, describing this as a kind of indirect protection of the Marines. And then, we began to bomb in order to "punish" an enemy we have not been able to find. And in all this, the Marines had to hunker down and abandon the very "presence" that was supposed to be the original point of the exercise. And now President Reagan says the Marines will remain until peace and a stable and united government have come to Lebanon. Well, if *that* is the goal, U.S. troops are in Lebanon until—in the grand old phrase of Khrushchev/shrimps learn to whistle.

One problem with the dark Reagan threat to "punish" those responsible for the truck-bombings is that we can't find out who in hell the villains are. An organization called the Islamic Holy War has claimed credit for all the car-bombings, but no one seems to know who they are. The Lebanese police are investigating the incident, but, as Thomas L. Friedman wrote in a witty article in the *New York Times* (October 25), they will undoubtedly never find the culprits, because: "for one, the investigation is being led on the Lebanese side by the military prosecutor, Assad Germanos, who led the investigation into the Sabra and Shatila massacre a year ago. In a draft report on the massacre . . . he concluded that it was impossible to say who exactly did the killing, though an Israeli investigation was able to do so." And further: "Since the Lebanese civil war broke out in 1974, virtually no major crime



of any political significance has been solved in Lebanon by the military prosecutor or anyone else."

But the Reagan Administration is not worried about such niceties as pinpointing the guilty. Instead, we seem to be adopting the Nazi practice of hauling in and "punishing" any and everyone in sight. First, we became convinced that the Islamic Holy War are "pro-Iran Shiites." Sounds ominous, except that most Shiites are "pro-Iran" in the sense that they consider Khomeini the highest spiritual leader in the Shiite world. But this hardly means that Tehran gives them orders, or that the Tehran government can be held responsible for any action committed in Lebanon by any "pro-Iranian group." Indeed, Iran—usually not shy about their achievements—has completely denied any role in the truck-bombings. Despite the lack of evidence, however, the U.S. remains convinced of Iran's guilt, and so we have finally—along with trigger-happy Israel—punished the "guilty" by bombing . . . Syria! or rather Syrian positions in Lebanon. Go figure this lunatic logic. Syria, after all, is nearer to us in Lebanon than Iran is, and so the Syrians make a handier target. And the bombers allegedly live in Syrian-occupied territory in Lebanon, so that makes the Syrian government guilty of their crimes. Great! On that basis, if John W. Hinckley, Jr. had happened to have been a Canadian, the U.S. would have been justified in fire-bombing Toronto. The next step, I suppose, will be: on to Damascus!

Just as in Vietnam, we hear from the Reagan Administration that, whether or not the Marines should have been there in the first place, once they are there they cannot be pulled out, else the U.S. will lose its "credibility." Once a "commitment" is made, no matter how idiotic, it must be pursued to and beyond the bitter end in order to preserve American "credibility." A beautiful recipe for permanent war, and for an escalation and a morass that will make Vietnam look like a tea party. In a sense, the situation is worse than Vietnam. With Soviet military advisers among the Syrians, the danger of World War III breaking out is far greater. And instead of two or three political or military forces at work, the U.S., the Ugly American bull in the china shop, has blundered into a region where there are literally dozens of warring ethnic, religious, political, and military groups, each of whom has hated the guts of the others for up to a thousand years—and often with good reason. How *dare we* bulldoze our way into this tangled web that is none of our damned business, and then proceed to grow petulant because there are all these inconvenient groups that won't roll over and obey American orders: Druze, Shiites, Sunni "fundamentalists", "pro-Iranians," Palestinian loyalists, Palestinian rebels, left secularists, Christian anti-Phalangists, and on and on? Yankee, go home!

It even got to the point that the U.S. became worried about an attack of neutralism in Israel, as Israel, stung by its heavy losses and its lack of accomplishment in the war of aggression against Lebanon, retreated to the south, where it is surrounded by a hostile Shiite civilian population. In the midst of this, the U.S. began to pressure Israel to resume its old ultrahawk role, to come back and crush the Druze and the Shiites in the villages of the Shouf mountains. The astonishing (and unconstitutional, if anyone cares) Reagan-Shamir agreement was designed to lure Israel into resuming its war-fighting role in Lebanon (Note the irony: the U.S. Marines were *originally*

sent in to protect the Palestinian refugees from the Israeli puppets of the Christian Phalange.)

The escalation of American fighting is based on the madman view of "world terrorism" that has been pushed successfully for years in the U.S. by the Stirling-DeBorchgrave-Moss-CIA axis. That view holds that any "terrorist" bombing or shooting or kidnapping anywhere is run by evil Cuba or Khomeini's Iran and *through* them to the Muscovite puppetmasters of the KGB. As Robert Scheer pointed out in his scintillating and scary book, *With Enough Shovels*, Ronald Reagan—and his ultra-right confreres—came to office with a world-view held fast for over four decades that all trouble in the world is caused by the masters of the "evil empire" in the Kremlin. It's as if every bad guy in the world must be, ultimately, a Commie. To call this "simplistic" is to put far too kind a face on it. Do any of these jerks know what Khomeini *does* with real, that is, Iranian Commies? If the Reagan warhawks should ever find out on their own hides, they would sing a different tune.

There is, of course, a curious exception. Any U.S. political figure who gets assassinated is invariably killed by a lone nut. The long hand of the KBG invariably stops at the water's edge. We might note, too, that Colonel Khadaffi, after enjoying his day in the sun as the top neo-Commie bogey-man for our ultra-right, has faded away and been replaced by the Ayatollah. (Does anyone remember the bearded Libyan "hit-men" who were supposed to have invaded our shores in order to kill Reagan? And whatever happened to them? )

The United States seems to be constitutionally incapable of being neutral in anyone else's conflict, and sure enough, we are moving further into the Iraq-Iran war, raging now for four years. Iran being neo-Commie bad guys, Iraq, the reasoning goes, *must be* good guys, and so the U.S. is now "tilting toward" Iraq. Mitterand's France, the Social Democrat running dog of U.S. imperialism, has sent fighter-bombers to Iraq, fueling the crisis and threatening escalation. Iraq and Iran have been fighting a war of attrition, which the far less populous Iraq is ill-equipped to wage. Iraq's despicable totalitarian dictator, Saddam Hussein, is openly threatening to bomb Iranian oil facilities at Kharg Island in order to provoke the Iranians into mining or sinking Western oil tankers in the Straits of Hormuz, whereupon U.S. imperialism will once again rush to the aid of yet another "free world" regime.

As we wrote in the August, 1982 *Lib. Forum* ("Don't Cry for Iraq") the Hussein despotism deserves no support whatever. Iraq launched its war of aggression against Iran in September 1980, and deserves to take the consequences. Its regime is a socialist despotism ruled by the Ba'ath party and devoted to the cult of personality of Saddam Hussein. Recently it was discovered that the driver of the truck-bomb of the U.S. Embassy at Kuwait was a "Pro-Iranian Iraqi." A "pro-Iranian" because he was a Shiite. And the crucial religious dimension in Iraq is that Hussein and his Ba'ath dictatorship constitute a Sunni minority tyrannizing over a Shiite majority in Iraq. That's the reason why anti-Hussein dissidents are apt to be both Shiite and "pro-Iran."

## II. Syria, the Palestinians, and Yasser Arafat

When I was growing up, we used to scoff at the Communist

Party for its dizzying reversal of "line", of who the good guys and bad guys might be. Well, the CP had nothing on U.S. imperialism for dizzying reversals. Blundering into age-old conflicts, not knowing what the hell it's doing, and yet desperately anxious to intervene somehow, to find groups that are one micrometer more Good Guy than the opposition, the United States has reversed its field without shame on the question of Yasser Arafat. Reviled for many years as a terrorist thug, Arafat, now on the ropes, has suddenly been transformed by U.S. propaganda into a shining "moderate", the last best hope for peace on the Palestinian question. Indeed, the U.S. had to put enormous pressure on its Israeli allies so that Israel wouldn't blow the Arafat troops to smithereens as they embarked from Tripoli to Tunis and other far-off Arab climes. Before that, Arafat's bacon was saved by his old friend the Soviet Union, who put tremendous pressure on its Syrian ally, and, in turn, on the PLO rebels to let Arafat and his men slip out of the squeeze that the rebels had put on Arafat's forces in Tripoli. If not for the Russians, Arafat might well now be permanently out of the Middle Eastern picture.

So what's the real story here? For many years, Arafat was revered by all Palestinians as the George Washington of his people, as the guerrilla leader and head of Al Fatah, by far the biggest single force in the umbrella Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Using great diplomatic skill, Arafat was able to win recognition and acceptance for the PLO at the UN and at many world capitals. For years, however, the Palestinians have been faced with an important quandary: should they accept a mini-Palestinian state, consisting only of the 1967 Israeli conquests of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip? Should they accept this half (or rather one third of) a loaf, rather than the full program for Palestinian justice, which would mean returning all the lands stolen by Israel to their Palestinian owners? In the latter event, the state of Israel would virtually cease to exist. The Palestinian quandary is complicated by the fact that Israel has shown no sign of offering such a deal; the deal has been bandied about by assorted "moderates" in the U.S., among the Arabs, and among some of the peace dissidents in Israel. Most of the non-Al Fatah forces in the PLO, constituting the "rejection front" headed by Dr. George Habash of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, angrily reject such ideas. Arafat and Al Fatah have always been ambivalent and vague on the issue, and the "extreme moderates" of Fatah, headed by the late "pro-American" Dr. Issam Sartawi, eagerly embraced the idea of such a deal. Dr. Sartawi was reviled as a traitor to Palestinian justice, and executed summarily by refusenik "terrorists"—an instructive lesson to other Palestinians who might have been tempted to follow his lead.

It must be realized that the issue is not simply whether or not to accept half a loaf. The rejectionists are not so crazy that they would simply refuse an outright mini-State. The problem is that the "moderates" are not simply offering a mini-State to the Palestinians. In order to appease Israel and gain its acceptance of the scheme, the mini-State would (a) have to renounce all claims to justice for the Palestinians driven out by Israel in the 1947-67 period, that is for the Palestinians who once lived in Israel proper; and (b) would have to remain disarmed, its borders patrolled by UN "peacekeepers", and suffer other indignities in order to reassure Israel. It is *these conditions* that no self-respecting Palestinian would agree to. A

Palestinian State would have to be a sovereign state among nations, and not accept any sort of special demilitarization, and it could not barter away the just rights of Arab brethren despoiled by Israel in 1947-48. This renunciation of just claims to stolen lands within Israel is what Zionists are always referring to as "recognizing Israel's right to exist." And that is why this renunciation or "recognition" is the heart of the Palestinian problem.

In the midst of this tinder-box, Ronnie Reagan unveiled his famous Plan to solve the Palestinian problem. The plan would create a mini-State on the West Bank and Gaza, all right, but (a) it would involve the renunciations, the disarmament and the guarantees mentioned above, and (b)—final indignity!—the mini-State would not even be Palestinian! The PLO would be deprived of any role, and the Palestinians would be "represented" by the infamous King Hussein of Jordan, who turned and butchered the PLO guerrillas without warning in the brutal month of Black September, 1970. For the United States, in its typical ignorance and arrogance, to airily appoint the "pro-Western moderate" Hussein as eternal spokesman for the Palestinians was bound to raise their hackles.

Issam Sartawi was eager to embrace even this egregious sellout, and so he was summarily disposed of by the refuseniks. But the rejectionists and even increasing numbers in Al Fatah looked upon Arafat's evasive and ambivalent response to the Reagan Plan with deep suspicion. The Al Fatah guerrillas began to realize that for years Arafat had done more talking and showboating than real fighting. He was so enamoured of his jet-set image that he had neglected the actual war front. His eagerness to display his "moderation" was becoming increasingly evident. And, to top it all, he gathered around him as guerrilla commanders lazy and corrupt cronies. When Arafat greeted his pummelling by the Israeli aggressors in the 1982 invasion of Lebanon as some sort of heroic "victory," it became apparent to the majority of the Al Fatah fighters that the showboating Yasser Arafat had outlived his usefulness to the Palestinian cause. He had become a drag upon the revolution.

There is another important difference between the strategic perspective of Arafat and the refuseniks: Their position on the "front-line" (those bordering on Israel) Arab states. In order to pursue a short-cut to victory, Arafat has always trusted blindly in seemingly sympathetic Arab regimes. Yet he has consistently been betrayed. Arafat trusted King Hussein of Jordan, and as a result the PLO was almost wiped out by the horror of Black September. Then Arafat settled in Lebanon, and he trusted Syria, who responded by invading Lebanon in 1976 when the coalition of the PLO and the Lebanese Left were on the point of total victory. It was "Commie" Syria, now supposedly the champion of the radical Palestinian cause, who crushed the Lebanese Left and restored minority Christian rule. In contrast to this running after short-runs, to this purblind reliance on Arab states that are only interested in their own power and not in justice for Palestinians, Habash and the rejectionists have long pointed out that the Palestinians can only win in a long-run perspective, by first engaging in a long march through the institutions, overthrowing the untrustworthy Arab states and relying mainly on Palestinians themselves for a Palestinian victory.

Thus, it is true in a very different sense from the Reagan Plan that the large majority of Jordanians are ethnically Palestinian. Jordan *is* Palestinian, but the only way to effectuate this reality is not to call King Hussein a surrogate "Palestinian", but to overthrow Hussein and his Bedouin praetorian guard and replace them by a Palestinian-ruled Jordan. There is no sign of this happening, although the gutsy movement, Black June, headed by Abu Nidal, is headed toward this goal. Taking this radical perspective will be slower, but it will in the long run be a far surer path for the Palestinian cause.

The situation now is tangled and complex. Aided by the Soviet Union and the United States, Arafat was able to escape from Tripoli. He has no base anywhere near Palestine, his troops are scattered all over North Africa, and yet the U.S. is pinning its hopes on his re-forming an alliance with Jordan. Arafat clearly has nine lives, so it is difficult to know which way events will jump. Although scorned and repudiated by most of the Fatah guerrillas, headed by Colonel Abu Moussa, Arafat still has the strong support of the West Bank civilian masses, who have not caught up with the significance of recent events. Only time will tell how much of a role the wily Arafat will be able to carve out for himself in the Middle East.

As a footnote to the inability of the United States to be neutral in *any* situation, let us note the cries of horror with which it greeted the recent declaration of independence by the new sovereign state of Northern Cyprus. For years, Cyprus has been in effect partitioned between the Turkish-occupied North and the Greek South. But why *shouldn't* the Turkish minority on Cyprus have the power to secede and set up their own republic?

It is true that when Turkey invaded Cyprus several years ago, it occupied the ethnic Turkish areas, but unfortunately extended Turkish rule to places far beyond the range of Turkish ethnicity. In short, it congered many ethnically Greek areas. Still and all, partition is always to be welcomed. Why shouldn't the Turkish Cypriotes have their own country? And why does the United States, with unvarying accuracy, not only intervene in all foreign quarrels but usually take the wrong side?

In this Turkic-Greek fight, there is nary a Commie in a carload. As a matter of fact, the Turkish government is considerably to the right of Greece. So why did we come out on the side of Greece over Turkey? Could it, by any chance, be due to the fact that there are lots of Greek-American voters and hardly any American Turks? Is this too cynical a stance? Or is it that U.S. imperialism has an all-pervasive instinct for coming out *against* the course of justice in any given foreign policy situation?

Finally, while ruminating on the Middle East, we may ponder the following fascinating question: Is sacrificing one's life for a cause Heroism or Crazy Fanaticism? This is a tough question, especially for someone like myself who espouses a pro-life ethic. Ayn Rand, the great opponent of self-sacrifice, tried to bring it in again through the back door by justifying such action in the name of a "life worth living". Perhaps, but this is hardly very convincing. At any rate, on one thing I am clear: It is illegitimate to brand someone who dies for a cause *you* don't like as a crazy fanatic while honoring as heroes those who die for a cause of which *you* approve. But yet the press has been denouncing the young lad who drove the truck-

bomb into American Marine headquarters in Beirut as a bestial fanatic who dared to smile at the end, while lauding Marine Commandant General Paul Kelley for opining: "I would simply ask that all Americans this evening, with bended knee, thank God, that this country of ours can still produce young Americans who are willing to lay down their lives for free men everywhere."

Maybe it all depends on *which* God one is praying to. If the young truck driver was indeed a Shiite Muslim, as is generally believed, then he had a powerful incentive for his kamikaze deed. For Shiites believe that all who die for *their* cause are assumed straight to Heaven, without any of the delays and uncertainties that afflict everyone else. Can the Judeo-Christian religion offer anything comparable?

### III. Conquering Little Grenada

Unfortunately, our title and article, "Ronald Reagan, Warmonger" (July-August *Lib. Forum*) proved to be all too prophetic. In a brutal act of naked aggression, Reagan on October 25 invaded the tiny island nation of Grenada, along with a few measly troops from neighboring client governments used as a flimsy cover. Not only was this a reprehensible act of aggression and murder, but it violated every tenet of international law and of U.S. treaties. International law is scarcely libertarian law, but at least it offers *some* restrictions on one government's intervention into another country. Thus, it is anti-libertarian for one government to aid another state militarily against the other's revolutionaries, but it does happen to be consonant with international law. But governmental aid to subversive troops in another country (such as the massive U.S. aid to the Nicaraguan *contras*) *does* violate international law. Even more of a violation is a naked act of aggression against another state and its people. But that is what U.S. imperialism, at last shedding much of its usual pose of legalistic hypocrisy, has done in Grenada.

Note the following:

A. The U.S. invasion was a clear and dramatic violation of Article 15 of the 1948 charter of the Organization of American States, of which the U.S., the puppet island governments, and Grenada were all signatories. Article 15 states: "No state or group of states has the right to intervene, directly or indirectly, for any reason whatever, in the internal or external affairs of any other state", whether by "armed force" or otherwise.

B. The invasion of Grenada was also a clear violation of Article 17 of the OAS charter: "The territory of a state is inviolable; it may not be the object, even temporarily, of military occupation or other measures of force taken by another state, directly or indirectly, on any grounds whatever." The United States did not seek the approval of the OAS before invading, because it would not have received it.

C. The invasion of Grenada was a violation of the UN charter, which prohibits "the threat or use of force" in international affairs except for defense against "armed attack." Grenada, it seems superfluous to add, had not launched any armed attack against the U.S.—or indeed against any other state.

D. The invasion of Grenada was illegal, because it did not



follow upon a declaration of war by the Congress.

E. The invasion of Grenada was illegal, because it violated the War Powers Resolution of 1973. Reagan lied in claiming that he had notified Congress after the fact of invasion, in a manner "consistent with the War Powers Resolution." For Reagan willfully failed to report that he had introduced U.S. troops "into hostilities"; if he had so reported, the resolution would have required him to "terminate" the use of troops within 90 days.

F. The excuses used by Reagan for his brutal act of murder were feeble to the point of obscene. He claimed he acted to protect U.S. citizens in Grenada. But there was no evidence whatever that these citizens, mostly students at the St. George's University School of Medicine, were under any threat, imminent or otherwise. In fact, the head of the medical school, Charles R. Modica, was bitterly critical of the invasion, and pointed out that the only threat to the lives and persons of the students was that posed by the invasion itself.

It's true that Mr. Modica, after a lengthy session with State Department officials, changed his tune, and declared that their "information" had led him to favor the invasion in retrospect. One wonders what in fact the State Department told Modica, and whether anything was mentioned, for example, about the legitimacy in American eyes of his Grenadian medical school and their practice of medicine in the U.S.

The United States lied, too, when it said that the Grenada airport was closed and that therefore the students could not have been evacuated without the invasion. Only the day before the invasion, Canada evacuated its citizens from Grenada at the airport with no problem. Furthermore, in a desperate attempt to forestall the attack, the Grenada authorities offered any guarantees that the Americans wanted on the safety or the rapid evacuation of the students. In fact, Grenada's Revolutionary Military Council, the Austin junta ruling the island, hand-delivered a note to the U.S. Embassy in Barbados, stating that: "We reiterate that the lives, well being and property of every American and other foreign citizen residing in Grenada are fully protected and guaranteed by our government. There is absolutely no basis whatsoever for any country launching an invasion of our beloved country and homeland."

But all to no avail. No plea was enough or was even heard by a Reagan Administration hell-bent on a war they could finally win. The Grenadians delivered the message at the U.S. Embassy at 2 A.M. Monday morning October 17. The U.S. reply—ignoring the Grenadian guarantees and simply reiterating concern about American safety—was sent not by normal diplomatic channels but by slow commercial telex after midnight Tuesday morning (a ploy reminiscent of U.S. actions at Pearl Harbor!). The idiotic excuse was that the Reagan Administration didn't "recognize" the military regime on Grenada as a "legitimate" government. The Council never received the telex. The *real* reply came a few hours later, from U. S. Marines and Army Rangers spitting death.

The Reagan Administration also claimed that the invasion was needed to "restore law and order and governmental institutions", and, as a corollary, "to forestall further chaos." But, first, it is unclear why the United States is supposed to be functioning as the imposer of law, government and "order" throughout the world, or why its function is supposed to be

that of universal repressor of "chaos." And, second, there was hardly any chaos or absence of law and government on Grenada. On the contrary, there was all too much government. Obviously, what Reagan was *really* saying is that the U.S. has the right to invade any country having a government it does not like, in this case Marxist-Leninist, and impose any other government—including its own troops—that it desires.

One of Reagan's excuses for his aggression is that the existing government (the Austin regime) murdered the Prime Minister. But since this Prime Minister, whom Reagan was claiming to avenge, was Maurice Bishop, a Marxist-Leninist who had seized control of Grenada in a *coup* in 1979, this means that the U.S. is willing to go to war to defend the honor of one Marxist-Leninist group against another—in this case a harder-core faction. Further, there is a great deal of evidence that Reagan had been toying with the idea of invading Grenada when it was still ruled by the beloved Bishop.

Secretary of State Shultz's excuse—that the U.S. had to act to put an end to "an atmosphere of violent uncertainty" in Grenada—is an even more destructive variant of the anti-"chaos" argument. Every time there is "violent uncertainty" somewhere, are we supposed to go to war?

The final insult was Reagan's last alibi for the invasion; "to restore democratic institutions" in Grenada. So are we supposed to wage war around the globe to impose "democracy" everywhere? Why then doesn't Reagan invade Haiti, Chile, South Africa, South Korea and a host of other undemocratic states? In fact, how many countries around the globe does this cretin think can pass muster in any sense as "democratic"? Darned few is the answer. We are back to the worst lunatic doctrines of Woodrow Wilson, in which the United States is supposed to wage perpetual war in order to cram "democratic institutions" down everyone's throat. Even the hawk Senator Moynihan (D, N.Y. ) protested at this and declared that he could not see how "democracy" can be brought to Grenada at the point of a bayonet.

And, finally, what in the concrete does this "restoration of democratic institutions" amount to? It turns out that the U.S. plan was to reactivate the British "Governor-General" in Grenada—the last defunct remnant of British imperialism in Grenada—and get him to *appoint* a new puppet government. What price "democracy" now?

In fact, since the American invasion, the resurrected Governor-General, Sir Paul Scoon, has been imposing "democracy" upon Grenada via the American troops. His hand-picked Cabinet is only a figure head, without power, and Scoon rules directly with the aid of American bayonets.

A particularly bizaare aspect of the Grenada caper was reactivating Scoon, since Great Britain itself not only refused to join the invasion, but sharply warned the U.S. against it. We have come to a helluva pass when Margaret Thatcher, the Butcher of the Falklands, is pleading with Reagan to show some common sense and restraint in Grenada. Legally, furthermore, Grenada is and has been a member of the British Commonwealth of Nations, and is an ally of Great Britain, so that the U.S. attacked and invaded a British ally. In fact, in one charming though highly unrealistic scenario, Britain could have interpreted the U.S. assault on Grenada as an attack on itself, and so we could have seen the fascinating spectacle of Great Britain launching a missile strike on Miami in

retaliation for our aggression against its Commonwealth protectorate!

Ronald Reagan, in announcing his attack upon Grenada, condemned its regime as a "brutal group of leftist thugs." But what are we supposed to do about *rightist* thugs? And especially about the Greatest Rightist Thug of them all, Ronald Reagan? For Reagan is not only a thug but a cowardly bully, only ready to launch armed aggression against a nation too tiny to fight back. As a friend of mine suggested, "Reagan has been anxious to Win One for the Gipper, and so he finally picked on a country he could—probably—beat." But even teeny Grenada minus an army gave us unexpected trouble, the Pentagon admitting that it had greatly underestimated the fighting capabilities of the Grenadians and of the Cuban construction workers (!) In fact, to defeat several hundred Grenadians, the U.S. had to send wave after wave of fresh troops, totalling over 5,000, from Marines to Army Rangers to the famous 82nd Airborne. Perhaps Maurice Bishop, who in 1981 forecast a U.S. aggression against Grenada, will prove prophetic when he warned: "The United States will find it a lot easier to land here than to leave."

In fact, Bishop's prediction has already come true. At first, the U.S. authorities trumpeted that our troops would be in and out—a quick victory taking no more than a week. Then it became "many weeks." And finally it was out by Christmas. When Christmas arrived, the Reagan Administration had totally changed its tune: only all "combat" troops were out of Grenada, with four hundred American troops remaining indefinitely, i.e. permanently. Half of these "non-combat" troops are military police, brandishing their "non-combat" weapons as they swagger around Greda, seeking subversive Cubanos.

The determined resistance of the Grenadians has obscenely been used by Reagan to justify the aggression itself. They had a large cache of arms! What would the evil Grenadians need arms for anyway? Surely not to guard against an American invasion, as the "paranoid" Grenadians had kept muttering? Don't they know that the U.S. is always peace-loving, and never never commits an act of aggression? So that the cache of arms, many of which were 1870 rifles, were marked down by the Reagan Administration as "proof" of the imminent aggression to be launched by teeny Grenada. Whom do you suppose they were going to attack, they with no army, navy or air force? A massive strike against Pensacola, perhaps, the "soft underbelly" of the North American continent?

It now turns out that the evil airport, which Grenada had under construction and which the U.S. denounced as a base for military attack, was a genuine airport after all! There were none of the underground installations that mark a military airstrip. The construction workers may have been Cuban, but the company employing them was British, and now the Americans are talking about finishing the airport for Grenada.

Ronald Reagan claimed that the invasion had come "just in time." Just in time for what? Even the Reagan Administration has not claimed that Grenada was planning, much less about to launch, armed aggression against any other Caribbean island, let alone the U.S. (No, dammit: If we don't stop them now, in Grenada, we will soon be defending the shores of Coney Island from Grenadian attack. And so, in the "complex of fear and vaunting" which Garet Garrett pointed

out is endemic to Empire, we launched a "preventive" strike.) No, it was just in time in the sense that the Grenadians might have been able to defend themselves for a longer time, to turn even this tight little island into another Vietnam for U.S. imperialism.

Another *post facto* rationale has been to play up the Cuban connection, as if the Austin-Coard regime were Cuban puppets. Apart from any other problem with this reasoning, the fact is that Maurice Bishop, the man Reagan was supposedly avenging, was far closer to the Cubans than were Austin-Coard. Castro and the Communist Party of Cuba strongly denounced the Austin-Coard *coup* against Bishop, and Fidel has described his relations with these ultra-hard-liners as "cold and tense" at best.

A particularly repellent aspect of the Reagan announcement of his aggression was his trundling out M. Eugenia Charles, Prime Minister of Dominica, the most "pro-American" of the Caribbean puppet regimes, to supply a native fig leaf for the invasion. Miss Charles provided a unique justification by interdependence and kinship: "I don't think it's an invasion," she said. "We are one region. We belong to each other. We are kith and kin." Well, that clears *that* up: alibiing mass murder by invoking a "sense of belonging." Truly, in Isabel Paterson's memorable phrase, the "humanitarian with the guillotine."

A few days after the invasion, La Charles came up with another dubious contribution to the cause of the Grenada War. She then maintained that the beleaguered Governor-General Scoon, who had been deposed in 1974 when Grenada became independent of Britain (though still a member of the Commonwealth), had asked the U.S. and its Caribbean stooges to intervene and invade Grenada. Miss Charles's assertion that Scoon is the "only constitutional authority" in Grenada proves a bit too much. For on those grounds, Queen Elizabeth would, right now, be the "only constitutional authority" over the American "colonies", and the U.S.A. would still be a vassal of Great Britain. It is strange for the U.S. to endorse this sort of argumentation.

Another heinous aspect of the invasion was the impudence by which the U.S. barred reporters from accompanying the invading forces. It was an act unprecedented in American history. In fact, when the U.S. troops found four American reporters on the island they promptly shipped them off by force. The insulting excuse was that the U.S. "feared for the safety" of the journalists. Again, phony humanitarianism and liberal paternalism were being used to justify arrant aggression. For, of course, it should be up to the journalists *themselves* whether they should endanger their safety. Does the Reagan Administration think it owns the bodies of the men and women of the press, and is therefore entitled to make such decisions?

The real reason why the press was kept out, while the war was going on, is that the Reagan Administration didn't want any Vietnam-like repetition of the media taking pictures of innocent civilians butchered by U.S. bombs and bullets. As it was, the Reaganite tactics worked beautifully, the embarrassing photos were avoided, and the pictures could be confined to happy Americans (happy to be evacuated from the Grenada war zone, that is) kissing U.S. soil. Far better for the Reaganite image!

(To be continued)

# Mercantilism and Public Choice

by Richard A. Cooper

Ekelund, Jr., Robert B. & Tollison, Robert D., *Mercantilism as a Rent-Seeking Society: Economic Regulation in Historical Perspective*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1982. \$17.50.

Reviewed by Richard A. Cooper

Today's debates over economic regulation versus deregulation render yesterday's debates over the system and doctrine of mercantilism of contemporary interest. In the view of Ekelund and Tollison mercantilism emerged as a result of efforts to obtain monopoly rents through state privileges. The authors state that, "... the supply of and demand for monopoly rights through the machinery of the state is seen as the essence of mercantilism." The authors apply the modern economic theory of public choice and economic regulation in order to understand mercantilism and its decline. Previous studies, they contend, were excessively "ideological," concerned with the arguments of the proponents and opponents of mercantilism. The mercantilist doctrines arose to provide an ideological cover for the privileged monopolists.

The authors rely heavily upon the Swedish classical liberal economist Eli Heckscher's classic study *Mercantilism* for historical data. However, Ekelund and Tollison reject Heckscher's interpretations, which emphasize the role of ideas in the rise and decline of mercantilism. The authors explicitly reject the concept that it was the free trade writers who overthrew the mercantile system in England.

Instead, using public choice analysis, Ekelund and Tollison assert that English mercantilism declined because the rise of parliamentary power raised the lobbying costs for monopoly privileges. As parliament refused to delegate its newly won powers to anybody, any prospective monopolist had to secure majorities in the legislature as well as the acquiescence of the king.

Ekelund and Tollison level two valid criticisms of Heckscher's work. First, they denounce the absence of economic actors from a work purportedly on economic history. Second, they note that Heckscher concurred with the German historical school economists (who praised the mercantilist system) in taking at face value the mercantilist doc-

trines for the building of state power. Ekelund and Tollison reject this public interest appeal as self-serving cant.

Certain observations are in order. My training was in European intellectual history and I believe that the German historical school accepted the Hegelian notion of a state above the interests in society. Moreover, the tendency I found in Heckscher's *Mercantilism* is not so much that of an emphasis upon intellectual history as upon "juristic" developments, an approach which owes much to the German historical school.

Ekelund and Tollison skirt close to the most vulgar sort of Marxist interpretation, albeit with a free-market perspective. Of course, people justify themselves to others on the grounds of serving the public interest. But is it not true that people can sincerely believe that the protectionist or other mercantilist schemes are good for the vast majority of people? I hesitate to say that I do not sincerely believe that free trade and laissez-faire are good for most people while at the same time I believe they personally benefit me. The mercantilists of the age of absolutism, like their counterparts today, will tend to favor a strong state, even though they recognize that it might not work to their advantage in all instances. The authors fall down in not clearly distinguishing between the particular historical actors in the mercantilist system, namely the monarchs, the royal bureaucrats, the guilds, the merchants, and officials of the various municipalities, as well as the writers of mercantilist tracts.

Ekelund and Tollison appear to hold the stereotypical Ricardian view of "Economic Man." This places them in a quandary: they shrink from the implications of their own statements by not applying the same rent-seeking analysis to themselves, other contemporary supporters of deregulation, and their free trade predecessors. They should take note that Ludwig von Mises, in *Human Action* and other works, forcefully reminds us that all values desired by acting humans, whether material or "spiritual," are the objects of economic behavior.

However, Ekelund and Tollison provide a necessary corrective to that somewhat naive concern with mercantilist and free trade propagandists on the part of previous students of mer-

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cantilism. The authors interpret prior views as guided by an evolutionary theory of the history of economic thought, which appears insupportable to me in the light of twentieth century experience, but which was

... propagated by historians of economic thought, such as Viner, who tend to view the history of economic theory as a progression from error to truth. These writers, whose approach is derivative of Adam Smith's famous critique of the mercantilists, have concentrated on an expose of the fallacies of the mercantilists as expressed by the "central tendencies" in the vast literature of the writers of the period. These scholars emphasize the presence of grave errors in mercantilist logic, errors that were exposed by David Hume and the classical economists.

Correctly, in my view, the authors stress the similarity between mercantilism and present-day economic regulation, despite the changes in the political system. I concur with their application of Stigler, Peltzman, Posner and Niskanen's theories of economic regulation to the study of French and English mercantilism. Beyond that, I maintain that they fail to provide the promised application of the interpretation of their model of mercantilism to the contemporary deregulation debate. Perhaps this is because the present controversy contradicts their dismissal of subjective-philosophical influences.

Take airline deregulation for example. We can identify particular authors and studies that persuaded Ralph Nader, Senator Kennedy, and President Ford to champion airline deregulation and to shepherd it through Congress. Did they have self-interest behind them? Yes, but what of it?

We can place Ekelund and Tollison into intellectual perspective. Clearly, they draw upon Chicago and Virginia School approaches, with a greater stress upon the Virginia "public choice" model as most relevant to the auctioning of monopoly privileges. As they see themselves: "It should be stressed that our purpose is not to *evaluate* mercantilist ideas from the standpoint of modern economic theory. Rather, it is to *explain* mercantile political economy using positive economic theory."

Such an approach does have some elements in common with the praxeological method of Von Mises, in that it is concerned with the actual subjective motivations and choices of the historical actors rather than quantification in the Chicago mould.

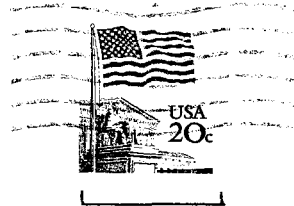
The authors' methodological assumptions appear "Austrian": "A blend of methodological individualism and evolving institutional constraints is central to our main thesis concerning the rise and fall of mercantilism . . . Given the standard and timeless assumptions of individual-choice theory, the rent-seeking model telescopes into a specification of the constraints that modify economic behavior." James M. Buchanan and Gordon Tullock of the Virginia School have acknowledged their intellectual debts to Von Mises and the Austrian School. Ekelund and Tollison are quite "Austrian" in their stress on mercantilism as a dynamic process rather than a set of legal institutions.

Ekelund and Tollison have created an impressive reinterpretation of mercantilism, despite the flaws in their conception of economic behavior. It should start a healthy debate on mercantilism.

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