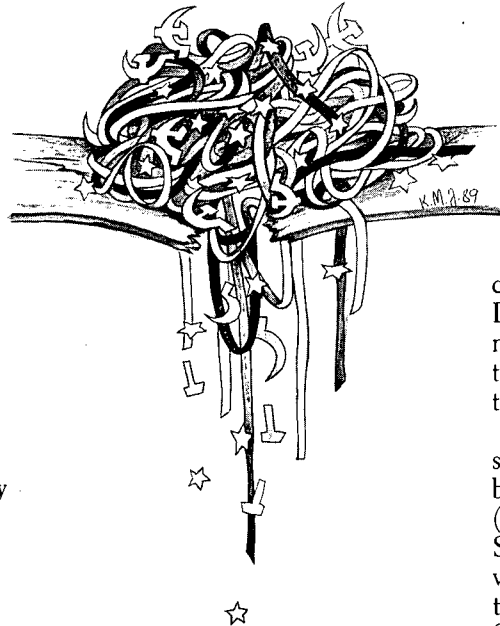


National Insecurity

by William R. Hawkins

"Diplomacy is utterly useless where there is no force behind it."
— Theodore Roosevelt



Inside the National Security Council
by Constantine C. Menges
New York: Simon & Schuster;
418 pp., \$19.95

The Presidency and the Management of National Security
by Carnes Lord
New York: Free Press; 207 pp.,
\$22.50

From the elevation of arms control to the opening of talks with the PLO, the course of American foreign policy in recent years has led some to wonder why Ronald Reagan was once considered such a contrast to Jimmy Carter. The cycle is best seen in Central America. In 1980, the question was whether El Salvador could survive a Communist insurgency. The Reagan Doctrine's support of the contras shifted the strategic balance. The question then became could Nicaragua survive an anticommunist insurgency. But these days, leftist demonstrators once again chant, "Nicaragua is now free. El Salvador soon will be." Soviet aid flows to the Sandinistas (and on to guerrillas, terrorists, and drug runners throughout the region), while the contras starve.

Reagan's defenders blame the Democratic Congress. The Boland amendments and Speaker Wright's plots with the Sandinistas come readily to mind.

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Yet the most powerful enemies of President Reagan's policies were within the executive branch at the Department of State. Reagan tolerated George Schultz as secretary of state, a man who in championing the appeasement policies of the Foreign Service worked tirelessly to subvert the President's policies—and in the last two years, succeeded.

This is the message of Constantine Menges and Carnes Lord. Both men served on the National Security Council staff (Menges, 1983-86; Lord, 1981-83). The NSC is supposed to keep the President in control of foreign policy. However, in the struggle between the NSC and the State Department, the NSC is short of resources unless the President stays involved in the process and imparts to the NSC his authority to deal with the bureaucracy. Reagan did not do this. Given the record of George Bush and James Baker during this period, matters are unlikely to improve.

The Menges and Lord books are complementary. Menges relates with details that make the blood boil the

constant intrigues hatched by the State Department, while Lord does an organizational analysis, proposing reforms throughout the foreign policy apparatus to increase presidential authority.

Menges had senior NSC staff responsibility for Latin America. He had been a Latin America CIA specialist (1981-83). He firmly believes that if the Sandinistas are not removed, Mexico will eventually fall and the US will face the unaccustomed danger of a large, Soviet-armed enemy on its own border.

Menges recounts seven major attempts between 1981 and 1986 by State to substitute its own program for Reagan's. State wanted a negotiated settlement that would ratify Communist control of Nicaragua and provide US economic aid in exchange for a Sandinista promise not to pursue revolutionary activity elsewhere. State opposed any attempt to remove the Sandinista regime or require it to adopt democracy as being contrary to this formula. Of course, without pressure there was no reason for the Sandinistas to make concessions.

That the State formula was contrary to Reagan's program was revealed whenever the President discovered what State was doing. The President always said "no" (often displaying considerable anger), ordered State plans halted, and sent personal assurances to friendly Central American governments. Yet he left the conspirators in place to try again, and they quickly learned to operate behind the President's back—and to block all attempts to inform the

President what was happening. This is the most shocking part of the story.

A few of the many examples: in early 1983, when Jeane Kirkpatrick made a tour of Central America with a letter from Reagan outlining his policy, Thomas Enders, assistant secretary of state for Latin America, sent a letter to all area ambassadors to ignore Kirkpatrick because a new policy, the State formula, was about to be adopted. In 1985, Schultz tried to persuade all Latin American ambassadors appointed by Reagan to resign, so that they could be replaced by career Foreign Service officers chosen by himself. Ambassadors involved had to resort to notes passed through Ed Meese and commercial telegrams to get word to Reagan. Repeatedly, State officials would hold secret talks with the Sandinistas and draw up complete peace treaties without ever showing the documents to the President. Even when these efforts were blocked, word would spread around the region, breeding fear of an impending sell-out. Without American leadership and support, no one can be expected to risk a confrontation with the Soviet-Cuban-Nicaraguan axis.

Robert McFarlane, as head of the NSC, was co-opted by Schultz to block

formal NSC interference. Messages from ambassadors, the NSC staff, Republican congressmen, Defense Secretary Weinberger, and even the heads of foreign governments were lost or delayed if sent by normal bureaucratic channels. Michael Deaver, who wanted to build a new Reagan image as a "man of peace," also worked with Schultz to advance State proposals. And whenever the Sandinistas provoked an outcry on Capitol Hill by invading Honduras or crushing dissent, a cabal swung into action to delay any votes on contra aid until the crisis had passed. State officials would trot out a new "peace process" development that the Democrats would use as an excuse for doing nothing. Eventually, Kirkpatrick, Weinberger, Bill Casey at CIA, and even Menges left government. The NSC was "disgraced" by the Iran-contra affair. Meanwhile, Schultz and the State careerists plodded on, finally gaining victory with the 1987 Arias Plan that sold out the contras for empty promises and a Nobel Prize.

Though Menges concentrates on Central America, he also observes how State worked for similar negotiated settlements of other issues: a desire to trade SDI for limits on Soviet offensive weapons; a cutoff in aid to anticommunist

forces in Angola and Afghanistan for promises of future Cuban and Soviet withdrawals but continuing Communist regimes (both plans advanced in the settlements rushed through in 1988); the constant attempts to buy Soviet goodwill through expanded trade financed on credit.

Menges calls this last point the "shallow economic determinism" shared by the departments of State and Commerce. Menges does not pursue this point as far as he should. It is a powerful ploy for co-opting otherwise "conservative" businessmen and intellectuals. The conservative movement has relied so much on classical liberal rhetoric in its defense of capitalism that it no longer gives due regard to the larger context of this philosophy. Thus the State Department had no problem embracing and promoting Reagan's "free trade" policy, as it is based on the same liberal view of a world of peace and harmony, and denies that other nations might be trying to gain an advantage.

Menges argues that the State Department, though wrong, thinks it is doing the right thing, and Lord speaks of a difference in "culture" at State, but neither explores the philosophical roots of the problem. State's house creed is liberalism. The often cited difference between "classical" and "modern" liberalism is irrelevant here, because continuity exists in liberal thought on international relations stretching back to the Enlightenment. The basic notion is that peace is the norm, conflict an aberration. The purpose of diplomacy is not to advance national interests, but only to clear up misunderstandings before they get out of hand (as Stanley Hoffman posed it, "world order" should be chosen over American "primacy"). It is thus important never to overreact (or even react at all). An occasional corrupt or insane ruler may cause problems, but there are no basic or permanent causes for animosity between peoples. All conflicts of interest can be settled by compromise. Reason will out. The idea that ambition or ideology can pit entire civilizations against each other in an ongoing struggle is totally unacceptable.

What else explains the airy belief that "talks" will bring peace between Israel and the PLO? What is there to talk about except a "Palestinian state" that would pose a mortal threat to Israel? That Schultz's "land for peace" formu-

LIBERAL ARTS

ON DEATH

Death meets us everywhere, and is procured by every instrument, and in all chances, and enters in at many doors; by violence and secret influence; by the aspect of a star and the stink of a mist; by the emissions of a cloud and the meeting of a vapour; by the fall of a chariot and the stumbling at a stone; by a full meal or an empty stomach; by watching at the wine or by watching at prayers; by the sun or the moon; by a heat or a cold; by sleepless nights or sleeping days; by water frozen into the hardness and sharpness of a dagger; or water thawed into the floods of a river; by a hair or a raisin; by violent motion or sitting still; by severity or dissolution; by God's mercy or God's anger; by everything in providence and everything in manners; by everything in nature and everything in chance. *Eripitur persona, manet res*; we take pains to heap up things useful to

our life, and get our death in the purchase; and the person is snatched away, and the goods remain. And all this is the law and constitution of nature; it is a punishment to our sins, the unalterable event of Providence, and the decree of Heaven. The chains that confine us to this condition are strong as destiny, and immutable as the eternal laws of God.

I have conversed with some men who rejoiced in the death or calamity of others, and accounted it as a judgment upon them for being on the other side, and against them in the contention; but within the revolution of a few months the same man met with a more uneasy and unhandsome death; which when I saw, I wept, and was afraid; for I knew that it must be so with all men; for we also shall die, and end our quarrels and contentions by passing to a final sentence.

—from *Holy Dying* by Jeremy Taylor