

By Joel Bleifuss

13 hostages return to court

Among those who are taking seriously evidence that the 1980 Reagan-Bush campaign cut a deal with Iran to delay the release of 52 American hostages until after that year's GOP election victory are some of the hostages themselves. Last week Jim Davis, an attorney for 13 former hostages—citing new information that recently has come to light about the alleged arms-for-hostages deal—asked the U.S. Court of Appeals in Washington, D.C., to rehear a suit he originally filed on behalf of the hostages in June 1981. That suit, which asked \$5 million for each hostage, challenged the agreement between the U.S. and Iran that set the hostages free but barred them from suing for damages. In requesting a rehearing Davis mentioned "recently declassified top-secret documents about the negotiations and agreements related to the release of the hostages" as well as the testimony of Oregon arms dealer Richard Brenneke, who testified in federal court that he was a participant in a 1980 arms-for-hostages deal between Iran and Reagan campaign officials. Davis told *In These Times* that once the federal appellate court has made a ruling, he and his clients will decide whether to "expand the suit to include individuals in addition to the [U.S. and Iranian governments]." He would not speculate on who those individuals might be, but his petition requesting a new hearing refers to "private parties such as William V. Casey, later director of the CIA, as well as persons at least arguably employed by the U.S. government through CIA 'dummy' organizations."

Where was George?

Colorado gold dealer and sometimes-pilot Heinrich "Harry" Rupp claims to have flown 1980 Reagan-Bush campaign director William Casey to Le Bourget Airport outside Paris on the night of Oct. 18, 1980. In addition, Rupp claims that he saw vice-presidential candidate George Bush on the tarmac at Le Bourget Airport. Two other sources, both of whom are veterans of the intelligence business who will not go on record, have told reporters that they learned after the fact that George Bush had been in Paris. Although Bush's staff and the Secret Service deny that he was in Paris on October 18 or 19, he was not seen in public for 21 consecutive hours on those dates—enough time to fly to Paris, attend a meeting and fly back. Rupp was convicted this year in a 1985 bank fraud case. He maintains that he was working on a sanctioned CIA operation at the time. Rupp's allegation came to light after arms dealer Richard Brenneke, a friend of Rupp's who testified in his defense, told a federal court in Denver that he was present at the third of three meetings held in Paris on Oct. 19 and 20, 1980, in which details of the alleged deal were made final. Brenneke says that soon-to-be CIA Director William Casey and the vice president's future foreign policy adviser, Donald Gregg, also attended that meeting.

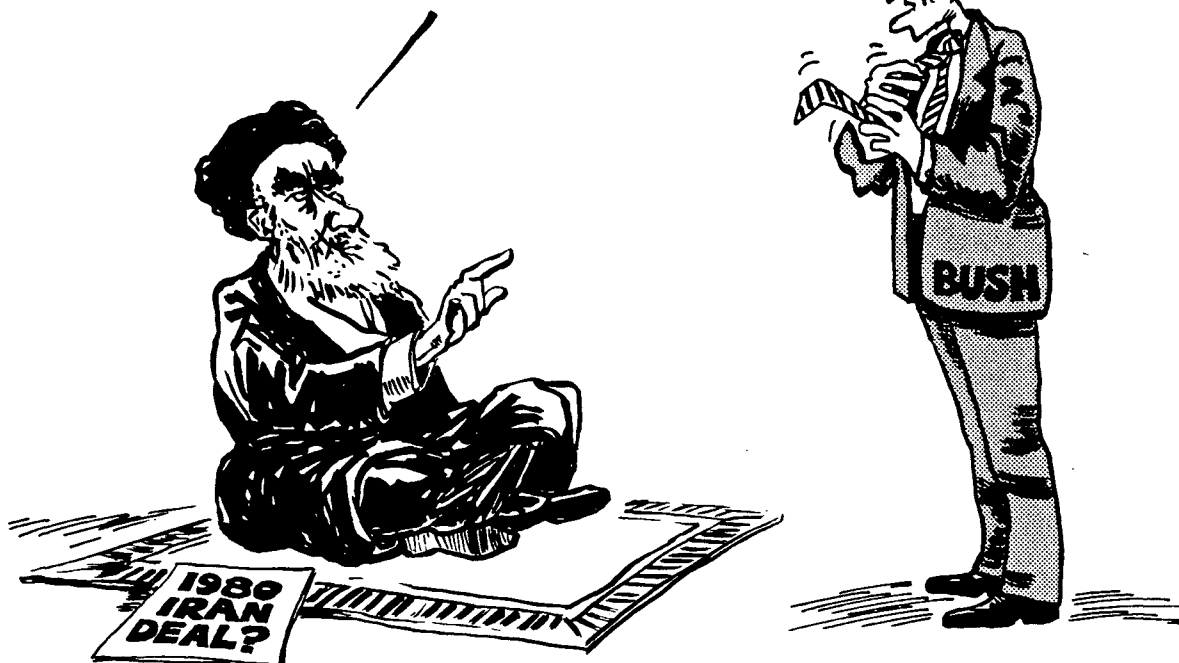
The missing witness

Rupp is now at the Bureau of Prisons' Federal Medical Center in Rochester, Minn. He seems to be held incommunicado, beyond the reach of his attorney and the press. Mike Scott, Rupp's lawyer, last spoke with his client on October 18 when Rupp called him. "I have spent as long as 35 minutes on the phone trying to get a message to him. People I talk to [at the prison] won't tell me who they are," says the Denver-based attorney. On October 27, as *In These Times* went to press, Scott flew out to Minnesota to see if it was possible to speak to Rupp in person. He says this is the first time he has had "this big a problem" reaching a client. "I would hate to think it is anything other than incompetence," says Scott. "Harry [Rupp] says he doesn't get any messages. He seems to be frightened." Rupp became difficult to reach on October 6 when federal authorities transferred Rupp from Denver to a prison in Oklahoma. He was held there before being sent to Rochester where he is undergoing a court-ordered psychological and medical examination. Rupp is reported to be suffering from a serious skin condition that he believes is the result of exposure to Agent Orange while in Vietnam.

Another channel

On October 15 Richard Brenneke called Kenneth Qualls, the manager of Tiger Air, the airline company that owned the BAC 1-11 jet Rupp claims to have flown to Paris. Qualls is an acquaintance of Rupp's. Tiger Air has in the past been a CIA front. Brenneke—who secretly taped the conversation—asked Qualls to help him

LET'S SEE IF I UNDERSTAND —
THIS TIME IT WOULD BE
PREFERABLE IF THE HOSTAGES
WERE RELEASED BEFORE THE ELECTION



Shades of white supremacy

DENVER, COLO.—John Tanton is the founder of U.S. English, a group that campaigns across the country for English to be adopted as the official U.S. language. Tanton is not only concerned with the cultural rot resulting from undue alien influences like use of the Spanish language, he is also worried that minority groups could take jobs and political power from whites.

Tanton wrote in an October 1986 essay, "As whites see their power and control over their lives declining, will they simply go quietly into the night? Or will there be an explosion? Why don't non-Hispanic whites have a group identity, as do blacks, Jews, Hispanics?"

To avert that "explosion," to help protect "non-Hispanic white" identity, the Washington, D.C.-based U.S. English has this fall sponsored referendums in Florida, Arizona and Colorado that would make English the official language of those states.

According to Tanton, a lot is at stake. He wrote, "Is apartheid in Southern California's future? The demographic picture in South Africa now is startlingly similar to what we'll see in California in 2030.... In South Africa, a white minority...speaks one language. A non-white majority...speaks a different language.

"In the California of 2030, the non-Hispanic whites and Asians will own the property, have the good jobs and education, speak one language and be mostly Protestant and 'other.' The blacks and Hispanics will have the poor jobs, will lack education, own

little property, speak another language and will be mainly Catholic. Will there be strength in this diversity? Or will this prove a social and political San Andreas Fault? ...Will Latin American migrants bring with them the tradition of *mordida* [bribery], the lack of involvement in public affairs, etc.?"

Last month former Colorado Govs. Richard Lamm and John Love co-authored an op-ed piece titled "Apartheid American Style" that basically took the same position as Tanton. Both the Tanton and the Lamm/Love pieces blame the victim for difficulty assimilating. The fact is it was only a little more than 40 years ago when signs could be seen in Colorado restaurants that read, "No Niggers, Mexicans or Dogs Allowed." The question for Tanton, Lamm and Love is, who was refusing to assimilate?

Last year Lamm received money from Tanton to help found a think tank from which Lamm could continue his xenophobic crusade against immigrants. That organization, the Federation for American Immigration Reform, a sister organization to U.S. English, helped publish and promote Lamm's book, *Immigration Time Bomb*.

In his book, Lamm wrote, "Some Americans doubt American culture. Some are embarrassed by it. Why would some Americans be reluctant to defend our common culture against the divisiveness of pluralism? First, we Americans are tolerant of the differences among cultures, more open to accept the values of other cultures than any other society on Earth, and reluctant to impose our own culture on others. That's laudable—unless it prevents

us from preserving our culture for our own descendants."

Lamm ironically has now come out against the amendment sponsored by U.S. English. He recently said that the amendment is too vaguely drawn and is not worth the divisiveness it apparently causes.

With the release of the 1986 Tanton essay has come a public outcry. His sharpest statements harken back to the anti-Catholicism of the Ku Klux Klan. "What are the implications of the changes for separation of church and state?" he wondered. "The Catholic Church has never been reticent on this point. If they get a majority of the voters, will they pitch out this concept? ...Keep in mind that many of the Vietnamese coming in are also Catholic.... Is there anything to be said about the Eastern religions that will come along with the Asians?"

In October veteran CBS broadcaster Walter Cronkite withdrew from the advisory board of U.S. English. In his letter of resignation to the president of U.S. English, political and cultural chameleon Linda Chavez, Cronkite wrote, "For your information, I remain firmly opposed to bilingualism in the Canadian pattern, but I also cannot favor legislation that could even remotely be interpreted to restrict the civil rights or the educational opportunities of our minority population."

A few days later, Chavez herself resigned from U.S. English, citing the bizarre hidden agendas of some of its members, like population control through forced sterilization.

It was then Tanton's turn. He resigned from the organization he founded.

—Richard Castro and Matt Levy

Referendum taxes the integrity of the abortion debate

Grab a few extras off the set of *thirty-something*. Tell them to talk about abortion. Within seconds they've dismissed the morality issues, the social questions, the legal dilemmas—they're talking about money. (Their own, of course.) The conclusion? "It's not fair to force taxpayers to pay for abortions."

That's a scenario Michigan voters are seeing replayed each night on their TV screens, courtesy of the Committee to End Tax-Funded Abortion. The commercial urges viewers to save tax dollars by voting "yes" on Proposition A, a ballot referendum that, if passed, will end Medicaid-funded abortions in the state.

"What we're seeing in Michigan is the test run of a whole new set of tactics behind the right-to-life movement," says Jeremy Karparkin, campaign manager of the Peoples Campaign for Choice, the coalition working to defeat the measure. "They've finally realized that getting arrested or bombing abortion clinics or waving dead fetuses around is not the way to go."

When this realization struck Michigan's anti-abortion organizers they went straight to the top for advice, enlisting right-wing media consultant Roger Ailes, the man credited with masterminding George Bush's attack-oriented presidential campaign. It was Ailes' production com-

pany that created the "yuppie lunch" TV spots that equate a vote for Proposition A with a vote against Michigan's welfare program and its dark-skinned beneficiaries.

Shifting debate on Proposition A from abortion to taxes was a wise move, since "the welfare budget in Michigan is always the most controversial component of state appropriations," says Rosanne Less. Less is a contributing editor to *Metro Times*, Detroit's alternative weekly newspaper. In general, she says, those who live outside the state's major cities resent seeing their tax dollars pay for social programs that they believe benefit only Detroit's inner-city poor. With that in mind, anti-abortion organizers are attempting to direct that resentment against the approximately \$5.6 million Michigan spends each year on about 18,000 Medicaid abortions.

Put on the defensive by the opposition's tactics, the Peoples Campaign for Choice has responded with a TV ad campaign. Its cynicism rivals that of the anti-abortion effort. Says Karparkin, "A Medicaid abortion costs about \$300. The cost of bringing a pregnancy to term is about \$3,000, and the cost of supporting someone on public assistance for 18 years is something like \$30,000. His group's commercials drive that point home, portraying Medicaid abortion as a kind of Dickensian investment that will ultimately prevent an increase in the welfare roles.

Defending his group's approach, Karparkin says, "It was the other side that opened that issue up." Those who support equal access to abor-

tion condone "doing anything that is necessary" to retain it, he says, and they understand that the pro-choice side is "the underdog" in the current race.

It is true that the Peoples Campaign cannot compete with the institutional strength and fund-raising capacity of Right to Life of Michigan. That group has been active in Michigan politics for 15 years and entered the campaign with a well-established network of foot soldiers, donors and organizers.

To determine just how well-organized the group is, Less, whose in-depth article on Proposition A was recently published in *Metro Times*, went undercover last month and attended Right to Life of Michigan's annual convention. In just one fund-raising session, she says, 400 people contributed \$9,141 to help finance the Proposition A campaign. The plea of the event's organizers was: "If we have no money we have no message. If we have no message we have no votes. If we have no votes we have no babies."

Nationwide since 1978 there have been eight state referendums seeking to restrict publicly funded abortion, all of them spearheaded by local groups like Right to Life of Michigan. Only one—Colorado's in 1984—has succeeded. This year the question is on the ballot in three states: Colorado, where pro-choice activists are attempting to reverse their 1984 defeat; Arkansas, where a similar referendum failed by 591 votes two years ago; and Michigan.

—Denise Rinaldo

Nicaragua confronts yet another disaster

MANAGUA, NICARAGUA—In its recent history Nicaragua has experienced volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, drought, floods, foreign occupation, revolutionary war, counter-revolutionary war and now a killer hurricane. All that's left would be a plague of locusts, and even that may loom on the horizon as waves of the insects are now attacking various Caribbean islands after hitchhiking across from Africa with Hurricane Joan.

At first Joan seemed to be teasing, hovering menacingly off Nicaragua's Atlantic coast for several days. But then it slammed into Nicaragua with devastating force, packing 130 mph winds and torrential rains. After leveling tiny Corn Island, along the coast, the storm turned the port city of Bluefields into piles of rubble and cut a path of destruction across the country.

Devastation is almost total in many other towns and villages, including Rama, 50 miles inland. From the air the region looks like an enormous muddy lake. All that is visible of Rama are rusty zinc roofs poking above the floodwaters and town residents clustered in makeshift lean-tos on nearby hillsides.

Despite the massive destruction, the death toll is under 100. Credit for this must be given to the extensive preparations undertaken before Joan's arrival, as 200,000 people were evacuated to safer areas.

The scene in Bluefields, Nicaragua's famed center of Afro-Carib culture, is one of utter devastation. Only six buildings in what was a city of 38,000 inhabitants remain relatively undamaged. Most houses were reduced to mounds of boards and corrugated zinc roofing. Debris litters the streets and power lines hang from their broken poles. Residents remain in a state of collective shock as they slowly begin hammering what's left of their homes back together.

"It's something I can't understand, really. I feel like I'm still sleeping. I'm walking, but I don't know how I'm walking," said one resident. "I look around, and everywhere I see the same thing: everything broken up, all the people begging because they don't have anything. I hardly know what street I'm on."

Joan's damage to Nicaragua's already weakened economy is expected to total millions of dollars, especially to crop fields and fisheries. Port facilities and other industries in the Bluefields area are a total loss, as is the city's charming colonial English architecture.

Relief efforts include a nationwide

campaign to send clothing, building supplies and other provisions to the affected areas. Cuba, Mexico and various countries in Europe, Latin America and the Eastern bloc are sending aid.

After proclaiming a state of emergency as the storm neared, President Daniel Ortega personally supervised handling the situation, saying the hurricane presented the worst crisis he has had to handle as Nicaraguan president. Asked if Nicaragua would accept U.S. government aid if offered, he said the best help Washington could give would be to cease support for the contras. But if aid was unconditional, he said, Nicaragua would receive it.

However, a Reagan administration official indicated no official aid was likely because "the Sandinistas could use the aid against the contras." For their part, the contras carried out several actions precisely as catastrophe loomed, including an attack on an ambulance transporting a wounded child in Nueva Guinea. The ambulance belonged to the French agency Doctors Without Borders. The attack left the driver wounded.

—William Gasperini

Readers wishing to aid hurricane victims in Nicaragua can send tax-deductible donations to Quest for Peace's Hurricane Relief Fund, P.O. Box 5206, Hyattsville, Md. 20782.

clear their mutual friend. *In These Times* obtained a transcript of that tape from the *Boston Globe*. Portions of that transcript follow.

Brenneke: I'm going to try and help out, to reduce the sentence or get a new trial for [Rupp].

Qualls: Yeah, that would be perfect if you could do it without implicating anyone.

Brenneke: The tough part is that people are going to be implicated, but those who will probably aren't worthy of great salvation anyways. I don't think this is right to use as a jumping-off point to go after the president of the United States.

Qualls: You know, like I told the press, "You guys don't understand the world. Take people that have been around, and I have been around. So what if somebody gave somebody \$40 million for 52 hostages? They're alive aren't they? If they're alive then who cares? I mean, who really cares?" I said, "Who cares if he was there and he lied?" You know, the fact is that he made a deal, and I said, "Deals like that are made in the Middle East all the time, and if you don't believe me, read the Koran." I said, "The potato farmer in Iowa is going to be pissed at Bush and want an impeachment. But the people that know about the world are gonna say, 'Hey, they did what they had to do. Carter wasn't going to do shit.'"

[Later Qualls suggested that Brenneke try to get Rupp pardoned.]

Qualls: You might want to try a pardon. That might be something. Let me tell you this: the Bush people are aware of what is going on, because I've talked to them. They are very much aware of Harry [Rupp].... I told 'em what everybody's going through. I said, "You know, if you need it, I'll make a statement saying I don't know shit about nothin' and they're barking up the wrong tree." But that may be an avenue.

Brenneke: What avenues did you try in the Republican side?

Qualls: I'd go to [Bush campaign director James] Baker. I got word to him through my channel.

The presses creak

The mainstream media is beginning to show a limited interest in the alleged 1980 arms-for-hostages deal. Several major dailies—including the *Boston Globe*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Portland Oregonian*, the *Rocky Mountain News*, the *Washington Post* and the *Oakland Tribune*—have examined the alleged conspiracy. Most of them expressed a good deal of skepticism about the veracity of allegations and evidence, first published by *In These Times*, that suggested the alleged deal took place. But even the newspapers that took the allegations lightly provided important new insights and information about the alleged Reagan-Iran trade. Some highlights:

The Boston Globe: An article by Ben Bradlee Jr. and Richard Higgins added compelling new information to the public record, particularly the Qualls-Brenneke conversation excerpted above. One of the most interesting statements in the *Globe* article came from Reagan's former secretary of state, Alexander Haig, who said: "My suspicion is that it's not true. On the other hand, I'm not confident that it's not." Another comes from Stansfield Turner, Carter's director of the CIA at the time of the alleged deal: "I've seen no hard evidence a deal was made, but I'm persuaded that some meetings took place that could have lead to a deal."

The Los Angeles Times: The most intriguing statement in an article by Doyle McManus came from Gary Sick, the man who managed the hostage negotiations under President Carter. "There obviously is no smoking gun here, but there is an accumulating body of circumstantial evidence," said Sick, who added, "I used to pooh-pooh these charges. I don't do that anymore."

The Oakland Tribune: In an editorial, the *Tribune* gave a concise summary of the information now available. The editorial, which ran over two days, concluded: "As Sen. Robert Byrd (D-WV) told his colleagues last year, 'The secret policy of arming the ayatollah may even have begun early in the '80s. This bribery and ransom strategy was on the minds of the inner circle of presidential advisers even before the [Reagan] administration took office.... This opens up disturbing questions about the longevity of this ill-conceived arms-for-hostages strategy. It needs further investigation, in my judgment.' But the Iran-contra committees of Congress ducked this inflammatory issue, leaving the allegations unresolved. But when the issue is treason, and when one of the accused is running for president of the United States, the facts demand a thorough accounting."