

# “Happy 1984”

## *The New York Times Editorials on Grenada Betrayed a Deep Suspicion of the American People*

Diana West

Rarely has the editorial page of an American newspaper so consistently misunderstood unfolding events as the *New York Times* did in its recent series on Grenada. At every stage of the Grenada affair, the *Times*' editorial writers completely missed the point. They misunderstood the bloody Leninist coup, they misunderstood the U.S. invasion, and ultimately, they misunderstood the reactions of the American people. The *Times*' editors were so mistrustful of the American government—and later, so mistrustful of the instincts of ordinary Americans—that they failed to recognize simple facts that almost everyone else could see, and they had to take tortuous linguistic routes to bypass the conclusions that nearly everyone else had reached.

From the very beginning, the *Times*' instinct was to point fingers at the Reagan administration. Indeed, the newspaper's reaction to the killing of Grenada's prime minister, Maurice Bishop, was to imply that the United States was to blame. In an editorial on October 21, 1983, entitled “Harvest of Failure in Grenada,” the *Times* stated:

... the United States' undifferentiated hostility to leftists in this hemisphere has been rewarded with a hard lurch to the dogmatic and pro-Soviet left. ... [Bishop's] killing suggests the inadequacy of policies that seek to influence leftist regimes by shunning them.

The editorial went on to fault the United States for not embracing Grenada when Bishop, as prime minister, indicated that constitutional reforms might be in the offing. The *Times* missed the obvious point that Grenada was pitched into revolutionary chaos by a handful of Grenadian military men supported by hundreds of armed Cubans, not a Grenadian majority disaffected by the cold shoulder of the United States. Summing up, the *Times* declared that “events in Grenada suggest that more sophisticated strategies are in order.”

When the troops landed, the *Times*' first—and only—impulse was to condemn the United States. The “frustrated Administration,” it proclaimed on October 26,

“acted not because it is right or necessary, only desirable and doable.” The *Times* then hastily dispensed with the reasons cited to justify the invasion:

A hypothetical threat to American lives, a claim of anarchy and a plea from West Indian neighbors are being served up to justify an invasion of Grenada . . . But no threat has been demonstrated. . . . no such chaos has yet been demonstrated. . . . no such evidence [of Cuban and Soviet intervention] has yet been invoked.

Ignoring even the remotest possibility that there might actually be some credibility to the reasons President Reagan had stated, the *Times* proclaimed:

... what is feasible cannot be the only standard of what is advisable, not if Cuba and the Soviet Union . . . are to be held to account for respecting international frontiers.

This statement would have us equate the American invasion of Grenada with an operation like the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan—a breathtaking proposition if only for what it reveals about the way the *New York Times* thinks. The only victims of American intervention in Grenada were 600 or 700 armed Cubans and a murderous band of Grenadian officers who had been terrorizing the population of the island. In the editorial eye of the *Times*, however, American force is patently wrong, always.

This attitude blinds the editorial writers to the difference between an invasion launched to restore order and democracy and one (of many) launched to crush a popular uprising against brutal domination. In other words, all that separates the American intervention from Soviet intervention is just a blur to the *Times*, minutiae not worth examining.

With an editorial on October 30 entitled “Goliath in Grenada,” the *Times* made the Soviet-American parallel even stronger. Calling the United States a “paranoid bully,” the *Times* gathered speed:

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Simply put, the cost [of the invasion] is loss of the moral high ground: a reverberating demonstration to the world that America has no more respect for laws and borders, for the codes of civilization than the Soviet Union.

... To much of the world, the invasion appears no different than the Soviet suppression of Poland or the occupation of Afghanistan. Even friends in this hemisphere and in Europe are tempted to think of the superpowers as equally selfish, possessed by their geopolitical games. In their private thoughts, they may even raise a cheer for the Davids who stand up to either Goliath.

This is the *New York Times* at its most hysterical, as well as at its most maudlin. Almost worse than its willful neglect of the remarkable differences between Soviet intervention in Poland or Afghanistan (or Czechoslovakia or Hungary) and American intervention is the Carrollian notion that Bernard Coard, the leader of the coup, is receiving silent tributes around the world for having played David to an American Goliath. This preposterous description was the diametric opposite of actual popular reactions, especially in the Caribbean democracies.

The *Times* also misunderstood the American public's enthusiasm for the invasion. It did not consider the possibility that Americans thought the invasion a just rescue mission or a necessary move to counter a real military threat. Instead, it reduced the spirit of the American people to the glee of a pack of sniveling brats:

A great many Americans, to be sure, feel better about their country this weekend than last. The carnage among passive marines in Lebanon struck them as one more sign of impotence, exposing a chronic failure of will to stand up to terrorists. Now, in tiny Grenada, Americans have shown that they can play hardball, too, that they can be just as tough at defending their turf as the Commies. Watch Out, Nicaragua. Beware, Syria. Keep Out, Russia.

When the editorial entitled "The Grenada High" was printed on November 2, a week had passed since the invasion. Reporting that "most Americans seem strangely ambivalent about the Grenada trip," the *Times* grudgingly acknowledged that they were "nonetheless inclined to find value in the enterprise." Once again, the editors reviewed the reasons for the invasion, checking them off like items on a shopping list: the threat to the American medical students was a "yarn"; the urgent requests from the neighboring democracies were "plainly encouraged, if not indeed written, in Washington"; the Cuban presence was, in fact, no threat at all.

"So what was eating Washington?" wondered the *Times* in its own eloquent way. Here, the editors took a different tack: Instead of linking the United States, the Soviet Union, and Goliath together in a villainous fraternity, and instead of insisting on the identical properties of Grenada and Afghanistan, the *Times* decided to play doctor. Turning to psychology to explain why we were behaving as we were, the *Times* informed us that we were only sick, not evil:

... psychologically ... the Cubans got to us, exposing a deep-down sense of American inadequacy and weakness. ...

After all is said and done, the real inspiration and justification for the Grenada invasion lies in those false feelings of impotence—fanned by years of deceptive politicking about American retreats, defeats and even nuclear inferiority. And the inevitable corollary of impotence is envy ...

Because the *Times* has for years been saying that feelings of impotence and envy were what drove the Soviets to erect the Berlin Wall, subjugate Eastern Europe, and engage in all sorts of other acts of repression, this was a

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mighty serious diagnosis. What on earth might happen next? "As Soviet history shows," the *Times* continued, "the worst thing about a national inferiority complex is that it induces conduct that really is inferior." Still, a ray of hope shone through this bleak forecast: The "delusion, deception, secrecy and lawlessness" that the *Times* said characterized the Grenada invasion were only temporary aberrations that would vanish because "sooner or later we will tell ourselves and the world the truth about Grenada. Having made a pathetic little war because we felt bad will not, finally, make us feel better." In essence, all we had to do was to 'fess up. According to the *Times*, the sooner we admitted the "truth" about Grenada, the sooner we would be restored to our noble selves.

After this piece, the *New York Times* fell temporarily silent on Grenada. For over a week there was no word about the "yarn," the "pro-Soviet gnat," or even the "impotence" of "President Feelgood" and his "headly pills" of success. One can only imagine the silent waves of despair that must have swept through the editorial room at the sight of each morning's headlines. Gun dumps, munitions contracts, and the overwhelming euphoria of Grenadians at home and in Brooklyn were too much even for the editorial board to ignore. No wonder the *Times* was quiet. What could it do but thrust its head into the hole it had dug for itself deep in Grenadian sand?

Nevertheless, this was not the last word on Grenada. On November 10 ran the finest example of the *Times'* inimitable editorial style to date. It was entitled "Grenada, by O'Neill, by Orwell." It contained no attacks on the Reagan administration on behalf of the "public," nor did it assume the fraternal "we" and "us" to refer to the American people. Apparently, there was no longer any

“we” where the American people were concerned. Grenada had taken its toll.

With the surrender of Speaker O'Neill, President Reagan's triumph in Grenada seems complete. The evacuated students kissed American soil and cheered at the White House. Grenadians express relief, even delight. Most Americans not only approve but feel positively invigorated . . .

For the editors, however, there was no joy in Mudville. “Although 1984 is at hand,” they ominously began, “hardly anyone dares confront the Orwellian arguments by which this grave action has been justified.” What follows is a tangle of verbal contortions that rivals even the complexity of Jonathan Swift—only Swift was writing satire.

The *Times* still dismissed the students-in-danger argument as poppycock, complaining that “no hard evidence” had been found. One can only wonder what would have satisfied the *Times* short of a dead student. “But assume,” it suggests,

like a delegation of Congressmen did, that the students faced a “potential” risk of being harmed or taken hostage. Why would the Marxists who had just seized power from other Marxists want to threaten Americans? The only reason could be to protect themselves from a feared invasion. The pretext for invasion, then, was a presumed danger posed by invasion.

How would threatening American medical students protect the Marxists from this “feared invasion”? And why would they fear an invasion unless they were threatening American medical students? The editorial writers of the *New York Times* will say anything to preserve their belief and desire that America is always wrong.

The *Times* was wise enough not to repeat its argument that there was nothing the Cubans could have done from Grenada they could not have done better from Cuba. Nevertheless, the editors persisted in their denial that anything found on Grenada—from machine guns to North Koreans—constituted any kind of a threat:

That the Cubans and the weapons finally counted in Grenada were a danger to the United States is far from proved. If they were, then the motive for invasion was . . . a quest for evidence to justify invasion.

It would seem that the *Times* was trying to say that the reason behind the invasion was merely to justify its having been launched.

As for the delight of the Grenadian people, the *Times* grudgingly admitted that “if this invasion yields them a more legitimate regime, they'll certainly benefit.” The prospect, however, hardly cheered the editors:

. . . that raises a startling new standard of international conduct. No American Government ever declared a policy of invasion to implant democracy in Grenada, or anywhere else. What other people now qualify for benign invasion?

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It is curious to see how perturbed the *Times* was by the fact that the United States had freed Grenada. Stubbornly rejecting the compelling motives behind the invasion, the *Times* remained oblivious to the invasion's significance. It was not, as the *Times* would have led us to believe, merely a preview of other invasions. On the contrary, as a victory more of political will than of military might, this act of invasion made Grenadas of the future (and Cubas and Nicaraguas) far less likely to develop.

Perhaps the *Times*' inability to comprehend this notion lies in its definition of a great power:

A great power that wants respect for its values as well as its power would have marshaled its diplomatic and economic might to contain the threat. It would look upon force as a desperate last resort.

One wonders what exactly is so great about this power the *Times* has in mind. A government known to relegate force to the status of a “desperate last resort” will have little “diplomatic and economic might” to marshal in the first place.

The overwhelming public support of the administration's action was perhaps the most notable development to take place during the entire operation. The piles of evidence mounting high in and around Grenada carried substantial weight with the public. When even Tip O'Neill decided to support the President, the *Times* was appalled. It berated Mr. O'Neill for his “surrender” to “public opinion,” a rather curious attitude for a self-proclaimed champion of democracy.

. . . Speaker O'Neill's final judgment may be the most shamefully motivated of all. “Public opinion is what's behind things here,” explained Representative Torricelli of New Jersey. “. . . people feel their frustration relieved, and members of Congress sense that.”

The newspaper was faulting elected officials for responding to their electorate. Apparently, the democratic process is not a legitimate form of government when the consensus does not coincide with the ideas of the editorial writers of the *New York Times*.

This dichotomy between the opinions of the electorate and those of the *New York Times*—and, for that matter, its media companions—is nothing new. For example, consider the stunning fact that 80 percent of reporters, editors, and columnists voted for George McGovern, a man the American people turned into a landslide loser. Clearly, the *New York Times* is out of sync with those whose surrogate it would claim to be. Its paranoid, unrelenting skepticism of American policy has become a ludicrous spectacle, especially in the instance of Grenada, in light of the facts reported day after day in its own front pages. The *Times*, however, did not surrender. Instead, it continued to evade and deny the evidence to the end:

So the invasion is finally justified because Americans needed a win, needed to invade someone. Happy 1984.



# Victory on the High Seas

## *The U.S. Navy Is Winning Its War Against Drugs*

David Martin

**N**OT ON MY WATCH. NOT ON MY SHIP. NOT IN MY NAVY! That is the message of a poster unfurled in all ships of the U.S. Navy and in the barracks of all Navy bases. The poster features a green marijuana leaf in a red circle with a diagonal stroke through the middle. It is the most visible sign of an all-out war on drug abuse launched by the armed forces in early 1982.

The war is being won, especially in the Navy. Current drug use (within the previous 30 days) fell from 48 percent in 1981 to 16.2 percent at the start of 1983—a 66 percent improvement. The other services have also made gratifying progress. The Army, for example, found that current drug use had fallen from 40 percent in 1981 to 26.2 percent in 1982. But whereas the other services found more servicemen using alcohol (the increase was from 26 to 30 percent in the lower ranks), the Navy was able to hold the line on alcohol use while significantly reducing the use of marijuana and other drugs.

The use of heroin by servicemen declined dramatically after the Vietnam War, but this decrease was offset by a massive increase in the abuse of cannabis (marijuana and hashish). The cannabis epidemic involved almost half of all junior enlisted personnel.

Marijuana is cheap and extremely easy to obtain. And thanks to media treatment of the subject during the 1960s and 1970s, there is a widespread misperception that marijuana is relatively benign; some reports, such as *Licit and Illicit Drugs*, published in 1974 by Consumers Union, even suggested that marijuana was beneficial.

The principal psychoactive component of marijuana, THC (tetrahydrocannabinol), has a powerful affinity for fat. Because the membranes of brain cells have fatty tissues, the brain is one of the prime areas of concentration within the body. It has been demonstrated that THC inhibits performance in driving and other complex functions and is therefore dangerous to the military.

Marijuana use seriously impairs memory. People who are high speak in a disjointed manner and are unable to complete sentences. It has a particularly serious impact on the transfer from short-term to long-term memory, thus interfering with the central process of learning, including military instruction. It impairs the capacity for

personal judgment, in particular, value judgments. Depending on the individual and the dose, it may result in psychotic episodes, including hallucinations and delusions.

Marijuana hurts personal morale because many habituates show progressively less concern about their appearance and personal hygiene. They also lose the motivation to engage in athletics and jogging and other activities to keep them physically fit. Resistance to authority, and therefore a breakdown in discipline, also often goes with chronic pot use.

The most dramatic consequences of drugs and alcohol in the military are the shocking casualty statistics. During 1981 more than half of the 853 military fatalities and more than 4,000 injuries suffered in training, such as practice parachute jumps, were clearly related to drugs and alcohol. Those figures may actually understate the problem, since viable roadside tests are not yet available to detect driving under the influence of marijuana and other drugs. The cost to the services of such accidents was estimated at \$110 million to \$150 million per year in manpower and material resources.

For the Army, marijuana use was 40 percent, and the Air Force, 21 percent. But the Navy was faced with the biggest drug abuse problem of the armed forces with 48 percent. Several factors spurred the Navy to institute its program to crack down on drug and alcohol abusers in the ranks. The Reagan White House, unlike the Carter and Ford administrations, made drug abuse a top priority. The Court of Military Appeals, meanwhile, recognized the reliability of trained dogs in finding probable cause for searches, and it recognized that the nonconsensual extraction of body fluids, such as urine, was governed by the reasonableness standards of the Fourth Amendment. Moreover, reliable urine tests that could detect residues of marijuana and its metabolites in the body had been developed. Finally, Admiral Thomas C. Hayward (then Chief of Naval Operations) was passion-

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