

Editorial



Reagan's contingency plans may deter Salvadoran rebels

The liberals who are looking for anti-Reagan material to use in this election year were, no doubt, delighted with a story published by the *New York Times* during the weekend.

The article, which also appeared in both local papers Sunday, said that some Reagan administration officials are saying privately that contingency plans are being drawn for the possible use of U.S. combat troops in Central America. The troops could then be used if other attempts at defeating leftist forces in the region fail.

The use of the troops would come under the terms of the Rio Pact of 1947, a mutual defense treaty signed by the United States and the countries of Central America.

The *Times* also reported that Americans working for the Central Intelligence Agency have, in recent months, supervised mining operations in Nicaraguan harbors. The actual placement of the mines has been done by Latin American commandos, the story said. Both reports give Reagan opponents plenty of campaign material. They will continue to charge that the president's policies in Central America are leading us into another Vietnam.

No one wants to see the United States become involved in any kind of conflict. But neither can this country

stand by and watch Communist aggression on all parts of the globe, believing that by doing nothing, we are somehow solving the world's problems.

As leader of the free world, the United States does have some obligations to other free men and women. We should pray that those obligations never involve military force, but we must be prepared.

The long-term economic and military assistance program proposed by the National Bipartisan Commission on Central America, led by former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, seems to be the best way to battle Communist aggression. But also being prepared for military action — and that's different than actually beginning troop deployment — is not unreasonable.

Drawing up contingency plans for possible use of U.S. troops probably will help Reagan get his Central American aid proposals through Congress. More importantly, it will help send a message to the Salvadoran rebels and their Communist supporters that they face the possibility of U.S. military action if things get out of hand.

By sending that message, we have a much better chance of avoiding military conflict than if we sit by and do nothing, hoping that the problem solves itself.

Good luck on keeping young students quiet

As soon as I heard the latest news on the school prayer issue, I called up my friend Arnold Stanleigh for a first-hand report from the battlefield. Arnie teaches the fifth grade at Millard Fillmore Elementary School.



Arthur Hoppe

"Arnie," I told him, "the Supreme Court says you still can't pray out loud in class. But they agreed to decide whether you can impose a daily minute of silence."

"A minute of WHAT?" cried Arnie over a hubbub in the background. "Silence!" I shouted back.

"We already have 40 minutes of science a day," said Arnie. "In fact right now we're dissecting earthworms. Keep it down to a roar, kids."

"No, no," I said. "A minute of silence. It's for meditation or voluntary prayer." What do you think of the idea?

"I don't know; we've never tried it. Put down that aquarium, Laura." "You've never tried meditation or prayer?"

"No, we've never tried silence," said Arnie. "But it's worth a shot. OK, children, we're going to have one minute of silence during which you may pray or meditate, whichever you'd like. Elena, get your fingernails away from that blackboard. Yes, Kelly, that's a good question. Do they have to close their eyes?"

"No, she's afraid of earthworms," said Arnie. "Just a sec. If you must assume the lotus position, Jadestar, kindly do so on the floor, not your desk. Yes, Taryn, I think it's very nice of you to pray for the good health of your family and friends and peace in the world and I hope you get a B+ in math, too. No, Kevin, I don't think

the Good Lord would want you to play doctor with Samantha. Kevin, don't you dare throw that!"

There was a moment of silence, but only from Arnie. "Sorry," he said when he came back on the phone. "I had to send Kevin to the principal and get the earthworm out of Samantha's hair. Stop crying, Jadestar, we all forget things. No, how would I know your mantra? No, you can't call home. Well, just sit there and pray. Hmmm, that is a problem."

"What's a problem?" I asked. "Jadestar can't think of anything to pray for. Can I tell her to pray for silence?"

"Absolutely not," I said. "The Supreme Court ruled that your dictating a prayer would violate the separation of church and state. The administration's lawyers are now arguing that a minute of silence for prayers is merely an accommodation of and toleration for private religious beliefs and practices and evinces a benevolent neutrality."

"A benevolent neutrality?" said Arnie. "OK, but can I tell Gregory he can't sacrifice Muffin? Muffin is our class gerbil and Gregory claims sacrifice is part of his Aztec heritage."

"He certainly can't sacrifice Muffin unless he can do so silently," I said. "Right, it would cause shrieks," agreed Arnie. "Ah, me, I'm already expected to be a combination of B.F. Skinner, Freud, Torquemada, Knute Rockne, Masters and Johnson and an underpaid file clerk. And now they want me to be the Maharishi Rajneesh?"

From his tone, I felt he wished the entire proposal would go away. "Shall I put you down, then Arnie, as against a minute of silence each day in our schools?" I asked.

"Heck no," said Arnie. "If the United States Supreme Court thinks it can bring it off, tell them to go for two."
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The renovated generation

Candidate Hart makes old not so old

Whatever happens in this bizarre presidential primary season, an entire generation of Americans owes its personal gratitude to Gary Hart for making us young again.

I am not talking about rejuvenating our spirits. I am not talking about pouring the elixir of youthful hope into our veins. I'm not talking about new ideas. I am talking about age.



Ellen Goodman

According to every image-maker, perception-hawker and headline-writer, Gary Hart is young. Well, I am, at the moment, on the cusp of turning 43 — a day which will arrive with Aries-like punctuality in April. The candidate, however, is 46 or 47 (let's not get into that) and therefore my senior. If he is young — gee, blush — I guess I am young and so are my peers. Certainly younger than we thought we were.

Up until Gary Hart's emergence as a youth-movement leader, most of my friends in their late thirties and forties had begun adjusting to middle age. It

takes some getting used to.

The stages of life in this country are not exactly well-defined. We generally grow from being too-young to still-young to looking-younger-than-our-age. We do not greet middle age; we admit to it.

I first contemplated middle age when I turned 37 and discovered that at my age, Mozart was already dead. Thinking about Mozart made me humble. I finally declared my entry into middle age at 40. The actuarial tables seemed to demand such an admission.

At 40, for example, I decided that if I was old enough to have seen a fashion recycle, I was too old to wear it the second time around. So much for the miniskirt. At 40, I began to look up the meaning of words like "generativity" and to think about being, rather than needing, a mentor.

But, Gary, you make me feel so young. When the senator from Colorado talks about changing the guard and his new generation, my entire cohort is cast back into those wonderful years of undergraduatehood, when we were the new generation for the first time.

In fairness, politicians have always been relatively younger than the rest

of us. You can be an aging athlete, dancer or mathematician while you are still too young to legally be elected president. The easiest way to stay young in the public eye, if not the mirror, is by running for office. Teddy Roosevelt, for example, was a mere wisp of a president at 42. Jack Kennedy was second-youngest at 43. Ulysses S. Grant was third at 46.

In theory, Reagan should have done for his generation what Hart has done for mine. At three years past forced-retirement age in most businesses, he is the Eternal Youth Candidate. But he seems more attractive to 50-year-old voters who hope they will be arm-wrestling and weight-lifting at 73 than to 73-year-olds who are as likely to be worrying about arthritis and Social Security. Living up to Reagan at 73 is a bit like living up to Catherine Deneuve at 40.

Real age isn't what's at stake here. After all, the youngest candidate this year is Jesse Jackson at 42 — although, as Jackson is the first to note, he isn't defined as a youth leader, he's defined as a black leader. If elected to office, Hart would be a mere five or six years (let's not get into that again) younger than Jimmy Carter, who no one thought

of as young. He would be the same age as Grover Cleveland, who no one thought of at all.

Hart's youth isn't a matter of chronology but of psychology. He has positioned himself at the leading edge of the so-called baby-boom generation — a group which ranges from those whose first political memories are of the Kennedy victory to those whose first political memories are of the Nixon resignation.

In Reagan's generation, everybody wanted to be mature. In my generation everybody wanted to stay young. If our parents longed for the stability of a premature middle age, we are the "kids" who, like the stars of *The Big Chill*, yearn to be post-maturely youthful. The dirty little secret of the Yuppies and Yumpies — that much-courted constituency of young urban or upwardly mobile professionals — is that many are (a) not really Y, (b) struggling to stay Y, or (c) only Y-ish.

It isn't Hart's place in the age cycle that's important. It's his place on the age re-cycle. Gary Hart is the first bona fide leader of The Renovated Generation.

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