

# Editorial



## Truth, lies and Ronald Reagan

Ronald Reagan's *Reader's Digest* mentality — the folksy optimism that may get specifics mixed up, but knows its own mind — is unshakable. It's a way of thinking that comes very much from the 1920s when Reagan grew up, seen through a dim green haze as a time when keeping cool with Coolidge was the only sane thing to do.

The *Reader's Digest* philosophy — Reagan has often quoted the magazine — has little to do with reality. One of Reagan's own personal glimpses and true life anecdotes could have come

would find an anecdote, a story with a moral, a tearful tale, to fit whatever his message to an audience was that day," Royko writes. "And how often these anecdotes were nothing but fiction."

Reagan's breezy ignorance of what's really going on has deeper consequences than making him an unreliable autobiographer. It makes him a dangerously unaware president. Unlike, say, Richard Nixon, a manipulative and dishonest man who had some grasp of effective tactics, Ronald Reagan wakes and moves in a cloud of hazy right-wing ideology that keeps him from seeing anything but evil in the Soviet Union.

As columnist Anthony Lewis notes, "He can preside over a disastrous policy, look at the resulting wreckage and smile happily. It is spooky. But it is also something else: a crucial part of his political magic."

That's why Reagan has been so successful in passing his legislative program, in getting elected in the first place. The people that Gallup and Harris contact don't care if Reagan gets his welfare mothers switched around, or if he finds the deficits which he caused unacceptably large. Irresponsibility is forgiven because of Reagan's fixed optimism.

In this aspect Reagan is actually quite a bit like Franklin Roosevelt. Both used their native optimism to considerable political advantage. Franklin Roosevelt was no more an intellectual than Ronald Reagan is, and his ignorance of economics was probably just about equal to Reagan's. Their talent is political, in forming coalitions and in finding the images which public policies need in order to be convincing.

The difference between Roosevelt and Reagan lies in the direction their simplistic philosophies take them. Through the labor organizing and government involvement of the Depression era, America became a more progressive and cooperative society, while Reagan heavily favors the rich and traditional. Roosevelt's social vision simply came closer to what America needed than Reagan's does.

Reagan is not only simple, but simply wrong. His conception of America standing tall again at least works when America is standing on little Grenada; but America can't safely continue to deal with the Soviet Union as if it were the evil empire of 1950s propaganda films and contemporary Reagan speeches.

### Eric Peterson

from the pages of a *Reader's Digest* article against gun control. In an interview with *Sports Afield*, Reagan said he was radio sportscasting in Des Moines, Iowa, when he saw a man robbing a nurse with a gun. Reagan pointed his unloaded pistol out the window and told him, "Drop it and get going," which the would-be robber apparently did.

Reagan's is a world in which that pistol you have lying around can come in handy in scaring off the bad guys. It's not a world in which you could get everybody killed with your show of bravado. The trouble with Reagan's true life stories, his stories that come in so handy in a speech to assert his own compassion or point out the horrible abuses of welfare fraud, is the same as the trouble with his rose-colored view of American society. You don't know whether they're true, but suspect they probably aren't.

Mike Royko, the refreshingly cynical and blunt Chicago columnist, writes of numerous errors of fact the President has made, and says that "when the person starts talking about things that happen in some kind of dream world, I have to wonder if he's hitting all the cylinders."

Royko says Reagan claims to have been shocked and moved when he entered the recently-liberated Nazi death camps to photograph the evidence of the Holocaust; the trouble is Reagan spent the war making propaganda movies in Hollywood. Royko notes that a case Reagan cited to show how legal technicalities hamper police, where a California judge ruled that searching a baby's diaper violated that baby's rights, never actually happened.

"Reporters who covered his campaign in 1980 were amazed at how easily he

by itself but the president has to compound this by getting up and extolling the virtues of America and capitalism right in front of his Chinese hosts.

Not only is this stupid, it's extremely bad taste. What do you think the reaction in this country would be if Konstantine Chernenko came to Omaha and got up before the Chamber of Commerce and denounced the American system and praised the virtues of communism? The good citizens of Omaha would be falling all over themselves getting in line to denounce this outrageous act.

Apparently Reagan doesn't realize, or worse yet, doesn't care about the crudeness of his actions.

In the final analysis, there can be little doubt that Reagan's trip is an election year gimmick, ultimately designed to steal the voters' attention away from the Democrats for a few days.

Of course, there's nothing wrong with this. It's a common political ploy. But let's not be duped into thinking that Reagan is a great statesman. Grenada, Lebanon and Central America prove that he's not.

— Jeff Goodwin

## China another example of inconsistent U.S. policy

President Reagan has returned from his trip to China and it could reasonably be asked what he accomplished.

Of course, such a trip is good if for no other reason than the simple fact that it means we recognize the existence of the People's Republic of China, something we tried to ignore for more than 20 years.

At the same time it is ludicrous when we see the president get up and toast Chinese hosts and tell us that the Chinese are no threat to the United States.

He's right about that but at the same time he expects us to believe that the tiny nation of Nicaragua is a threat to America.

What kind of insanity is this? China, a nation of 800 million people and the proud owner of one of the largest armies in the world, is not a threat to us but the Nicaraguans, a nation of a few million people are? You figure it out.

It is just another example of the convoluted logic that has guided Reagan's foreign policy since he took office three years ago.

The hypocrisy and inconsistency of Reagan's foreign policy is bad enough

## Campus Quotes

Should the CIA be involved in potentially dangerous covert activities?



**Kathy Norton**  
senior  
wildlife management  
"I don't think so because it doesn't do much for the credibility of the U.S."



**Dale Harvey**  
senior  
animal science  
"No, I just don't see that they've got any business doing that."



**Bill Caldwell**  
East Campus  
administration  
"No, I think we need a basic policy statement on Central America. It should be open and honest with Congress, and not be a behind the scenes operation."



**Mark Sandeen**  
senior  
animal science  
"Not really the way they're doing it. I think what they're doing should be made public, and not so much a covert operation."



**Anne Moore**  
word processing specialist  
agricultural communications  
"No, I don't think we should be involved in that at all. At least I should say they shouldn't be involved in it."

Joel Sartore/Daily Nebraskan