

North trial highlights the President's 'Gregg problem'

by Webster G. Tarpley

The situation was summed up by the London *Sunday Times* of April 16, in Edward Pearce's "Last Word" column: "Increasing reports from the trial of Colonel Oliver North look grim for George Bush, less and less innocent-seeming in the Iran-Contra scheme. If North should 'peach' then, garlanded as he is with so many denials, Bush could not discount impeachment. I doubt if it will come to that. But if it did we should all start dossiers on Representative Thomas Foley of Washington State." According to the *Sunday Times*, Quayle "should resign" in case Bush were ousted, and Speaker of the House Jim Wright is charged with "financial carelessness." That would, according to the *Sunday Times*, make Representative Foley the successor to the presidency.

The North case is now with the jury, and North has not "peached" yet, so far as is known. But, the documents released in the course of the North trial have brought the Iran-Contra affair back to center stage. The specious credibility of the Tower-Muskie-Scowcroft and congressional coverup investigations has crumbled, and every press availability of the President has been transformed into a gauntlet of highly embarrassing Iran-Contra questions which Mr. Bush, acting under the dubious advice of White House Counsel C. Boyden Gray, has flatly refused to answer.

What Donald Gregg knows

With congressional resentment growing owing to the manifest failure of the Reagan-Bush White House to provide vital documents from North's office and other NSC files to Hill probers during the summer of 1987, it is likely that the new phase of Iran-Contra will culminate in the confirmation hearings for Donald Gregg, the former national security adviser to then-Vice President Bush. Gregg has been nominated as ambassador to the Republic of Korea (see article, page 64). These confirmation hearings are scheduled to begin before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on May 12. If the senators wish to maintain any pretense of oversight over covert intelligence operations, they will have to prove it by

rejecting the Gregg nomination. Gregg has been repeatedly guilty of perjury on Iran-Contra matters, and was up to his neck in gun-running and drug-running in the Caribbean. Even more important, Gregg's 1979-82 tenure as CIA representative at the National Security Council spans the Carter and first Reagan administrations, years when the NSC toppled the Shah, brought in Khomeini, and began the arming of the Islamic revolution. He would be in a position to confirm that the policy of arming the Ayatollah began not under Reagan, but already under Carter.

Gregg would be a disaster in Seoul, a kind of imperial proconsul with the task of enforcing the odious Anglo-American-Soviet condominium in all of Asia, paralleling in this the role of European proconsul Vernon Walters in Bonn, whose job would be to sell out Europe to the Soviets. Gregg is a CIA *agent provocateur*. Where he goes, a band of Iran-gate bandit-adventurers will follow. Gregg in Seoul would attempt at the very least the violent overthrow of the sovereign government of South Korea, and would do everything in his power to inflict destabilization on Japan, the Republic of China, India, Pakistan, Thailand, the Philippines, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, and other countries. Statesmen in Seoul and the rest of Asia are advised not to rely for one instant on the U.S. Senate to block the Gregg nomination, but to seize the initiative in their own interest by declaring Gregg *persona non grata*, subject to arrest on arrival.

If the Gregg nomination were to go through, there would be nothing to prevent the name of Al Capone from showing up on the next White House appointment list. Sen. Alan Cranston (D-Calif.) has promised to use the hearings for an inquiry into Gregg's knowledge of administration efforts to arm the Nicaraguan rebels. Oliver North testified during his trial that it was Gregg who introduced him to Felix Rodriguez (alias Max Gomez), the CIA case officer for the Contra supply efforts. Cranston called James Baker at the State Department to suggest that the Gregg nomination be withdrawn, but Baker refused.

The documents most damaging to Bush have been those implicating him as the “discreet emissary” from the Reagan White House designated in 1985 to brief the President of Honduras, Suazo Cordova, on the benefits that the United States expected to accrue to the Contras from a *quid pro quo* or incentive arrangement involving increased U.S. aid to Honduras. The White House had been reluctant to pass these conditions on to Suazo in writing. One document bears a marginal notation from Adm. John Poindexter of the NSC stating: “Add that we want VP to also discuss this matter with Suazo.” Bush is also listed as an intended recipient of a copy of Reagan’s secret approval of a February 1985 decision to provide incentives to Honduras.

The gaping holes opened by the new documents in the standard Reagan-Bush denials have spurred congressional leaders to demand explanations. On April 13, Rep. Lee Hamilton (D-Ind.) wrote to C. Boyden Gray demanding that Gray “undertake an immediate review to determine whether documents were withheld from the Iran-Contra committees.” According to Hamilton’s office, the congressman wants to know “why the documents were withheld.”

On the afternoon of April 17, Sen. George Mitchell, the Democratic majority leader, met with journalists at a Washington hotel to announce that he had ordered his staff to conduct an investigation to determine whether the Reagan White House deliberately withheld documents from the congressional Iran-Contra investigating committees. Mitchell warned that if this probe were to show that the White House did not “comply with the promise to provide all appropriate documents,” he would regard this as “a matter of the utmost gravity.” In this case, “there would have to be action taken,” Mitchell stressed.

Some observers also recalled that prosecutors working for independent counsel Lawrence Walsh had complained two years ago that there had been difficulty and delay in obtaining documents from the White House and the CIA. Walsh conducted his own inquiry as to whether the Reagan administration had withheld evidence. It would be theoretically possible for Walsh to re-open that investigation in the near future.

Published accounts suggest that if the officials of the Reagan White House did not obstruct justice, then perhaps the FBI did. John W. Niels, the chief counsel to the House Iran-Contra committee, recalled that he had demanded all of the documents from Oliver North’s office, regardless of the subject matter. “The argument the White House made is that we shouldn’t search ourselves, that the FBI searched them.”

The *Washington Post* on April 20 quoted an unnamed administration official to the effect that “North’s office was sealed when he was fired in November 1986. FBI agents acting for independent counsel Lawrence E. Walsh read through all the documents in the office and concluded that about one-fourth of them were relevant to Walsh’s investigation, the official said. Those were forwarded to Walsh; the

remainder were sealed at the White House.” According to this official, the documents remaining at the White House would have been sent to Congress on request, but nobody ever asked—a strange story indeed.

Lee Hamilton declared himself not convinced, saying that the story of the FBI ignoring the documents “really strains credulity.” “These documents would be as if you picked up a red flag,” Hamilton said. “The FBI clearly has some explaining to do if its agents did not realize the germaneness and relevance of these documents.” A group of FBI agents loyal to FBI Deputy Director Buck Revell or some other invisible government figure screening documents before they reach the congressional committees also makes a mockery of the very idea of congressional hearings. Why have hearings if the secret police are to fix the outcome in advance?

Bush on the hot seat

In the meantime, Bush is under increasing pressure for full disclosure. He has chosen the ill-fated stonewall strategy attempted by Richard Nixon, hiding behind the North trial. The logic of the strategy is that the President sacrifices himself to protect his advisers, just as Nixon immolated himself to protect Henry Kissinger. The alternative is mobile development in which the advisers are thrown to the wolves. Has Bush learned nothing from Watergate? What will he say when the North trial is over? And after North will come Admiral Poindexter, who worked several levels above North and who received his orders from Reagan and from Bush himself as a member of the NSC.

Presidential news conferences now sound like the following:

Q: Mr. President, were you an emissary to Honduras, as has been alleged?

The President: I went to Honduras, sure. That’s a matter of public record.

Q: And did you have a *quid pro quo* deal—

The President: I have told you that I am not going to discuss that until the trial with North is over.

Q: But the jury is being sequestered today, sir, and it’s—

The President: No, I might have something to say on it when the trial is over, but I would simply ask you to understand that this is a request of the lawyers. And I’m not going to do something that inadvertently will—but put it this way—my conscience is clear.

Franklin D. Roosevelt would have known what to do: publicly repudiate the entire policy structure behind Iran-Contra, and fire all the officials compromised with the failed policy. Such a policy shift combined with a purge, plus the freeing of Lyndon LaRouche, might still prevent the scenarios of the London *Sunday Times* from being visited on the President’s head.