

Reagan, Meese have begun the counter-Watergate

by Criton Zoakos

During his historic press conference, Nov. 25, Attorney General Edwin Meese, and President Reagan, on whose behalf Meese spoke, launched a campaign which, within a few hours, appeared to be the exact reverse of Watergate. It will succeed, so long as the President and Meese insist on their present, uncompromising policy of "full disclosure."

Contrary to Watergate, the inquiry is launched by the President and his Attorney General, not against them, as the case had been with Richard Nixon.

Contrary to Watergate, when National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger and White House Chief of Staff Al Haig stayed in their posts throughout the crisis, until they blackmailed their chief into resigning, now, John Poindexter is out and Chief of Staff Donald Regan has been stripped of all power and function—his remaining in office (as of this writing) only serving to cause him personal ridicule.

Contrary to Watergate, President Reagan and Meese, each day that passes, are keeping Congress and the press off balance, as they direct their inquiry into the wrongdoings of persons and cliques which have, hitherto, enjoyed the protection and sympathy of the liberals in both Congress and the press.

The following joke, circulating in the corridors, characterized the situation: "Q: Did you hear, John Conyers is organizing impeachment proceedings? A: Against President Reagan? Q: No. Against Ayatollah Khomeini, for supplying the Contras—he figures, the liberals put Khomeini in power, the liberals can take him down."

Dismantling Kissinger's 'NSC structures'

Contrary to popular perceptions, neither the resignation of Admiral Poindexter, nor the dismissal of Lt.-Col. Oliver North, are the important elements of the Meese investigation,

so far. What shocked the Establishment, was the fact that Meese walked to the podium of the White House conference room and did what most people till then considered "unthinkable" for Reagan and his friends to do: He pointed the finger at the core of illicit Israeli intelligence activities in the United States, and destroyed, on the spot, the cause of the Nicaraguan Contras.

Following that press conference, the Attorney General issued further instructions setting the direction of the Justice Department's investigations. The key element of Meese's instructions is the order that "every dollar will be traced," from the Iranian arms transactions. As a result, the investigation is now directed against a maze of semi-formal groups and institutions in government known to the bureaucracy as the "Kissinger NSC structures." Two large groupings are now the immediate target of the investigation. First, the extensive Nicaraguan Contra support apparatus, involving such persons and General Singlaub, General Secord, Andy Messing, and others in the so-called National Defense Council Foundation. Second, the network shipping weapons to Iran, not just recently, but years before Reagan had signed any authorization.

Among the persons targeted by the Meese investigation, are Undersecretaries Armacost, Armitage, Elliott Abrams, CIA Deputy Director Claire George, NSC staffers Howard Teicher, Geoffrey Kemp et al., and a special category of influence-peddlers such as Michael Ledeen. These persons share in common something. Some of them are members of a group called "The 208 Committee." Others belong or have belonged to special inter-agency or supra-agency units, established at various times on an *ad hoc* basis for pursuit of specific, delimited policies, under NSC authorization. This maze of special units and *ad hoc* committees which had

pervaded Washington since the early 1970s, was created by Henry Kissinger and is known as the "Kissinger NSC structure." Under this arrangement, and through an entity once called by Kissinger the Special Coordinating Committee, a great number of illegal operations have been conducted over recent years. Under the "Kissinger NSC structure," any officer seconded to these "special units" from, say, the Pentagon, CIA, State Department, Treasury, etc., was no longer answerable to his or her original agency. Any oversight or jurisdiction over their actions was made impossible, and all sorts of rogue operations were made possible.

The arms shipments to Iran and the illicit Contra funding were but two examples. The notorious Terpil and Wilson Libya affair (involving General Secord of Nicaraguan Contra fame), is another; projects such as the toppling of the Shah of Iran, and of President Marcos of the Philippines are similar examples; the financing of the terror networks of Ahmed Ben Bella and François Genoud, the assassination of ex-U.S. Ambassador to Greece Henry Tasca, and the assassination of CIA station chief in Athens Richard Welsh, are other such examples of the activities of this Kissingerian NSC structure.

With Meese's investigation as it stands now, the so-called "structure," to carry out such nasty operations is being wiped out. If the going gets rough down the road, and someone gets the clever idea of trying to stop this clean-up, even more interesting things may happen—such as, for example, actual, full-scale, public investigations into these past, nasty jobs of the "Kissingerian NSC structure."

It has been well known among senior Western intelligence officials that the emergence of this "Kissingerian NSC structure," from 1970-71, had been associated with the dramatic increase of the Israeli Mossad's influence over the United States NSC's personnel selection. What foreign capitals are concluding now is that, as a result of Meese's counteroffensive, the Israelis are rapidly losing gains which they had accumulated in Washington over a 15-year period.

What comes next

There is a mad scramble in Washington to take the initiative of the investigation away from Reagan and Meese. John Conyers and his House Judiciary Subcommittee have formally requested the establishment of an independent Special Prosecutor, to investigate the following members of the administration: Meese himself, Vice President George Bush, CIA chief William Casey, White House Chief of Staff Donald Regan, Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger, and Assistant Secretary of State Elliott Abrams. At this stage, the Conyers effort will not go very far. It has generally been seen as a very biased effort to: a) cover up for one of the real culprits, Secretary of State George Shultz, whom Conyers does not name, and b) to direct fire against Weinberger, who is the one official who is shown on the record as rejecting the proposals for arms shipments to Iran.

The Senate Intelligence Committee, in announcing its intention to continue its hearings into the CIA's role in this matter, essentially strengthens the weight of the Meese investigation.

Finally, Meese and President Reagan are bound to continue keeping both Congress and the liberal press off balance by means of the appointment of the Special Review Board to examine the "methods and procedures" of the National Security Council. Its three members, John Tower, Edmund Muskie, and Brent Scowcroft, have been appointed to come up with a proposal to revamp the NSC by destroying its "operational" features, and restoring its policy advisory function. The appointments were inspired by sublime irony. Scowcroft, Henry Kissinger's creature and the first to receive from Kissinger's hand the safekeeping of the "NSC structure," has been invited to slaughter his own child; Muskie, the Carter Secretary of State who signed the secret agreements of January 1981 with Iran, on which arms sales to Iran are based, has been invited to investigate the wrongdoings of his own policy. John Tower is on the board for the purpose of keeping the other two honest.

For fear of what Reagan might do otherwise, the liberal friends of Muskie in Congress, and the Trilateral Commission friends of Scowcroft, do not yet wish to trade a Special Prosecutor whom they do not know, for a Special Review Board that they do know.

As a result, Meese's Department of Justice investigation, maintains the initiative, for the time being. If the Attorney General perseveres in his present, winning, "full disclosure" policy, he will inevitably order the investigation of some of his subordinates within the Justice Department, for a certain wrongdoing during the time before he had moved to the department. Specifically, during 1983, Assistant Director of the Criminal Investigative Division Oliver B. Revell signed a classified declaration which argued at the U.S. District Court of the Northern District of Georgia, that the activities of one Cyrus Hashemi, a prominent Iranian arms merchant, shipping weapons to Iran, be kept secret by asserting "state secrets privilege." For the Attorney General's information, the case is *Hashemi v. Campaigner Publications et al.*, filed at the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Georgia as Civil Action No. 80-1555A. Meese's predecessor, William French Smith, apparently was given a similar text to sign, providing "state secret" protection to Hashemi's arms shipment to Iran—but did not sign.

At the present time, the Reagan-Meese "full disclosure" policy cannot be defeated, because Reagan cannot be proven guilty of any wrongdoing, unless the policies of Jimmy Carter and Edmund Muskie toward Iran, in the 1979-81 period, are proven wrong or treasonous. For John Conyers to find President Reagan guilty, Conyers and the whole liberal and Trilateral cabal in Congress (and this includes Claiborne Pell), must first go to jail.