

# COMMENTARY

## THE WEEK IN REVIEW

# The White House Psuedo-Gate

It's sounds like the title of an Agatha Christie or Edgar Allen Poe mystery. The White House case of the Purloined Papers has stirred a flurry of ethical questions concerning Carter administration documents that surfaced amidst President Reagan's 1980 campaign staffers. Knee-deep in the mess is the FBI, which is trying to determine whether any federal laws were violated in the filing of then-President Carter's reelection briefing papers. The goods included some 1,000 pages of documents on foreign policy and national security.

At a recent press conference, President Reagan, in admirable bureaucratic fashion, skirted the questions about "Debategate," denying any knowledge of stolen papers. Then he coined the phrase, "I haven't done anything to apologize for."

This modern whodunit has been quick to generate friction in the upper echelon of the Reagan administration. Possible campaign abuses focused the spotlight on CIA Director William Casey and James Baker, White House chief of staff. But the search for the "mole" who leaked the information to Reagan staffers remains inconclusive.

### Missing in 'Nam

The whereabouts of U.S. war dead missing in Vietnam has not been forgotten. Secretary of State George Shultz recently accused Vietnam of purposely withholding hundreds of bodies of Americans killed in the Indochina war. Shultz also said the United States might possibly support private groups seeking to bring the bodies back. This comment contradicted a Reagan administration policy of opposing private searches for missing Americans in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos.

A senior Reagan administration official said the administration is stepping up its efforts to gather information about MIAs in Indochina. The official said that the United States "has information in its possession that precludes ruling out the possibility that live Americans are being held captive in Indochina." And he said that more than 200 reports from refugees who claimed to have seen American prisoners in Indochina in recent years could not be dismissed.

### Partisan Pope

Although Pope John Paul's recent actions have incited anger from the Vatican, as long as trouble brews in Poland, the pope clearly intends to remain a highly visible political consultant. While the pope preaches morality, he seems to be a practicing politico. And his influence into the problems between the Polish government and Solidarity could either further complicate or help alleviate the dilemma. Predictions are about as uncertain as the results of the secret meetings between Pope John Paul and Polish leader General Wojciech Jaruzelski and those between the pope and Lech Walesa.

President Reagan got into the act by announcing that if Polish authorities allow a revival of free trade unions, the United States would "turn back" some of the sanctions imposed when martial law was declared in 1981.

### One hand slaps the others

The Supreme Court wiped out more provisions of more Federal laws than all of its other decisions put together by ending a 50-year-old legislative device.

In the past, one slick stipulation to most legislation had enabled Congress to authorize Presidential and Federal actions, but also to recall those actions. The court said that such clauses allowed for after-the-fact legislation as in the cases of spending on national security and domestic programs. The rulings also revoke the only stipend of the War Powers Act of 1973 which enables a President to dispatch troops without Congress's approval or a declaration of war. Congress had been able to direct the President to withdraw troops.

In another taxing decision, the court ruled that all parents could be entitled to tax breaks to offset their children's educational costs, even if they attend private or parochial schools. The American Civil Liberties Union had contended that the laws violated the constitutional doctrine of separation of church and state.

### Rewind discrimination

"Our opinions today will further confuse rather than guide," Justice Lewis Powell said this week after a badly split court decided not to allow blacks and Hispanics to recover back

pay and health benefits after being laid off from the New York City Police Department. The court handed down its 5-4 decision in the form of six separate opinions that totaled 63 pages and 80 footnotes. The officers, who had been laid off because they lacked seniority, argued they were never hired earlier because of racially biased entrance tests. The court, however, said that compensation for past wrongs was not justified because they could prove no intentional discrimination.

### No Laughing Gas?

The N.C. Senate gave the final approval to the option of dying in the gas chamber or by lethal injection. The bill passed as quickly, 36-2, as the pharmaceutical cure for death row inmates will. While there was substantial debate over the ethics of the new method of execution, opponents of capital punishment were not able to muster the support for life imprisonment.

Compiled and edited by Associate Editor Ginie Lynch and News Editor Joel Broadway.

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