

Opinion

Bush uses rhetoric in combatting drugs . . .

It has not been the best of rookie years for George Bush. In spite of an economy that has yet to sag, an agreeable Supreme Court majority, and a general nod of approval from the American public, these are uneasy times for our leader. Reason: the long, dark shadow cast westward by the Soviet Union has all but disappeared from its 45-year occupation of the White House lawn. The result is an ideological and rhetorical vacuum Bush and his court have been scrambling nervously to fill since the first moments of hard fought victory 11 months ago.

Fortunately, all is not lost. The president has been in politics for more years than most of us have fingers and toes, and he recognizes an opportunity when he sees one. Enter then "The Extraterritorials," the one-dozen magnificently evil bad boys our president and his press entourage teach us to love to hate.

That the situation in Colombia resulting from the drug trade has reached a crisis state is without doubt. The Medellin Cartel possesses the power and sophistication to both declare war on a government and to carry that threat out — chilling evidence of a society in chaos. The assassination of Senator Galan is only the most dramatic in a long series of violent acts. Since 1985 some 1,000 members of the left-wing Union Patriótica have been killed, as have approximately 250 Colombian judges and magistrates. The massacre of 43

dissenters to the right-wing drug coalitions in a half-hour spree in Sequia last November is testimony to the ruthlessness of those who wield power in the drug industry.

Yet the issue at hand here is manipulation — that is, how clearly and effectively the Bush team has capitalized on the glamorous aspects of the "war" being waged in Colombia. The New York Times and Washington Post display daily headlines and photos glorifying the "let's get tough" attitude Washington has adopted toward the "drug kingpins." The in-action photo the Times treated us to just one week after the initial large-scale raids by Colombian President Virgilio Barco Vargas is an excellent case in point. President Bush, Attorney General Dick Thornburgh, Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney, and of course Drug Czar William Bennett — an entourage we might label "The Untouchables" — are pacing in what appears to be a rapid manner across the drive of Bush's home in Maine. We are certain high-level, no-nonsense talks will follow shortly.

But the question is when, if ever, Bush, Bennett or anyone will address the root causes of the dilemma — causes the Reagan-Bush administrations have long ignored.

Recent articles and editorials have spent a considerable amount of space and ink reminding us that Colombia, and in particular the Medellin Cartel, is

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responsible for the vast majority of the cocaine shipped into the United States each year. Many such pieces also discuss the dramatically increased use of cocaine and other drugs within the United States. But rarely do we find a news item combining these two very well-known facts. Rarely, in other words, is the point made that the drug problem in Colombia is a direct result of a drug consumption our government has made only superficial attempts to check over the past decade.

In an issue of the Wall Street Journal several years ago, Alexander Cockburn made several insightful comments to this effect. "Drugs," he said, "are useful in the subjugation and atomization of the dangerous classes, meaning the potentially disruptive poor. A narcotized underclass can be comfortably defined solely in terms of addictions" (Wall Street Journal, July 11, 1986). Cockburn went on to describe a photo that ran in Time magazine, which showed a black youth spray-painting an "X" on the door of an abandoned building in Harlem used as a crack house. The social disease, as he pointed out, is identified as the drugs, rather

than the surrounding squalor. "A drug-free society," Cockburn concluded, "is a subversive idea."

A quick sampling of statistics supports the notion that those suffering most from the drug problem — lower income minorities — are also those receiving less and less help from their government. In 1965 the poorest 40 percent of the population earned 11 percent of the total U.S. market income; almost 15 years later, the take made by that same group fell to 8.5 percent. From 1945 to 1983, the participation of black males in the labor force fell from 80 percent to 60 percent (The Nation, July 21, 1984). As of 1984, black unemployment was twice the level of white unemployment, while poverty among blacks was three times more common. Of black males who were employed in that year, 60 percent were concentrated in the spectrum of the lowest-paid jobs (New Left Review, January-February 1984).

What does Bush want? To stop illegal drug use in the United States? Perhaps. But that is an expensive, difficult proposition. How about assuring his own re-election in 1992? Yes. If we give his ensuing three years a quick cost-benefit analysis, we find he is far more likely to succeed should he convince Americans he is damned well going to fight the good fight. The "battle" for good (and re-election) is far easier when in possession of a simply defined "evil," this

is especially true when the evil is elusive and far away. In the next several years, hundreds of millions of dollars will be spent on battle gear for a fight in foreign fields, while comparatively little will be allocated to intelligent, long-term preventative measures in our own backyards. Bush's current plan shortchanges such measures (i.e. medical aid for the poor, along with jobs and housing), in exchange for the theatrics of short-sighted and expensive "solutions" such as vastly increased prison capacity and international aid.

What is absurd about this? Number one, in all likelihood the efforts to prevent cocaine from entering the United States will fail. Number two, these same failed efforts will provide the rhetoric for re-election ideology that continues to ignore the economic and social conditions within our own country that are the root causes of the problem.

So if the Bush League isn't really stopping consumption of cocaine/crack in the United States, what is it doing? Consider our political arena as a circus, complete with ringmaster, a superfiendish lion to tame, high-wire gun-fights and a ready supply of clowns, all leading through predictable acts to a slam-bang finish early in 1992.

Remember the Golden Rule for public relations: "Images unite, issues divide." Any well-versed public relations team will not allow Bush, Bennett or anyone else to publicly address this

complex problem with anything other than hollow symbols and hefty rhetoric. Over a series of months, perhaps years, television and the front pages will display a storyboard something like this:

Panel 1: A stern-looking George Bush, with pals Bennett, Cheney, et al, sending American "advisers" and money to a country that is frightening, and most importantly, distant from our domestic troubles.

Panel 2: Uniformed Colombian policemen/troops standing atop a pile of ("Captured!") guns and cocaine, while manhandling some surly-looking Foreign Arch-Fiends.

Panel 3: A Well-Known Figure in Colombia, in public, demonstrating that the streets of Medellin are safe (when surrounded by the Secret Service, CIA, FBI, ABC, NBC, TBS, CBS, and PBS, closely observing through telephoto lenses, rather than the scope of an M-16. For the lens is mightier than the scope).

Panel 4: Bush's proud, fatherly mug nodding in approval of the previous panels, with burning coca leaves as backdrop, which slowly dissolves to red, white and blue banners at the forthcoming Republican convention.

Michael Strong and Dave Anthony are both graduate students in English from Chapel Hill.

. . . But his war only fights against individual rights

There is a plague on the land. You hear about it on the evening news. Your president tells you it is the "gravest domestic threat facing the nation today." He says that the name of the plague is *drugs* and that your utmost commitment and effort are required to eradicate it. He calls on you to fight a noble fight, a war on drugs.

There is indeed a plague on the land, but its name is not *drugs*, and you cannot rely on your leaders to identify and combat it, for they are its chief advocates. The name of the plague is *statism*. It is the belief that the interests of the state outweigh the interests of the individual.

"Drugs are sapping our strength as a nation," your president says. What does he mean? Clearly, a number of serious

problems are associated with illegal drugs: drug users steal to support their expensive habits; drug dealers fight "turf wars" to secure exclusive "right" to drug sales in particular neighborhoods; employees who use drugs are less productive. But these facts alone do not justify a war on drugs; in order to solve any problem, one must first identify its source.

Your president claims that he has done so: the people responsible for the problem are "everyone who uses drugs, everyone who sells drugs, everyone who looks the other way." This last grouping is intended to be all-inclusive; it means that *you* are responsible, as long as you are not actively opposing the use and sale of drugs. And make no mistake — you are being held respon-

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sible. The punishment imposed upon you is *taxation*, and the war is just beginning to heat up.

Illegal drugs are a grave threat to our society, but it is the *illegal* part, not the *drug* part, that is the source of that threat. Prohibition of the drug trade is the source of most of the problems associated with drugs. If drug sales were legal, they could take place openly; violent turf wars would end. (How often do you see the manufacturers and sellers of alcohol and cigarettes involved in shoot-outs with the police and with each other?) Moreover, drug prices would drop considerably, since it is the artificial scarcity and high operating costs imposed by prohibition efforts that keep prices high; as a result, drug users would not need to turn to crime to support their habits. In each case, prohibition is the root of the problem. A bigger dose of prohibition can only make the problem worse.

Yet that is what your president is advocating. We are involved in a war, he says. You have heard about wars

before: wars on poverty, on illiteracy, on AIDS. Perhaps you assumed "war" was only a metaphor. It is time to reconsider that assumption. The war on drugs is for real. The shooting has been going on for years in the streets of America's cities. In Colombia, they are bringing out the big guns: your money has been confiscated in order to send military supplies and advisers to that country. Sending in troops is the next logical step. Do not be surprised when it is taken.

Colombia's president has said that the drug habits of Americans have created the largest criminal enterprise in the world. Your president agrees with him. Neither will admit that the *prohibition* of the drug trade is the source of the problem.

Do not be confused by the language your president uses. There can be no such thing as a war on substance. The war on drugs is a war on people. And a nation must undertake careful deliberation before declaring war against a group of people. A nation which recognizes individual rights will declare war only in response to a violation of those rights. But a nation which ignores individual rights, or considers them only one factor among many to "weighed"

and "balanced," will act accordingly.

Your president attempts to justify his actions by speaking the language of rights. "Americans have a right to safety," he says. This sounds reasonable enough. But safety could be secured in any number of ways: it could be secured by rounding up and imprisoning anyone who looks suspicious. Surely your president does not mean that. What he does mean is that Americans have the "right" to prohibit their fellow citizens from engaging in voluntary transactions — when those transactions involve certain drugs, the use of which "society" does not approve. This is the premise of *statism*, the belief that the interests of the state or of "society" justify the violation of individual rights.

Your leaders are acting on the statist premise now. They are using it in two ways: to justify the prohibition of the drug trade and to justify the seizure of your wealth to enforce that prohibition. You might suppose that in as diverse a society as ours, someone of prominence would be opposing this statist trend and defending individual rights. Not so. Your leaders are united on this issue; they differ only as to how much of your money to throw away.

But they don't mention the word

"money," and you will never hear the word "taxation." They talk endlessly of "resources;" we need greater "resources" to deal with these complex problems, we must allocate our nation's "resources" efficiently. The "resource" that they are speaking of is *you* — you and anyone else who produces any wealth in this country. If you are not paying taxes now, your turn will come. The war on drugs is a long-term project.

The raids on Colombian drug lords which the seizure of your money supports are code-named "Operation Apocalypse." The name is fitting, calling to mind images of destruction and doom. But the doom that awaits you has its origin in *statism*, and it will only be hastened by further statist measures. The way to avoid it is through the recognition of individual rights, even in cases where people exercise their rights to engage in activities of which others do not approve. In declaring war on drugs, your president has declared war on the individual — he has declared war on *you*. If you value freedom, you must let him know you are not a "resource" that he can dispose of.

Harry Dolan is a graduate student in philosophy from Rome, N.Y.

Leaders will fight future tuition hikes

Many students returned to campus two weeks ago to find an unpleasant surprise awaiting them — a tuition increase of 20 percent for in-state residents and 15 percent for out-of-state students. Those percentages translate into about \$100 per year and \$650 per year respectively. While this news was unexpected for many students, their representatives spent a great deal of time this summer speaking out on the issue and lobbying against the increases. Since recent editorials have criticized the strong position taken by student government we feel that it would benefit the university community to outline the principles upon which our opposition was based.

Too much, too late: The increases were unprecedented in their size and unanticipated by students when they left the campus in May. Thus students and their families were not prepared to respond politically or financially and the Office of Scholarships and Student Aid was unable to budget for the wide impact of the increases. The aid office has only been able to fill students' needs with loan dollars, adding to already-staggering amount of debt burden felt by the students.

The cost to the University: Higher tuition could very well cost UNC two things. One is a loss in the diversity and quality of our out-of-state population. Carolina will lose one of its competitive advantages, making it a less attractive alternative. We'll end up with an out-of-state population that can pay its way but may not bring an equal amount of talent with it. This will damage the reputation of a university already slipping in national rankings.

The second loss will be the result of the drastic rise of in-state tuition rates. An increase of this nature can only erode the cherished principle of a minimal cost university that is enshrined in the North Carolina Constitution. If our attitude today is "Well, it's only \$100 and that's not so unreasonable" we will open up Pandora's Box for every succeeding state budget process and this can only lead to an ultimate desertion of the very principle upon which the university was founded.

The funding of private education: The tuition hikes were especially objectionable in the face of the state's increased funding of private colleges and universities. The state maintains two funds, one being a pool from which money is distributed on the basis of financial need. The other fund is an across-the-board donation by the state toward the tuition of each North Carolina resident at an N.C. private university. The bottom line here is that while the resident North Carolinian got hit for

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\$100 a year extra at public schools, those state residents going to private schools like Duke or Meredith were given a raise from \$1,100 to \$1,500. If you are sitting in Lenoir at a table of four North Carolinians, congratulate yourselves. You all just contributed the extra \$400 to "Biff" who goes to Duke. If that is not shooting public education in the foot, what is?

The lack of university control: The current system of tuition is unfair to the students and their institutions. Unlike private school students, we aren't really paying "tuition" — our dollars go to the General Fund of the state of North Carolina, not to our campuses. In truth, we are paying taxes. Our schools' budgets come under intense scrutiny and micro-management, whereas the \$1,500 per head going to the private schools is essentially a carte blanche.

Increasing tuition has truly achieved only one thing — it has given \$19 million to the state General Fund. And where has it all gone? A few million here for a basketball arena to N.C. State, a few million there to build a business school we didn't even ask for and some \$25 million in aid to private school students. The student body here in Chapel Hill and, indeed, students across the state, have been used as a cash cow, seen simply as a source of revenue.

Student government believes that the state of North Carolina could have handled the issue more sensitively, could have consulted those concerned. This simply was not done and we were forced to use the media to get our points across. We will continue to keep this issue in the forefront so that increases of this nature do not become the status quo. We believe that public higher education in North Carolina at all those who benefit from it deserve better.

Our continued opposition is not based on a selfish desire to squeeze every drop out of the system that we can. It is based on a respect and admiration for the people of North Carolina and their 200-year commitment to public education. The recent tuition increase is an affront and an insult to that commitment.

Brien Lewis, a senior political science major from Toronto, Canada, is student body president. Gene Davis, a senior speech communications major from Raleigh, is the speaker of Student Congress.



Appropriations, AIDS, streetcars and stress

"We are now a world-class university. We won't be in 10 years if we rely on state appropriations." — Chancellor Paul Hardin, speaking to the Board of Trustees on why the University should seek more financial autonomy.

"Our mission is to provide the best education for the least amount of money, not necessarily to be a great university." — Board of Trustees member John Pope on why he disagreed with Hardin's proposals. Pope was the only member to express serious reservations with the suggestions.

"A lot of eyes bulge and there is a lot of giggling." — Laura Foster, chair-

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woman of the Union's Gallery Committee, describing reactions to the "Visual AIDS" exhibit, which included sometimes-explicit AIDS educational posters from around the world.

I feel that the student vote should be final. I'm not sure it's any congress member's role to question that decision. I don't think the merits of the rec center should be called into question." — Carolina Athletic Association President Lisa Frye, speaking before the Rules and Judiciary Committee of Student Congress on a proposal to put the

Student Recreation Center to a second referendum. The proposal was sent with an unfavorable recommendation to the full congress.

"Downtown Chapel Hill is not dead. But we're going to make it livelier." — Chapel Hill Mayor Jonathan Howes on the unveiling of the town's two new, \$150,000 teal trolleys.

"We shall prevail over the forces that would destroy our democracy and enslave our nation." — Colombian President Virgilio Barco Vargas, explaining his hard-line stance against his nation's drug traffickers.

"After two years of sheer mental torture, he was just stressed out." — Tammy Faye Bakker, wife of televangelist Jim Bakker, who collapsed during his trial and was admitted to Butner hospital for a mental evaluation.

"There's quite a potential for explosion if the drums aren't stabilized." — Chapel Hill Fire Marshal Joe Robertson, explaining that a fire in Venable Hall Tuesday could set off explosions from the drums of flamme liquid, which each had the explosive power of six sticks of dynamite.

Compiled by editorial page editor Mary Jo Dunnington.