The Military’s Video Wargames
Also reviews by Fred Graham, Gregg Easterbrook, E. Fuller Torrey, and Thomas J. Peters

EVERYTHING YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT FOREIGN POLICY

that Ronald Reagan didn’t tell you
Mrs. Rosenthal lived on the second floor of my lower Manhattan tenement, amidst the odors of rotting potatoes, old newspapers, and rags that always issued forth from her lair. In fair weather and foul, Mrs. Rosenthal stood guard beside the front door; her warted nose, frazzled grey hair, and eyes smarting with hurt gave her the appearance of a frenzied gargoyle, matched by Harry, the elfin building superintendent who stood guard on the other side.

Though Mrs. Rosenthal rarely left the block, she had a world view. Events large and small, from a national election to a garbage strike to evidence of tampering with her mailbox, she laid to Israel’s ancient enemies, most notably their personification at that time, Gamal Abdel Nasser. Hour upon hour, she stood by that door (in a black wool coat on even the hottest days, lest her sufferings be forgotten), working her gums in mumbled vituperation against Nasser and his fellow goyim. (Harry stood nodding in agreement, mainly...
because he had the shakes.) The slightest provocation could raise Mrs. Rosenthal’s mumblings to Jimi Hendrix heights of free-form invective, and baiting her became something of a sport on the block. One day a group of Puerto Rican girls came sauntering past, clucking at Mrs. Rosenthal and giggling. Persecution was Mrs. Rosenthal’s cue.

“You little shtunks,” she spat. “Who do you think you are? Big shots like Nasser? Nasser Shmasher. I’ll shmasher him, that schmuck. Schmuck him. That’s what I say. You think you’re big shots, too, do you, you little pishers? I’ll pisher you, right in the kisser. Nasser, ha! I’ll pisher him too. You get away from me. Get out of here.” (This while chasing them, to their delight, with her stick.) When Mrs. Rosenthal got wound up, she could go on for hours, and before she was through, Lindsay Shmindsey, Nixon Shmixon, the Kennedy Shmennidies, and other persons of note had fallen under the scourge of her avenging tongue.

Whenever I hear the president or his cohorts talking about the world, I think of Mrs. Rosenthal. I do not wish to exaggerate. The Reaganites’ demon, the Soviet Union, does loom larger in the world than did Nasser in the problems of the New York City Sanitation Department or in the provocations of Mrs. Rosenthal’s young neighbors. But to see conflict in nations like Nicaragua and Lebanon, which have been embroiled for as long as anyone can remember, as essentially the work of the Soviets and their proxies; to excuse and support regimes like those of Marcos in the Philippines and Botha in South Africa because these are, we say, bulwarks against the Soviets; to contend, in the face of reality, that a government that calls itself communist is by definition a mortal threat, is delusion of the same kind if not the same degree. Yes, the Soviets are a danger. But to view the world as Reagan does is itself to concede a form of victory to them—a victory over our ability to see the world as it is, and respond appropriately. It’s a little like having Mrs. Rosenthal in the Oval Office.

**Slowing the Arms Race**

American liberals bear the cross of having to prove their toughness on foreign affairs. On this score, Reagan’s hands were free. “Because of his conservative credentials,” said Reagan’s successor as governor of California, Jerry Brown, “[Reagan] is uniquely empowered to negotiate and obtain ratification for a workable nuclear arms treaty.”

As we all know, Reagan did not seize this opportunity.

He campaigned like John Kennedy establishing his conservative credentials against Richard Nixon—the “missile gap” became the “window of vulnerability.” Once Reagan was in office,
moreover, he showed none of the test-ban treaty side of Kennedy. Instead he used his conservative credentials in the service of policies that were conservative cliches. On arms control, the only real debate within the administration was whether to make the Soviets an offer that was totally—and brazenly—unacceptable, or whether to make an offer that had at least the appearance of plausibility. We ended up demanding that the Soviets give up existing weapons—something neither side has ever done—while we merely refrained from building more. Give me a dollar and I'll promise not to ask you for another. Arms control talks broke down for the first time in 14 years.

So determined was the president not to negotiate, he even ignored the advice of his own military when it was tending in that direction. The Pentagon, for example, had never really wanted the Pershing II missiles in Europe. These missiles would eat up dollars the military felt could be better spent on other things, and they wouldn't accomplish anything that our existing missiles couldn't accomplish already. The only reason Carter had supported this project was to make a symbolic commitment to our allies. Here was one of those rare opportunities to negotiate on something that was dispensible to begin with. Reagan wasn't interested.

His theory was that we could beat the Soviets into submission with an all-out arms buildup and rhetoric to match. But posturing like Qaddafi or Idi Amin wasn't exactly a fast track to an arms accord. Soviet leaders want to be seen as cowering before the capitalists about as much as Reagan wants to be seen as cowering before them. The administration's attitude that arms agreements “aren't worth the paper they're written on” wasn't conducive to agreement either. Kenneth Adelman, Reagan's arms control chief, actually suggested that negotiation can breed an atmosphere that encourages Soviet aggression. Reagan was right that we needed to negotiate from strength. But it is hard to believe that he really wanted to negotiate at all.

It was also hard to believe that he really cared about the spread of nuclear weapons, which is one of the few things on which the Soviets and ourselves should be able to agree. To Reagan's credit, the administration did increase its support of the International Atomic Energy Agency. This is the U.N. body that is supposed to detect any diversion of commercial nuclear plants to weapons production; it has been, and remains, notoriously weak.

But where Carter had tried to restrain U.S. sales of nuclear technology and materials, Reagan's policy was to make us a "reliable supplier." He sold such technology to India, Argentina, and South Africa, even though these countries had not signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), and he helped arrange sales through third-party suppliers to get around the provisions of our own non-proliferation act. Then, too, there is Section VI of the NPT that calls upon us and the other nuclear powers to pursue in good faith a "treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control." It wasn't bedtime reading.

While the superpower arms race was mounting, another such race was occurring in the Third World. Military budgets there have soared by 400 percent over the past decade, and in 1982, Reagan pushed us past the Soviets as the Third World arms sales champs, with more than $7 billion worth. In 1983 we exceeded Soviet arms sales by 50 percent. These were not just surplus jeeps, but sophisticated weaponry such as F-16 bombers, many of which we financed. Of course, rupees so spent are not available for other things. Pakistan, which bought $1.6 billion worth of the bombers in 1982, pays its school teachers $30 a month.

The countries that buy such weapons are tempted to use them. Quite possibly they will use them against us. Khomeini's Iran is now fighting Iraq with weapons we provided the Shah. When Britain invaded the Falklands, it was greeted by an Argentine army equipped with weapons Britain had sold it.

The president calls this a safer world. Of course it is not a safer world. The arms business is a bad business, and we should get out of it as quickly as possible.

This will not be easy. A lot of jobs are involved in the arms trade and the defense build-up generally. But the difficulty should not prevent us from deciding what is right and planning for the day when that can be our policy. The U.S. switched its factories from peace to war within six months in 1942. And we switched back to peacetime production almost as fast in 1945-46. We can do it again. Anyone who doubts we can have prosperity without significant arms production should look at the period between 1946 and 1950, when we did exactly that.

To be sure, there is no shortage of countries that are eager to sell arms, or nuclear materials, to just about all comers. The temptation is to let the lowest common denominator prevail and seek to become, well, the most "reliable supplier." This is a problem crying out for leadership, and that
leadership starts with a willingness to show restraint ourselves. This Reagan has not done.

Defending Our Ideals

Whatever Happened to Human Rights?

That we talk about “human rights” as though it were a foreign policy frill, is itself rather telling. What is America about, anyway?

The Carter administration was not always a tiger on human rights; but at least Carter said to the world that if you want our aid you’d better treat your own citizens with some regard for human decency. This did not rout all the tyrants, but it was not without effect. Countries like Zaire, Argentina, and Chile eased their atrocities to some degree. Indonesia released 35,000 political prisoners who had been jailed without trial for years.

Yet there was no Carter policy that the Reaganites assaulted with more relish. “Utopian,” huffed U.N. Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick, leaving one to wonder why we bother opposing the number-one human rights violator, the Soviet Union, anyway.

This view of the world put those Reagan officials responsible for human rights in the strange position of advancing a policy in which they didn’t believe. Elliott Abrams, Reagan’s human rights chief, undertook the task with elan, assailing not so much human rights violators, as liberals who criticize human rights violators friendly to the U.S. The Abrams staple was a speech he gave to the Cuban American National Foundation, which is avidly anti-Castro. “They [these liberals] have spent years defending tyrants, years demeaning their own great nation, years obfuscating the truth,” Abrams said.

Now, Abrams wasn’t all wrong. Columnists such as Alexander Cockburn show an indulgence for the Kremlin exceeded only by Jeane Kirkpatrick’s indulgence of the Argentine generals (Kirkpatrick was so enamored of the junta that she actually supported it against Britain in the Falklands war). The U.N. often does sound like, well, a Republican platform-writing committee that has slipped into ideological reverse. But people like Abrams become so obsessed with such one-sidedness that they lapse into a contrary one-sidedness of their own. They can’t seem to understand that many human rights advocates—Amnesty International is an example—refuse to regard people in places like Central America as pawns in the cold war and romanticize neither generals nor guerrillas. They just think that killing and torture are wrong.

Hatred is a form of attraction, and we tend to become more like that which we obsessively oppose. So here the Elliott Abramses of the administration lapse into an apologia that is almost a comic rehearsal of those of the liberals they detest. In a New York Times op-ed piece entitled (the man can’t restrain himself) “The Myopia of Human Rights Advocates”—Abrams aimed his assault not at the Turks, but at those who complain about the rights violations of the Turks. These complainers just don’t understand the travails of a country surrounded by enemies and with a history of instability—sort of like the Soviet Union, or Nicaragua, some might add. Then sounding much like an Upper East Side liberal coddling ghetto criminals, Abrams lamented the plight of the Turkish police forces, which are “decentralized, very poorly trained, and lacking discipline.” What the poor dears need, of course, is education and professional training; but alas, “Vietnam-era legislation...prevents us from training foreign police forces.”

What’s happening in countries where the Reaganites have proudly rolled back the human rights policies of the Carter administration—the Philippines, for example, or South Africa? In the former, we see a populace rising up against a hated dictator. In South Africa we see torture and political detentions mounting, while the Botha regime enforces with renewed enthusiasm such racist measures as the pass laws. Furthering what it calls its “constructive engagement” with this regime, the Reagan administration has approved a $1.1 billion IMF loan for South Africa.

With Friends Like These...

We agree with those who believe that, instead of just being against communism, we should be for freedom and democracy around the world. The Philippines is a major test of that belief. And it is a test that we are failing with our continued support of Ferdinand Marcos.

Marcos is the Philippines president who buys elections and tortures and kills his opponents. In a country in which 80 percent of the people live in miserable poverty, Marcos has made himself and his cronies exceedingly rich by cutting them into virtually every business deal worth noticing. (His opponents talk of the Philippines “mining” industry: “This is mine. This is mine...”) In 1972 Marcos found himself barred by the...
country's constitution from seeking a third term. His rival, a man named Benigno Aquino, was poised to take power. Marcos solved this political dilemma in true democratic fashion by suspending the constitution, declaring martial law, and throwing Aquino into jail. Aquino went into exile here in 1980. We all know what happened to him when he tried to return in 1983.

Marcos a friend of democracy? Our leaders seem to think so. Since he took power in 1965 we have bestowed upon this dictator more than $2 billion in outright aid, plus billions more in loans and credits from the World Bank and other agencies. This is on top of the roughly quarter billion dollars a year that our military bases in the Philippines pump into the local economy through salaries, purchases, and the like.

Those bases—Clark Field and Subic Bay Naval Base—are the reasons that we grovel. Military bases are supposed to make us strong, but here's an example of how they can make us weak. Moving us to befriend a Marcos and enabling him to jerk our chain. In the latter, he has become expert. Although our lease agreement for the bases was supposed to last until 1991, he has been demanding—and getting—regular renegotiations to up what he calls the “rent.” To shut up congressional critics of his human rights abuses, he simply threatens to kick us out.

Without question, those bases are important. But are they important enough to make us kowtow to this Asian Bugsy Seigal? The official wisdom is that Clark Field and Subic Bay are crucial to our presence in the Pacific, Indian Ocean, and even the Persian Gulf. This litany has been recited so long, that it is time for another look. Leaving aside whether we really need to be in the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean to begin with, our bases in Guam, Okinawa, and Japan are close enough to establish our military presence in the region, and facilities in Singapore and Australia are available as well. The bases in the Philippines are not a major strategic deterrent to the Soviets: our B-52s, for example, use Guam. As for possible trouble in Vietnam, Marcos has agreed with Hanoi that Philippines bases will not be used for hostilities in that country. He's not worth the bargain.

Knowing When to Intervene

Son of Bay of Pigs

Invasion is the most extreme step one country can take against another. We should do it only when nothing else works. Certainly we shouldn't do it just because we don't like somebody.

Back in the Coolidge era, our reigning wise men saw trouble in Nicaragua as the work of revolutionary communism in Mexico. Now the Sandinistas have overthrown Somoza, the U.S.-sponsored dictator and we see the hammer and sickle marching toward our borders again. "Exported from the Soviet Union and Cuba," proclaimed Reagan, suggesting that reasonable men could have no other reason for wanting to get rid
of the dictator. Accordingly, he launched a modified Bay of Pigs, funding remnants of Somoza's guard, the Contras, to try to overthrow the Sandinistas and bring back the good old days. More ominous still, Georgie Anne Geyer, the columnist, reported that two American diplomats in the region told her that the administration seemed bent on stirring up a full-scale conflict in the region. What makes this news especially scary is that Geyer is no left-winger, but a respected reporter who is also a political conservative.

The question is not whether the Sandinistas are nice people. Certainly you wouldn't mistake them for the Tulsa Jaycees. But do they really threaten the free world? There is scant evidence of the supposed arms flow from the Sandinistas to the Salvadorean rebels. Their crime seems to be that they hold political sympathies that we dislike. We should aid the Afghan resistance against the Soviet regime there, which resembles Vichy France under the Nazis. We should not try to overthrow a government that a large number of Nicaraguans do support.

China ought to have taught us that even a straight-line Marxist government is not necessarily a threat. The Sandinistas showed at least the potential for going on an independent course, and there was nothing to be lost in trying to build relations with them to this end, as we might have done with China to our immense benefit 35 years ago.

There is no guarantee that would happen, of course. But should a real threat arise—should, for example, the Soviets put backfire bombers at the Punta Huete airfield, which has the largest airstrip in Central America—we could deal with that as we dealt with the Soviet missiles in Cuba 20 years ago. That would be the time to impose a blockade, or even to mine the harbor. Reagan's error was not in doing so, but in doing so without provocation. It wasn't just a shameful disregard of international law. It was also stupid. Strategically, it leaves us with few cards to play short of war in case of a real provocation. At the same time, Reagan's actions strengthened the hand of the hard-line faction within Nicaragua itself, just as Soviet aggression would strengthen Reagan, and not Mondale, here.

When Peacekeeping Becomes Partisan

Trying to steady other people's altars is a tricky business. When you take sides, it becomes impossible. That's the lesson we hope Reagan learned in Lebanon.

Lebanon was a shotgun marriage to begin with, carved out of Syria following the dismemberment of the Ottoman empire in the 1920s. (See "The Tribal Trap," Gordon Rayfield, April.) Under an antique power-sharing arrangement, a minority Maronite Christian ruled over a fractious brew of Christians, Sunni and Shiite Moslems, and more recently Palestinians, who had encamped there.

When we became involved back in August 1982, as part of a multinational force to oversee the withdrawal of Palestinians from Lebanon, it was a worthy endeavor. And when we sent the Marines back after the massacre of Palestinians by Christian Phalangists, our troops were seen as friends and protectors by the Moslems and Palestinians in West Beirut. "We really felt appreciated," one Marine told The New York Times.

Then we expanded our role from peacekeeping to nation-building. We decided to back the Christian Gemayel government. This made us the enemy of the Moslems who had seen us as friends. Making matters worse, Reagan elevated this grade-B conflict into a Sam Goldwyn epic, seeing in the morass the hand of Russia acting through Syria, which was helping Moslem factions in the growing civil war. Lebanon was now "central to our credibility on a global scale," the president declared after the Moslems bombed the Marine barracks.

But, as the territory controlled by the Gemayel government shrunk to what one reporter described as "less than the size of Reagan's California ranch," the president had to withdraw the Marines. "The administration," Newsweek summed up, "had portrayed the Lebanon conflict as a contest of wills with Syria and with Syria's patron in Moscow; its pullback thus handed a stunning propaganda victory to Assad and indirectly to the Soviet Union. No matter what happens next in Lebanon, Reagan's retreat will also deal a sharp blow to American prestige and credibility around the world."

As we look back on this debacle, it's important to distinguish between the reason we went in and the reason we had to leave, for both shed important light on the policies we should follow in the future. We went in to prevent bloodshed, to provide a neutral force that would separate hostile parties. This kind of peacekeeping is something we should always do when it is needed. There are, however, important limits. First, many nations and many factions within nations do not regard us as neutral because of the Cold War or
because of a history of our intervention on what they regard as the wrong side. In such cases we should use our diplomacy to encourage the use of peacekeeping forces from other nations, and we should always be ready to supply and transport such forces when our own troops can't be used.

The second limit on peacekeeping becomes apparent when one or both of the hostile nations or factions would resist the interposition of a neutral force. Sri Lanka and Northern Ireland are examples.

The third limit is the one we encountered in Lebanon. Ordinarily you shouldn't take sides. If the other side is as strong as the Moslems supported by the Syrians, or the Vietcong supported by the North Vietnamese, moreover, intervention is not likely to produce a happy ending. The one time that taking sides is clearly proper is when one country has attacked another. In such cases the international community should act as it did in Korea to throw back the aggressor. While this is always desirable as a matter of morality, there are practical limits, as the case of Russia and Afghanistan illustrates.

Peacekeeping, done with a sensible regard for these limitations, is not a pie in the sky idea. As long ago as the end of World War II the idea commanded widespread support in this country. Senator Joseph Ball, a Republican from Minnesota, led a bipartisan effort to incorporate an international peace force into the United Nations. Ball felt so strongly about the issue that he switched his support to Roosevelt in the 1944 election because Roosevelt seemed firmer in his advocacy than did Tom Dewey. A Gallup poll at the time found that 75 percent of the American public knew of the idea and supported it.

The U.N. charter did provide for peacekeeping forces, which have been used on several occasions since World War II. Unfortunately, the Cold War took a lot of steam out of the idea by making agreement on a true world police force impossible. However, much of the dangerous hostility in the world—whether between Greek and Turk, Jew and Arab, or Indian and Pakistani—has nothing to do with the Cold War. In these cases neutral forces can be vitally important in preventing or halting war.

Using Our Eyes and Ears

What didn't they know and why didn't they know it? Worse, Why didn't they want to know it? If you answered those questions, you would understand a great deal of the administration's blundering in the foreign policy arena.

Intelligence, or lack of it, has been a chronic problem. In the late fifties the book The Ugly American portrayed a foreign service that couldn't speak the local language and was totally out of touch with the countries in which it served. Twenty-five years later, Jack Anderson was reporting that right across our border, in Mexico, few CIA operatives speak Spanish. In Iran, only a handful of our embassy staff spoke the native language, Farsi. This did not enhance our ability to detect the revolution that was brewing.

This language ignorance is connected, in turn, to career patterns within the foreign service itself. Under the belief that everyone is a potential undersecretary, the State Department regularly transfers foreign service officers every two to four years. This is a great way to build a resume, but a crummy way to get to understand the country where you are stationed. As a result, our embassy staffs spend most of their time talking to local officials and other diplomats. CIA agents tend to be attached to embassies and thus fall into the same big-shot syndrome. When our embassy was taken in Tehran, guess where most of the CIA people were. And guess where they were when our embassy in Beirut was bombed. "It is not surprising that most of their reports read like diplomatic dispatches," a Senate Intelligence Committee staff member observed in an article in The Washington Quarterly.

The Reagan administration showed some awareness of the CIA problem, but by and large the old attitudes have flourished. It starts with the president himself. His lack of curiosity about the world is remarkable: though railing against communism for more than 30 years, he didn't get around to actually visiting a communist country until he went to China earlier this year.

As the chief, so the Indians. For example, the administration made little effort to find out whether it is actually true—as it persistently maintains—that the Salvadoran refugees we deported face little danger upon return to their country. "It's a question," human rights chief Elliott Abrams told me, "of how much time [we] spend on something we think is ridiculous." (See Jonathan Rowe, "Murder by Deportation," February.)

In all fairness, our foreign service officers don't get much encouragement to do their jobs better. When they do, they tend to be ignored, especially when they bring news the administration doesn't want to hear. Former ambassador to Iran
William Sullivan recalls in his memoirs that as the revolution was brewing, our embassy finally began to realize that something was amiss. Carter and Brzezinski were committed to the shah, however, and would hear nothing of this. Sullivan and the embassy were ignored.

Scene shifts to Nicaragua. Reagan is now president. For months, our embassy tried to convey to Washington that while Cuban advisers were to be found in that country, it was not "another Cuba," as Alexander Haig had put it. In frustration, an embassy official unloaded to a Boston Globe reporter. "We've pointed out [their] distortions time and again and been totally ignored, or told to shut up," the official said. "They must be using our reports as toilet paper." The administration even recalled its ambassador to Nicaragua, Anthony C.E. Quainton, for suggesting that the Sandinistas were doing a respectable job in such areas as education, at a time when our official line proclaimed otherwise.

Vietnam was the world's longest running example of fiction from subordinates in the field designed to tell Washington what it wanted to hear, alternating with accurate reports that the higher-ups refused to believe. While Reagan's problem with reality is that he insists upon viewing it through a conservative prism that eliminates facts that don't fit his view of the world, the more common intelligence problem is illustrated by Vietnam, where the lying and resistance to truth were motivated less by ideology than by bureaucratic self-protection.

We won't have a sensible foreign policy until we have accurate information on which to base it. And we won't have that kind of information until we have a president who is strong enough and objective enough to listen to what he doesn't want to hear, and who understands and guards against all the ways a chain of command—whether it's the CIA, the Pentagon, or the State Department—can distort or suppress the truth.

Doing the Other Guy's Work

Get NATO Off the Dole

While the U.S. Senate was still considering the North Atlantic Treaty Organization agreement, Secretary of State Dean Acheson was asked at a hearing whether the agreement might involve a permanent commitment of large numbers of American troops. "The answer to that question, senator," Acheson replied, "is a clear and ab-
solute 'No!'"

Thirty-five years later, 325,000 American troops are committed to NATO, and roughly half our defense budget goes to support them and European defense in general.

Readers of this magazine know that we have been urging since 1970 that America bring home these troops. This is not because we don't consider Europe important, but because—with twice the GNP of Russia and with only one front to defend to Russia's two—the Europeans can now pay for themselves.

At long last, Congress is waking up. Back in June, Senator Sam Nunn of Georgia, a strong defense advocate, proposed an amendment to the defense bill that would have brought home up to 90,000 U.S. troops if the Europeans didn't start contributing more to their own defense. (We spend 7.2 percent of our GNP to West Germany's 4.3 percent and Italy's 2.6 percent.) Though the amendment was defeated, the relatively close margin—55 to 41—would have been inconceivable just a few years ago. The message is getting through to people like former West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt and French President Francois Mitterand, both of whom have spoken of the need for Europe to provide more for its own defense.

About the only person who hasn't gotten the message is Ronald Reagan, who lobbied hard against the Nunn amendment and was responsible for the largely party-line vote. But Reagan should be the first to see the light. If we are going to get tough on welfare recipients who don't make a sufficient effort to find work, shouldn't we be just a little concerned when the Germans make a defense effort of only $363 apiece while we spend $819 (much of which is used to help defend the Germans)? Reagan ought to realize that the money saved from a more sensible NATO commitment would enable us to address such problems as the dismal lack of combat readiness of our own troops.

But if none of this convinces the president, perhaps a little arithmetic will. We currently spend between $70 billion and $130 billion a year defending Europe. The federal deficit is now in the vicinity of $180 billion. Reagan has pledged there will be no tax increase next year, and he's also pledged to balance the budget. Now let's see....

Forget the Persian Gulf

Suppose the Iran-Iraq war heats up to the point where Iran closes the Strait of Hormuz, through which 20 percent of non-communist oil production flows daily. A disaster for the United States,
right?
The administration seems to think so. It is drafting contingency plans for the U.S. to step into the Iran-Iraq war. And on the broader scene, it's embarked on a $20 billion-plus "Central Command" that would commit over 200,000 U.S. forces to contain such conflicts. In early 1984 we had 20 ships in the area. "There's no way we could allow that channel to be closed," Reagan said.

But why not? We get less than four percent of our oil from the Persian Gulf these days. Saudi Arabia, which was our leading oil supplier as recently as 1978, didn't even rank in the top five last year.

Then who does care about Persian Gulf oil? Japan for one, which relies on the Gulf for over one half of its oil, and Western Europe, which gets around a quarter. Japan is also the number one or two trading partner with every country in the Gulf except Bahrain, where it is number three. It is the number one trader with both Iran and Iraq. France is selling weapons to the latter.

Given this sizable financial interest on the part of our allies, you'd expect them to help pay for the Gulf's defense. But would you pay, if you had a soft touch like Reagan eager to do it for you? While Japan and our allies merrily make money off the Iran-Iraq war, we pay the bill to contain it.

But what about that 4 percent of our oil that

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And If They Won't Pay for Their Defense...

About that Japanese economic miracle you've read so much about. The main miracle is how the Japanese have gotten us to pay for their defense for so long. If we spent as small a portion of our economy on defense as they did, we'd have more than $150 billion dollars to build better factories and cars and to train better engineers. As it is, we buy their cars for dollars and we provide their defense virtually for free. Our trade deficit with them last year was $20 billion.

It's a little like the retired couple who sent supp-

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Bring Back the Havana Sugar Kings

A photograph in the October 14, 1959 edition of The Sporting News shows a beaming Fidel Castro shaking hands with a crew-cut gringo named Ted Wieand. Wieand was about to pitch the seventh and final game of the Junior World Series for the Triple-A Havana Sugar Kings against the Minneapolis Millers, whose second baseman was a fellow named Carl Yastrzemski. Havana won that game, and the series; and though it had been in the league only a few years, the team seemed to have a promising future.

It was not to be. Castro became our devil, we became his, and the Sugar Kings became the Jersey City Jerseys. But baseball resides in a zone that is beyond such matters as ideology and the Cold War. Despite 20 years of CIA plots, Cuban adventurism, and harangues on both sides, those Cuban players and fans still want to play ball. "We all await the day when we can play against the North American Great Leaguers," Wilfredo Sanchez, Cuba's leading lifetime hitter (332 lifetime average) told Thomas Boswell of The Washington Post.

We should give Wilfredo Sanchez and his countrymen their wish. Specifically, we should admit Havana into the American League. It would be great for the game, and great for our relations in the hemisphere to boost the Soviets would be shut out cold. As Don Miguel Cuevas, Cuba's native Joe DiMaggio, put it, "The Russians have yet to come up with a good left-handed hitter."

Cubans are nuts about baseball. "Even Brooklyn couldn't match Cuban "fanaticos,"" wrote a sportswriter for the Toronto Daily Star after the Sugar King/Miller series. A Havana journalist said of Cuevas: "In a baseball crowd, even Fidel would not receive the recognition of Don Miguel."

Among the Cuban baseball nuts is Fidel Castro himself, who, as a pitcher for the University of Havana, was scouted by the old Washington Senators ("Good stuff," the reports said.) Fidel attended all five games of the '59 series that were played in Havana, once calling off a cabinet meeting and dragging the ministers off to the park. If only we could get Castro and Reagan, the former sportsman, together, just think how they could reminisce about the golden days of Williams and Mantle, Snider and Mays. Sorry, Chernenko.

So there is ample precedent for bringing Havana into the upper reaches of the sport. The benefits could be enormous. At first Castro might insist upon a Cuban national team. But the aim should be an entry that, like the White Sox or Athletics, consists of players from all over. That way, folks in Fort Worth and Spokane could root for their hometown boys playing for the Havana team, the way basketball fans in Indiana root for the Boston
it wouldn’t have much effect on us. Reagan opposed stand-by rationing, maybe he just prefers to fight. Reagan has also opposed energy conservation, which has helped to make us less dependent on the Gulf to begin with. Somehow, he has gotten it into his head that strength is seen in self-indulgence rather than in self-restraint.

The British were smart enough to pull out of the Gulf in 1971 when they realized that other countries had come to have a bigger stake than they did. It’s time for us to see that light ourselves.

A Few Easy Answers

Foreign policy isn’t always an interminable conundrum. Sometimes, it’s easy, or at least ought to be.

Perhaps the easiest form of foreign policy is those symbolic gestures that act as balm and make cooperation possible. On this stage, Reagan, our most charming president since John Kennedy, should have shined. He could have gone to Brezhnev’s funeral, and Andropov’s too. What

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a golden opportunity to gain a bit of goodwill, and to work his charm upon the Soviets themselves. Instead the president dispensed rhetorical humiliation upon the Soviets at every opportunity. The man spoiled his own best act.

Another form of easy foreign policy is simply to encourage travel to and from the U.S. Who better than Reagan to promote peace through the private sector—to "get government out of the way" and encourage the people of the world to get to know one another?

Instead, the administration showed once again how an obsession with one's enemy can cause one to act just like him. Reagan has invoked the McCarran Act to exclude such persons from our shores as Gabriel Garcia Marquez, the Nobel Prize novelist, and the widow of slain Chilean leader Salvador Allende. His administration turned away hundreds of Japanese who wanted to take part in a U.N. conference on disarmament and a host of others.

Reaganites like Jeane Kirkpatrick spout indignation when college students refuse to let unpopular people speak on their campuses. Now they are doing the same thing themselves. Apparently, Reagan thinks government is a better judge than you or I of whom we should listen to.

Reagan also seems to think the government is a better judge of where we should travel. "U.S. INVESTIGATING TRAVEL TO CUBA—WASHINGTON MOVES TO TIGHTEN CURBS—SUBPOENAS TRAVEL AGENCY FILES," declared a recent headline in The New York Times. We may not have the funds to stem the international drug trade, but by gum we'll get those travel agents who are setting up trips for illicit tourists to the wicked isle.

Contact between people of different nations is not just an exercise in good will. It's also an important way for us to find out about the world. Peace Corps volunteers in Iran knew long before the CIA how much the shah was hated outside of Tehran; our CIA sleuths were too busy trading secrets with the shah's generals. We just might learn a few things about a country like Cuba if more of us went there, too.

One way to encourage such contacts is through cultural exchange. It should not have taken Reagan four years to renegotiate the cultural exchange agreement with the Soviets that had lapsed in 1979. We should want our entertainers to go there, especially the bearers of our infectious popular culture. How can the Soviets run a respectable class war if teenagers there start clamoring for Michael Jackson tee-shirts?

Another form of travel and exchange is the Olympics. Back in 1980 there was almost universal agreement that we should pull out of the Moscow games to protest the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. But that move only led to the Soviet pullout this year, and the further unraveling that may occur in South Korea in 1988. We shouldn't have done it.

For all their unfortunate nationalism, the Olympics are important. An Olga Korbut, Nadia Comaneci, or Mary Lou Retton does humanize an otherwise harsh world scene.

We should encourage the spread of sports across national borders, and one of the most fertile possibilities in this regard is baseball. It is a link between ourselves and the rest of our hemisphere that transcends politics—for all the tensions between our countries, Nicaragua sent its baseball team to the Los Angeles games. It is also a link in which the Soviet Union cannot share. Is there a Soviet personage who could make anywhere near the splash in Cuba or Nicaragua of a Reggie Jackson or Pete Rose? The major leagues have already expanded to the North. Now we should play our baseball card, and let Havana into the American League. (See sidebar.)