

## editorial opinion

### Time to face the nation, Mr. President

Silence is golden. Except when you're dealing with elected officials, especially the president of the United States.

Last Thursday's presidential news conference marked only the third time this year that Ronald Reagan has formally addressed the national press, earning him the distinction of most inaccessible of modern presidents.

Saul Friedman, White House correspondent for *Newsday*, wrote recently that Reagan has held fewer formal news conferences per month than any of his post-World War II predecessors — 41 in 80 months, as reported in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. Since his reelection in 1984, the frequency of Reagan's press conferences has fallen off to once every four to six months.

As it stands the president addresses the press about as often as the universe experiences an harmonic convergence, but the people of this country deserve more.

With the nation facing an unstable economy, proposals for an arms summit, a vacancy on the Supreme Court and mounting tensions in the Persian Gulf, this country needs a strong, accountable, accessible leader.

Americans don't need an actor who relishes simplistic photo opportunities with elementary school children or prefers to quip undiscernable answers over the racket of a helicopter lifting off from the White House lawn. But the president seems to enjoy those forms of non-communication, or the one-sided nature of his weekly radio addresses.

Members of the press looked silly a few weeks ago when they shouted questions at the president as he finished speaking to a group of teachers in the Rose Garden. But how else were they going to get answers to questions which needed to be asked?

Reagan's indifferent attitude toward the question of accountability to the press and public is incomprehensible.

Last Monday, when United States military forces bombed Iranian platforms in the Persian Gulf, he flatly refused to even briefly address the press. Instead, he sent White House Spokesman Martin Fitzwater out to take his punches in an extended brawl with the national press.

Thursday, when Reagan did finally hold a news conference, it was only about 30 minutes long and many questions were left at least partially unanswered, or addressed only in terms of rehearsed rhetoric. In the face of current national and international situations, the people of this country deserve more than 30 minutes of their commander in chief's attention.

President Reagan should keep in mind that he must be accountable to the press and the public just like any other elected official. If a mayor, borough council member, state representative or U.S. senator can't get away with such behavior, neither should he.

## the Collegian

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## reader opinion

### Cabin rent

I would like to clear up some misunderstandings concerning the use of the United Campus Ministry-Penn State Outing Club Log Cabin in Shingletown Gap. First, the log cabin is not owned by P.S.O.C. It is owned by U.C.M. and is rented through the office of the United Ministry at Penn State. P.S.O.C. receives a rental discount in exchange for annual maintenance and repair of the cabin.

Second, the cabin will not be available to rent until next spring. After the water is shut off in November, the cabin is used only for P.S.O.C.-sponsored trips.

Third, the cabin is not rented to individuals for weekend retreats. It is available only to student organizations for the sponsored activities.

And finally, the purpose of the cabin is not for fraternities or any other student organization to host parties where alcoholic beverages are served.

This policy will be strictly enforced in the future. The purpose of our cabin renovations has been to create a more enjoyable atmosphere there, and to instill an attitude of respect for its use.

Lee Tobin  
cabin chairman  
Penn State Outing Club  
main division

### Peace plan

I think it's time to defend the choice of Costa Rican president Oscar Arias Sanchez as the recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize.

Arias' plan is by no means carte blanche to the Sandinistas to continue their oppressive measures. The plan requires the lifting of restrictions on civil liberties in Nicaragua (the op-

position newspaper, *La Prensa*, and an opposition radio station are both back in operation even before the Nov. 7 start date of the Guatemala accord). The treaty restricts support not only for the Contras but for the Leninist guerillas in El Salvador as well.

The ideas behind support for the Contras are based on cold war hysteria and are, ultimately, very short sighted. Contra supporters continually claim that no Marxist-Leninist government has ever voluntarily stepped down. I hasten to point that few governments anywhere in the political spectrum step down voluntarily.

The cold reality Contra supporters overlook is that most attempts to violently overthrow a Marxist revolution have resulted in that government being more firmly in control. Two examples are the Bay of Pigs debacle in Cuba and the assistance of the west during the Russian civil war.

While it is true that popular support for the Sandinistas has diminished in Nicaragua recently, due mostly to their poor handling of the economy, it is also true that the majority of people in Nicaragua do not support the Contras. Many people there view the Contras as a return to the oppression of the Samozas.

Increased U.S. military pressure on the Sandinistas could very likely result in an increased Cuban and Soviet presence in Nicaragua — not a pleasant prospect.

The Contra war is an attempt of a "quick fix" solution to a very complicated problem.

The Arias plan is, as I said, a start towards a peaceful solution. It is a chance for stability in Central America which is certainly in the best interest of the United States.

David Pickering  
sophomore-telecommunications

### Contra policy

Concerning Rick Wetzel's letter of Oct. 22, I would like to pose a question. Does President Reagan's contra policy equal the United States for Mr. Wetzel? I doubt this, yet he claims that criticism of a dubious policy like the contra war is "an insult to the United States of America."

Arias' peace plan, called the Guatemala accord, was signed in August 1987. Recently negotiations between government and rebel forces in Guatemala and El Salvador have taken place, and for the first time, a similar dialogue is being worked out in Nicaragua.

The accord has also resulted in great strides toward a solution of refugee problems concerning Nicaragua, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras. And because of the agreement, *La Prensa* and other opposition media has reopened in Nicaragua. This seems to be an impressive record for a two-month old peace process in a region as war-torn as Central America.

I fully acknowledge Mr. Wetzel's right to support our president's policies. However, I cannot understand why he is ignoring these hopeful signs from Central America.

The Nobel Committee Chairman said it was a function of the prize to contribute to peace (NYT Oct. 14, 1987). Their selection of Arias was clearly such an effort. The Committee's choice focused international attention and support on Arias and the other leaders who are taking grave risks in an effort to normalize the situation of their region.

Why feel offended by the selection of a person who is risking his life in a bold, creative, and promising attempt to bring more peace to our planet for the Nobel Prize?

Alex Gravesen



BLESSING THE PUBLIC WITH HIS PRESENCE

## The senselessness of war

What do you say to a nine year old whose father has just been killed in a helicopter crash?

As a conscientious student I am a firm believer in a balanced breakfast — you know, a can of soda, a bag of chips, and a healthy dose of the *Collegian*. This usually gives me all of the energy I need to make it through the day, but sometimes things go wrong. Last Monday was just one of those days: the soda was warm, the chips were stale and the *Collegian* was sort of depressing. I could go on about the chips and soda, but that probably wouldn't make much of a column so I guess I'll concentrate on the news.

Monday's news contained articles detailing the violence and civil unrest sweeping the Philippines and South Korea; the letters-to-the-editor offered reader opinion on the war in the Persian Gulf and the long history of violence and oppression in Central America.

Let's we think of these things as being problems that occur in other places, there was also an article that informed us of a person or group of persons who felt the need to express their hatred and intolerance by spending the weekend plastering racial slurs and threats around campus. Finally, according to the police report, four assaults occurred on campus last weekend and one was reported downtown at the Saloon.

I don't know why Monday's news made such an impression on me. It was just a typical day in the world, nothing extraordinary happened. Yet I suddenly found myself questioning the sanity of each of the five

billion people who inhabit this planet.

Why is it that violence seems the logical response to situations that range from government oppression in the Philippines to a doorman's refusal to allow someone to enter the premises in State College?



Gloria Hampton

I thought about it for the rest of the day and talked it over with a few friends. They were sympathetic and yet at the same time pragmatic. "You know, Gloria, you shouldn't take it so hard. Waving the peace sign doesn't always work. Sometimes you just have to flex a little muscle and kick a little butt to get your point across."

I was almost willing to accept this analysis of the situation when a less tactful man made his point. "Oh, you're just a woman. What could you possibly know about what war means?"

His statement about my womanhood was blatantly sexist, but after I recovered I decided his question deserved an answer. I grew up on a military base in Germany

surrounded by warriors who called themselves peacekeepers: we their children just called them Daddy. For all of us war was not an abstract danger that might happen elsewhere, it was a distinct possibility that could happen right there at any time with very little warning.

There were regularly scheduled evacuation drills for family members, but we all participated with a grain of salt knowing that Soviet nuclear missiles could reach our position in 10 minutes. Not much of an advance warning.

Knocks on the door in the middle of the night meant that my father had to go on alert: just another drill or maybe it was the real thing this time. To us, war meant being prepared. Our fathers were often away for long periods of time on training exercises. Sometimes training accidents happened and some fathers never came home at all. What do you say to a nine year old whose father has just been killed in a helicopter crash? I never figured that one out so I just remained silent.

A few years ago war began to mean something else: it became an unseen enemy with nebulous purposes. He came in the middle of the night bringing unwanted goodies that took many lives and destroyed many others. He called himself a freedom fighter, we called him a terrorist and a murderer.

While Americans here expressed their displeasure and fear by refusing to travel

abroad, we sat in Germany like ducks in a shooting gallery. War now meant that we had to alter our lifestyle to protect ourselves. Identification cards were required for admission to the base; new, less conspicuous license plates were issued to Americans.

Unattended packages or briefcases in the library resulted in visits from the military bomb squad. We simply could not take any chances. And still the bombings and shootings continued.

The situation climaxed with President Reagan's decision to retaliate against Libya for its part in the murder of Americans. While Americans here celebrated this "muscle flexing," Americans abroad were busy dealing with the consequences of this action.

We met in our town hall like frightened sheep and listened as we were informed of the new curfew. Because cars and buses now had to be carefully searched at the gates there were often two-hour waits for admission to military bases. War now began to mean a waiting game — waiting for the next attack.

To me war means all of these things. It also means actually seeing victims of the Lebanese truck bombing as they lay in a military hospital in Germany hoping they would soon be well enough to make the journey home, still wondering what the hell happened.

War means flying out of Frankfurt Inter-

national Airport the day after an attack there in which several innocent bystanders including children were shot and killed. The presence of German police armed with machine guns frightened me more than it reassured me that day.

War means there is a good possibility that terrorist activity against Americans overseas could increase again as the American presence in the Persian Gulf escalates — it means that I worry about my parents and sister who are still in Germany and I constantly scan the newspapers for international news. War also means that my brother will soon follow in our father's footsteps, beginning his own military career in an age plagued with conflict around the globe.

Finally, war means to me what it should mean to everyone. It means that we have all surrendered our power to reason and denied our ability to compromise, instead giving in to the irrational desires to decide issues by physical strength and to see the world on a "them against us" basis. In the end war means a failure for humanity.

Maybe I shouldn't have asked myself why Monday's news was so upsetting to me. Maybe I should have asked why it isn't equally upsetting every morning.

Gloria Hampton is a sophomore majoring in political science and is a columnist for *The Daily Collegian*. Her column appears every other Thursday.