

REVIEW & OUTLOOK

A Walsh-Stone Production

After five-and-a-half years and more than \$30 million, Iran-Contra prosecutor Lawrence Walsh has now admitted that he was wrong all along. The real crime in the case wasn't secretly selling arms to Iran, it was in opposing the sale. That at least is the ironic way we read the news that Mr. Walsh may indict former Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger.

Recall that Mr. Weinberger opposed, from the start and throughout, the secret sale of weapons to Iran that ended up becoming ransom for hostages. Mr. Walsh has been arguing all along that the people who made the sale were the criminals. Yet in his obsession to prove a "conspiracy," Mr. Walsh is willing to turn the logic of his case entirely on its head. Does this mean he now thinks Ollie North was right all along?

By now anything's possible with Lawrence Walsh, the Eveready prosecutor. His biggest cases — Mr. North and John Poindexter — have been tossed out on appeal, so Judge Walsh is fighting for his reputation. He doesn't seem to mind how flimsy his cases are. He managed to extort a petty misdemeanor plea from Elliott Abrams, who couldn't afford a long felony trial. He continues to pursue a retired career CIA official, Clair George, who has so far compiled some \$500,000 in legal bills. (Contributions can be sent to: Legal Defense Fund, P.O. Box 309, Merrifield, Va. 22116.) It's an interesting commentary on the Washington community's mores that it raises so little objection when Reagan officials are sent toward financial ruin by such a process.

The harassment of Mr. Weinberger is Mr. Walsh's strangest yet. It's based on some private Weinberger notebook jottings that allegedly show he knew about the arms sales one year earlier than he has already admitted. This not-so-smoking gun is supposed to suggest that Mr. Weinberger and his colleagues all sat down and cooked up a conspiracy to protect their President. Somehow this conspiracy remains unexposed, despite Mr. Walsh's 11 full-time attorneys, 33 support staff and half a decade of prospecting.

Sherlock Walsh's gumshoes somehow didn't even discover the notebooks until Mr. Weinberger helped them. He himself informed Mr. Walsh's office that he had donated them, as part of 370,000 total items, to the Library of Congress in 1987. There they were neatly organized by an archivist, who even broke out an "Iran-Contra" section in the Library's "finding aid" guide. Mr. Weinberger also

wrote a letter asking the Library to open the files to Mr. Walsh. He must be one inept conspiracist.

If Mr. Walsh does indict, he will also have to impugn the credibility of the likes of Colin Powell. Now Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Powell was Mr. Weinberger's executive assistant at the time. He has signed a statement claiming that Mr. Weinberger's private notes were part of a daily routine and are consistent with Mr. Weinberger's opposition to the Iranian arms sale. For his trouble, General Powell and other Pentagon officials have been subpoenaed by Mr. Walsh for all documents pertaining to contacts with Mr. Weinberger's lawyer, Robert Bennett. Even intimidating potential defense witnesses isn't beyond Mr. Walsh.

It's unlikely that Mr. Walsh relishes a case against Mr. Weinberger. He knows his evidence is so weak he'd probably lose. But with this gambit it becomes obvious that his real target is Ronald Reagan. In typical out-of-control prosecutor fashion, he hopes that Mr. Weinberger will cop (at worst) a misdemeanor plea, turn on his former boss and reveal the conspiracy. Trouble is, Mr. Weinberger insists there's nothing to reveal. If there was a conspiracy, he wasn't part of it. He's vowed to fight any indictment to the end.

Mr. Weinberger has taken and passed a lie detector test on the matter. And his credibility is reinforced by a letter from Democrat Daniel Inouye and Republican Warren Rudman, the chief Senate investigators of Iran-Contra. They say they were aware that Mr. Weinberger's memory about when he first learned about the arms sale "might have been imperfect" given the passage of time. But "what was important to us," they say, was Mr. Weinberger's opposition to the arms sale, "on which the testimony was incontrovertible."

This latest Walsh outrage again proves the adage to beware the prosecutor with just a single case. As an "Independent counsel," Mr. Walsh is beholden only to his own conscience, which is not enough. Only someone who has completely lost his moral bearings would consider prosecuting on such flimsy evidence a 74-year-old man who has served his country without blemish for 20 years.

We have a suggestion that's better for everyone, even for Judge Walsh's plunging reputation: He can write up his final report laying out his grand conspiracy theories, then invite in Oliver Stone to do the movie.

Let Slovakia Drift Awhile

Czech and Slovak voters came up with two opposing visions of their country's future in last weekend's elections. Czech voters supported Finance Minister Vaclav Klaus, the force behind Eastern Europe's most successful reform program. Just over a third of Slovaks backed Vladimir Meciar, a former Slovak prime minister and communist-turned-nationalist. As the two met yesterday to discuss a coalition government, we are told the unity of the nation is at stake.

Of course, the idea of yet another East European divorce is unsettling. But, if the price of living together is a watered-down economic reform package, the best course is greater autonomy for the two republics.

Mr. Klaus likely will have little luck in bringing Mr. Meciar around. Mr. Meciar rallied Slovak support by charging that the larger Czech republic has grown fat while Slovakia suffers. Though stopping short of advocating full-scale Slovakian independence — which, polls show, has little support — he is pushing for greater autonomy and more control over Mr. Klaus's free-market reforms.

Slovakia houses the bulk of the country's unprofitable, heavy industries. Much of what came out of these communist-built monoliths was exported to the Soviet Union. The collapse of the Comecon trading bloc has taken heavy tolls on the republic. Slovakia's unemployment level for 1991 was 11.8%, compared with 4.1% in the larger Czech republic. Ingrained local habits and housing shortages mean that few unemployed Slovaks venture far in search of work.

The situation in Prague is entirely different. Ubiquitous shops, restaurants, vendors and the presence of many foreigners are the result of successful economic reforms. Mr. Klaus's reform program has gone further than that of any other former Soviet bloc country. Price liberalization was

achieved by January 1991, inflation is essentially zero and the country's currency has stabilized with little intervention from the central bank.

Yet it is not just the swift macro-economic reforms that set the Czechoslovak reform program apart; both Poland and Hungary have made major reforms as well. With his bold program of voucher privatization, Mr. Klaus also seems to be clearing a hurdle that has repeatedly tripped his neighbors. By giving nine million Czech and Slovak citizens shares in state owned enterprises, Mr. Klaus has created private owners virtually overnight and avoided the risk that long-term privatization will be confounded by political wrangling and bureaucratic inertia.

Opponents criticized the plan on a number of specious grounds. But the alternative to a rapid transition — the so-called gradualist approach — leads nowhere. Poland, having applied the brakes to its reform program, is finding this out. Hungary also remains stymied by its go-slow approach to privatization.

Arguments against a speedy transition are little more than a veneer for preserving the status quo. In the most successful capitalist countries share ownership is not so broadly and equitably distributed across the population. By giving citizens shares and the option of using them as they wish, Mr. Klaus ingeniously enfranchised the population while getting ownership out of the hands of the state. That solves many political problems and could ultimately solve the problem of Slovakian backwardness.

In time, we suspect, the reforms coming out of Prague would take hold in Slovakia. If the Slovaks don't see it this way, it would be better to let them drift on their own than give their visions of renewed socialism the chance to dilute Mr. Klaus's formula for liberalizing the economy.

Asides

Numbers Correction

Several close readers have written to point out an error in a formula published in our May 21 editorial "On Keeping the Record Straight." To set the record straight, a typographical

error changed a plus sign into an incorrect division sign. The formula was part of a white paper developed by the President's Council of Economic Advisers to answer recent arguments about the distribution of incomes during the late 1970s and the 1980s.

Sharpen Your Pencil, and Begin Now

America's children need strong academic skills more than ever before. Yet, despite a decade of educational reforms, their achievement remains disappointing.

In a 1986 assessment of 17-year-old juniors, students were asked when World War I occurred. A little more than 40% were unable to place the event "sometime between 1900 and 1950." Last year's National Assessment of Education Progress found that only 6% of American high school

graduates are ready for college math. American students rank near the bottom of industrialized countries.

Recently, reader John Harker sent us evidence of what at least some students of a time long past were expected to know:

EXAMINATION FOR ADMISSION.

Jersey City High School,

JUNE 1885

tests given in June 1885 to prospective high school students in Jersey City, N.J. To be fair, in 1885 most Americans did not attend high school. Nevertheless we thought readers might like to inspect the exams. They were first reprinted, along with answers prepared by Jersey City State College faculty, 12 years ago in the now-defunct Union City, N.J., newspaper, the Hudson Dispatch. (We have updated some of those answers.)

ALGEBRA.

- I. Define Algebra, an algebraic expression, a polynomial. Make a literal trinomial.
- II. Write a homogeneous quadrinomial of the third degree. Express the cube root of $10ax$ in two ways.
- III. Find the sum and difference of $3x-4ay+7cd-4xy+16$, and $10ay-3x-8xy+7cd-13$.
- IV. Express the following in its simplest form by removing the parentheses and combining: $1-(1-a)+(1-a+a^2)-(1-a+a^2-a^3)$.
- V. Find the product of $3+4x+5x^2-6x^3$, and $4-5x-6x^2$.
- VI. Expand each of the following expressions and give the theorem for each: $[a+4]^2$, $[a^2-10]^2$, $[a+4][a-4]$.
- VII. Divide $6a^4+4a^3x-9a^2x^2-3ax^3+2x^4$ by $2a^2+2ax-x^2$.
- VIII. Find the prime factors of x^4-b^4 and x^3-1 .
- IX. Find the G.C.D. of $6a^2+11ax+3x^2$, and $6a^2+7ax-3x^2$.
- X. Divide $\frac{x^2-2xy+y^2}{ab}$ by $\frac{x-y}{bc}$ and give the answer in its lowest terms.

ARITHMETIC.

- I. If a 60 days note of \$840 is discounted at a bank at $4\frac{1}{2}\%$ what are the proceeds?
- II. Find the sum of $\sqrt{16.7281}$ and $\sqrt{.724}$.
- III. The interest of \$50 from March 1st to July 1st is \$2.50. What is the rate?
- IV. What is the cost of 19 cwt. 83 lb. of sugar at \$98.50 a ton? What is discount? A number?
- V. Divide the difference between 37 hundredths and 95 thousandths by 25 hundred thousands and express the result in words.
- VI. The mason work on a building can be finished by 16 men in 24 days, working 10 hours a day. How long will it take 22 men working 8 hours a day?
- VII. A merchant sold a quantity of goods for \$18,775. He deducts 5% for cash and then finds that he has made 10%. What did he pay for the goods?
- VIII. A requires 10 days and B 15 days to do a certain piece of work. How long will it take A and B working together to do the work?
- IX. By selling goods at 12 $\frac{1}{2}\%$ profit a man clears \$800. What was the cost of the goods, and for what were they sold?
- X. A merchant offered some goods for \$1170.90 cash, or \$1206 payable in 30 days. Which was the better offer for the customer, money being worth 10%?

The Answers:

ALGEBRA.

1. Algebra is the general method of computation in which signs, symbols and commonly the letters of the alphabet are made to represent numbers and quantities. It takes an unknown quantity sought, and as a means of one or more quantities known proceeds, till the unknown quantity is discovered. Algebraic expression is a collection of variables and real numbers in which we supply a finite number of operations of addition, subtraction, multiplication, division or the taking of roots or powers. Polynomial: Turned algebraic expression. Terms are designated by the use of plus or minus signs. Literal trinomial: $x+y+z$.
2. $-x^2-2x^2+3x+5$; $\frac{1}{4}10ax$, $(10ax)^{\frac{1}{4}}$
3. Sum: $6ay+14cd-12xy+3$
Difference: $6x-14ay+4xy+29$
4. a^2+a
5. $36x^2-73x^3-18x^2+x+12$
6. $a^2+8a+16$; a^4-20a^2+100 ; a^2-16 . Theorems: $(a+b)^2=a^2+2ab+b^2$; $(a-b)^2=a^2-2ab+b^2$; $(a+b)(a-b)=a^2-b^2$
7. $3a^2-ax-2x^2$
8. $(x^2+by)^2$; $(x+b)(x-b)$; $(x-1)(x^2+x+1)$
9. $(2a+3x)$
10. $\frac{c(x-y)}{a}$

ARITHMETIC.

1. Using a 360-day year, \$833.70; using a 365-day year, \$833.79.
2. 4.94
3. 15%
4. Using U.S. hundred weight of 100 pounds, \$97.66. Percentage rate deducted from certain quantity. Concept of how many.
5. One thousand, one hundred.
6. 21 9/11
7. \$16,214.77
8. Six days.
9. If profit is based on cost, cost is \$8,400 and selling price is \$7,200. If based on selling price, cost is \$5,600 and selling price is \$6,400.
10. \$1,170.90

GEOGRAPHY.

1. The real or imaginary line on which the earth rotates or is supposed to rotate. Imaginary circle around the earth that is everywhere equally distant from the two poles and divides the earth's surface into the northern and southern hemispheres; 90 degrees, and 6,250 miles; solar radiation is most concentrated at the equator for the entire year.

GEOGRAPHY.

- I. What is the axis of the earth? What is the equator? What is the distance from the equator to either pole in degrees, in miles? Why is it warmer at the equator than near the poles?
- II. Name four principal ranges of mountains in Asia, three in Europe, and three in Africa.
- III. Name the capitals of the following countries: Portugal, Greece, Egypt, Persia, Japan, China, Canada, Hindostan, Thibet, Cuba.
- IV. Name the states on the west bank of the Mississippi, and the capital of each.
- V. Bound New Jersey, and name six important cities in the state.
- VI. Tell the situation of the following: Detroit, Chicago, Portland, Rio Janeiro, Callao, Venice, Bombay, St. Louis, Halifax, Vera Cruz.
- VII. Name 10 countries of South America, and the capital of each.
- VIII. Bound Russia and name its capital and largest river.
- IX. In what countries is coffee raised? What are the principal exports of France? Of the West Indies?
- X. New York is nearly 75° west of London. When it is noon at the former, what time is it at the latter?

GRAMMAR.

- I. Analyse the following: Perseus ground his teeth with rage, for he saw that he had fallen into a trap.
- II. Make a list of all the verbs in the sentence above, and give the principal parts of each of them.
- III. Parse for, had fallen, that, saw
- IV. Give two uses of the hyphen. Copy the sentence below, and punctuate it properly. "Will you please to tell me boys, for what the reindeer is useful"?
- V. Write a sentence containing a noun used as an attribute, a verb in the perfect tense potential mood, and a proper adjective.
- VI. Correct [a] It is only me. [b] Who did she invite? [c] Whenever my husband or son take an umbrella down town, they always leave it.
- VII. Write the declension of [a] bird, [b] man, [c] fly, [d] fox, [e] it
- VIII. Write four lines of poetry, giving particular attention to the use of capitals, and to punctuation.
- IX. Make three sentences, using the plural of sheep [1] in the nominative case, [2] in the possessive, [3] in the objective.
- X. Write a declarative sentence; change to an imperative, to an interrogative, to an exclamatory, and punctuate.

U. S. HISTORY.

- I. What people settled Massachusetts? Where did they land, and what was their character?
- II. Name four Spanish explorers and state what induced them to come to America.
- III. What event do you connect with 1565, 1607, 1620, 1664, 1775?
- IV. Name the thirteen colonies that declared their independence in 1776.
- V. Name three events of 1777. Which was the most important and why?
- VI. What caused the war of 1812? Who was president during that war? What was the result of it?
- VII. What form of government was established in 1789? Into what three branches was the government divided? What do the Senate and House of Representatives constitute?
- VIII. What caused the Mexican war? What was the result? What American general commanded at the capture of the City of Mexico?
- IX. What was the remote and the immediate cause of the great Civil war. Who captured Fort Donelson?
- X. Name three commanders of the Army of the Potomac. In what battle was "Stonewall" Jackson killed? How?

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