

# Here's to the good ol' boys

**T**hirteen muscular men in conservative business suits boarded a van on July 28 and headed off to a small airstrip in Hammond, La. Waiting around the aircraft that was to have taken them south to Surinam was a posse of armed federal agents. The "financial executives" were handcuffed and bundled off to jail.

These good ol' boys were merely following a grand Louisiana tradition that has given us the word, "filibuster." Back in the early 1800s, wealthy young men in New Orleans used to form clubs whose main activity was the time-honored sport of rape and pillage. They would charter a schooner, fill it up with rum and good wine, and party southward down the Gulf of Mexico and across the Caribbean.

The high point of such boys' outings was landing at some Central American port. There, the Louisiana Filibusterers would storm ashore, fire some rounds at the terrified locals, ravish a few beauties, loot the local bank and then head back to New Orleans.

That is exactly what Tommy Denley and his 12 pals were trying to do in Surinam, a remote little nation of 400,000 souls perched precariously on the jungled northern shoulder of South America. A good target too: Marxist Surinam, once a Dutch colony, has few friends and no allies. Its dictator, Col. Desi Buterse, is hated at home and scorned abroad.

Tommy and the boys were due to fly in to Paramaribo, Surinam's tatty capital, disguised as financiers coming to offer investment funds to Buterse's hard-up regime. Holland cut off aid two years ago after Buterse executed most of the opposition. Cuba then jumped in to become Surinam's

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new friend, sending thousands of military advisers, ballet dancers and teachers.

But when the Americans invaded Grenada, a Marxist ally of Surinam, Col. Buterse got the willies. After learning that the CIA was preparing a coup against him, Buterse threw out most of the Cubans and became very, very quiet.

Tommy and his fellow "financiers" had a meeting scheduled with Buterse and some of his ministers; the filibusterers planned to grab the government leaders and hold them as hostages. Then they planned to loot the local banks, have a few drinks of rum, and skeedaddle back to Louisiana. Some reports suggested that the gringos also planned to somehow link up with Amerindian tribesmen in the interior fighting against the Buterse regime, but I don't believe them.

That the filibusterers are in jail must be a big relief to Col. Buterse. But he will still have to spend a lot of time looking over his shoulder. Some 40,000 Surinamese, including many of the nation's educated people, now live in exile in Holland.

The liberal Dutch have been horrified by Buterse's reign of terror and his ruin of Surinam's once flourishing economy. Interestingly, the loudly moral Dutch, who are always eager to denounce South Africa or America over their treatment of blacks, are getting fed up with having so many blacks from Surinam and wish they would pack up and go home.

So the Dutch may be planning to help overthrow Col. Buterse, possibly with the support of the CIA. Surinam's neighbor, Marxist Guyana, is also feeling threatened by the Reagan administration which would dearly like to see the Caribbean basin purged of Marxism. A feeling, one suspects, shared by many long-suffering Surinamese and Guyanese who have seen their rich, sparsely populated nations turned into impoverished Marxist police states.

In a way, it's too bad that Tommy and the boys didn't manage to at least shoot up Paramaribo and give Col. Buterse prickly heat. I remember, for example, two decades ago when another enterprising bunch of good ol' boys from Florida gave Haiti's murderous dictator, Papa Doc, the scare of his life.

It was the famous Dade County Deputy Marshal's invasion — six off-duty cops who landed in Haiti, shot up the National Palace, and had a petrified Papa Doc packing his bags. They failed and sadly all got killed, but at least they gave Papa Doc a taste of his own terror.

Tonight, I'm drinking a toast to the Louisiana boys for ruining Desi Buterse's week and for cheering up mine.

## Punch



"It's no good moaning now. I warned you about becoming typecast."