

IN THESE TIMES

Editorial

Carter SALTs tails, left and right

President Carter sent Secretary of State Cyrus R. Vance all the way to Moscow to deliver a message to those who stayed home—the American people and Congress.

Soviet Communist party chairman Brezhnev and Foreign Minister Gromyko were understandably perturbed at being so drawn into domestic American politics but, with just the appropriate degree of restrained anger, they served as good mediums in strengthening Carter's hand against those on his left and right.

What was the message? And how shall socialists and others on the left in the United States understand and respond to it?

Carter did not intend to engage the Soviet government in serious discussion of nuclear arms limitation, but rather to defer it. As the *New York Times*' Hedrick Smith noted: "Indeed, both inside and outside the Administration, specialists in Soviet affairs saw little chance that Moscow would accept the American proposals at this early stage of the talks." The message to the Soviets, then, was, "wait awhile," though it was orchestrated publicly to make the Soviets appear to oppose nuclear arms reductions. Hence Gromyko's display of exasperation.

But the intent lay elsewhere: to disarm the powerful American Hawks to the right and to discredit those to the left who want to cut military spending.

On the right hand, upon Vance's return home, the *Times* reports that Carter received "praise from domestic conservatives for his proposals for 'drastic' arms reductions." Since it was obvious that the hawks want arms increased, they were actually praising the deferral of arms-reduction talks.

On the left hand, the movement for cuts in military spending and the transfer of funds to social programs, has been stopped in its tracks. Liberal Democrat and assistant majority leader Sen. Alan Cranston (Calif.) states that Carter is being "tested" by the Soviets and that "the American people, Republicans and Democrats, hawks and doves, will rally to his support." This means, as Representative George H. Mahon, Texas Democrat and chairman of the House Appropriations Committee said, that expected Soviet rejection of Vance's proposals would "tend to support an atmosphere in Congress of support for the President and a strong defense."

Vance's journey to Moscow, in short, strengthened Carter's position in the middle of the American road. Some historical perspective helps to shed light on the direction it portends.

Ever since the first two decades of the 20th century when experts like Brooks Adams, Alfred T. Mahan, Paul S. Reinsch, and Charles A. Conant were the national security counterparts of today's Kennans, Kissingers, and Brzezinskis, American corporate and political rulers have defined world politics in terms of competing empires. They have viewed the U.S. as rightfully replacing Britain as the dominant Empire-nation, conceived not as an old annexationist colonialist power, but as director of an international corporate political-economy. American military might was to serve this political-economic objective as an instrument of foreign policy: Naval power combined, after World War II, with strategic air power, was the key to American global objectives.

Only after World War II did the U.S. become not simply a superpower, but the world's only superpower. Then it began to implement its imperial design on a comprehensive global scale.

The "Cold War," from 1945 to 1970,

...now Lennid,
before we
start talking 'bout
disarmament n'all,
let me ask you something...
are you familiar with
the Bible & our Saviors Jesus...



dear Jimmy,
...for every
warhead we
disarm—
we want One
Pepsi-Cola
franchise, one
hundred gallons of
gasoline, 28 tons of
wheat—57 BIG MACS...



Rehearsing for the SALT talks

was less a confrontation with the Soviet Union or China, than a mobilization of the American people, and international pro-capitalist forces, against revolution and in support of the military might and political initiatives needed to police and direct the spectacular expansion of the U.S.-dominated multinational corporate-capitalist imperium.

Outside of its immediate vicinity, important to its own security, neither the Soviet Union nor China could or did militarily threaten the U.S. or its world domination. The two great Communist nations were a threat only in their withdrawing a huge portion of the globe's resources and peoples from the world capitalist system, and in their aiding or inspiring anti-imperialist revolutions in other countries.

This is now conceded by all American political and military experts. From Kissinger and Sonnenfeldt to Nitze and Stansfield Turner, they all point out that only since the late 1960s has the Soviet Union become a global political and military superpower, if not yet an economic one. Only by about 1970 was the Soviet Union drawing to a "rough equivalence" with the U.S. in strategic nuclear capability and, more significantly, in naval power.

It was precisely the Soviet Union's new status that led the Nixon/Kissinger administration to reassess relations with it, and that has plunged the corporate ruling class into a fundamental debate over strategic policy.

In the whole period from 1945 to the end of the 1960s, the United States did not enter into serious consideration of detente with the Soviet Union, nor did it seriously consider disarmament or arms limitations agreements. It is only since the Soviet Union has begun to approach military parity that the U.S. has moved in that direction. The "Cold War" went merrily on as long as the Soviet Union could not threaten American security;

"detente" has followed only now when the Soviet Union has a destructive capability similar to that of the U.S. The Soviets will be excused if they believe that only its military might induces U.S. leaders to "moderation."

American strategic debate is ostensibly between those who want to restore the old American military superiority through nuclear and other military build-up—the impossible dreamers led by Nitze, Sen. Henry Jackson, Schlesinger, Rumsfeld—and those realists who recognize that that is now impossible. The latter (Warnke, Harriman, Kennan, Turner, Vance, Brown) want to accept a nuclear stand-off ("mutual deterrence" or "mutual assured destruction"—MAD) and maintain American naval and conventional superiority, to provide the muscle to keep as much of the rest of the world as possible within the capitalist empire.

Both sides favor rising military budgets over the next decade at least.

Carter is with the realists. He wants to reach agreement with the Soviet Union on limiting and even scaling down nuclear arsenals, but in such a way, and with such timing, as not to open his government to attack from the right for being "soft" toward the Soviets, and as to thwart movements for cutting the military budget and transferring funds to social programs.

For the time being, Vance's mission has accomplished that.

But it should be clear that Carter's "realist" objective is the same as that of the impossible dreamers. It is to expand and deploy American military power to maintain the global corporate empire, and to discourage both the Soviet Union and China from aiding anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist revolutions in third countries. It is an objective that in updated rhetoric continues the old Cold War against the right of peoples throughout the world to change their social and

political systems in accordance with their own needs and aspirations.

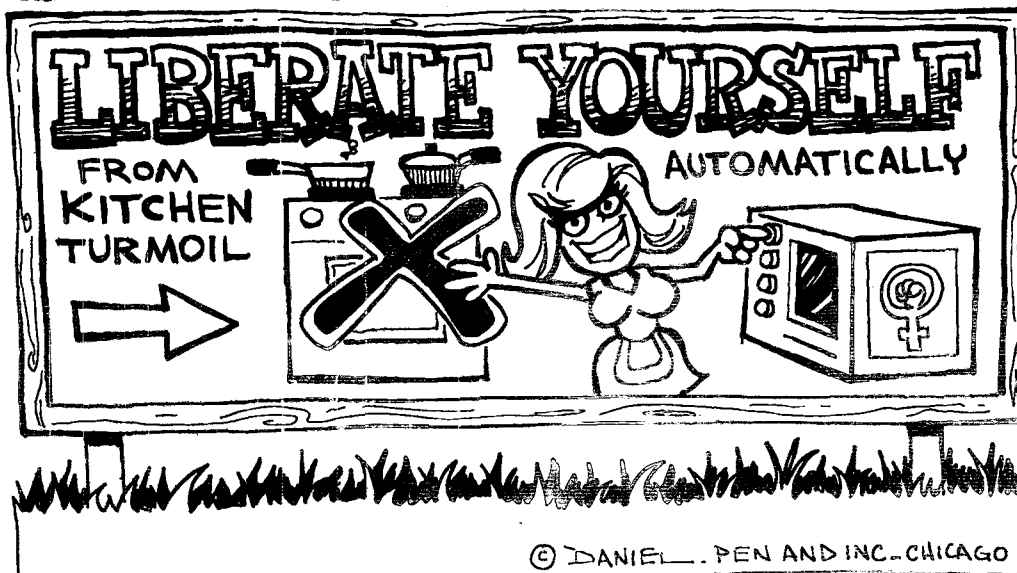
It continues the old interventionist planning, the CIA covert operations, the corporate-imperialism, and the anti-democratic alliances abroad (for all the talk of human rights), and the bloated military budgets, urban decay, peacetime unemployment, and social disarray at home.

Bleak as the prospects now appear, socialists and those on the left should redouble their support for reducing military spending and raising outlays for full employment planning and other social programs. But we have seen how a corporate administration can manipulate sentiment in Congress and among the public away from such efforts and toward higher military spending, as long as there is no powerful force in American society challenging the basic capitalist premises of foreign policy, and offering and fighting for new ones, and electing people so committed to Congress, the legislatures, city halls, and other offices throughout the land.

Those new premises would view the world as a pluralistic community of peoples and nations, not as competing empires. They would call for the U.S. to respect the right of peoples everywhere to effect fundamental social change, or revolutions; they would welcome rather than fear or intervene against them. The new premises would mean a declining military capacity and the transfer of resources and labor to constructive purposes. They would mean genuine efforts at real disarmament negotiations rather than cosmetic "arms limitation" agreements.

Substantial and sustained cuts in American military spending will only come with a fundamental change in American foreign policy objectives, and that will only come with fundamental social change, or a revolution in political and economic relations at home.

THE FACTORY FEATURING RIFKA



Letters

Already an impact

Editor:

The *Lincoln Gazette*, a small alternative newspaper in Lincoln, Neb., would like to contribute \$5 to *IN THESE TIMES*. You have already made an impact on American political thought; you have our support.

—Allan Stibal
Lincoln, Neb.

Found us on the floor

Editor:

I picked up a copy of your weekly from the floor of a corridor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. And was I ever surprised! Virtually all of the left-oriented publications I've run across are dry, humorless, and dogmatic. But your paper is just great—intelligent, analytical, perceptive, and so much more.

So enclosed is \$15 for a year's subscription.

—Michael Stone
Watertown, Mass.

Sectarian carping?

Editor:

Roberta Lynch's column on DSOC (*ITT*, March 30) raises important questions about that organization, particularly in regard to DSOC's relationship to anti-progressive trends within international social democracy. While these concerns play a part, as she says, in determining "the role that DSOC will play within the left," the column raised anew in my mind questions about the role that NAM will play within the left.

Socialist ideas and programs are gaining increasing acceptance within the liberal political movement (notably within the New Democratic Coalition, in which I've become active), and with sections of the labor movement. This potential hegemony of socialism is largely due to the efforts of DSOC.

If NAM's relationship to DSOC, and to the liberal/labor/left within which DSOC works, is limited to polemics such as Lynch's column, then those polemics will amount to nothing more than sectarian carping. Throughout its history, NAM's biggest flaw has been a syndicalist fear of involvement in politics. If NAM will end its political abstentionism, and begin to participate with DSOC and others in reform political activity, then NAM's criticisms of DSOC will contribute to the building of a democratic socialist movement able to place socialism on the American political agenda.

—Al Hart
Erie, Pa.

Doctrinaire jah?

Editor:

Roberta Lynch's jab at DSOC's "demonstrated leanings" on Israel bespeaks her failure to accept the Jewish people's right to self-determination.

At the Chicago convention, DSOC resolved "that the achievement of a just and lasting peace between Israel and her Arab neighbors requires:

"1. The Arab states' and the Palestinian Arabs' acceptance of Israel as a legitimate expression of the Jewish people's right to self-determination;

"2. Israel's recognition of the Palestinian Arabs' right to a self-determination, including national sovereignty, alongside Israel on a basis compatible with Israel's right to independence and security;

"3. Israel's commitment to withdraw from substantially all the occupied territories in the context of a comprehensive peace settlement providing for (i) mutual recognition and normalized relations, (ii) demilitarization of the territories from which Israel withdraws, and (iii) measures to prevent terrorist actions against Israel;

"4. Acceptance of the Palestinian Arabs as an additional party to peace negotiations; and

"5. Continued American political, economic, and military support for Israel's defense of her independence and security."

DSOC's foreign policy perspective, as exemplified by our support for Arab/Israel peace and democratic socialist advance in Europe, is of a piece with DSOC's domestic politics. They share a commitment to the inextricable connection of socialism and democracy.

In this respect, *ITT* exhibits a split personality. Domestic coverage seems animated by the same spirit moving DSOC. However, foreign coverage tends to be more doctrinaire and unclear about socialism's democratic essence.

—David A. Guberman
Newton, Mass.

Disturbingly sectarian?

Editor:

Erazim Kohak's small classic, "What is Socialism?" and DSOC hold views "most disturbing" to Roberta Lynch, e.g., that there is no socialism where the state and factories do not belong to the people and factory workers (and they do not in communist countries), and that self-determination is valid as well for Czechoslovakia as for Zimbabwe.

What is disturbingly sectarian about Lynch, and most *ITT* foreign affairs commentary, is the acceptance of communist parties as socialist without regard to their democratic credentials, while democratic socialists and social democrats are scorned for having democratic objections to communism. The idea seems to be that there are two socialisms—authoritarian and democratic—between which no choice is necessary.

However, communism is only more or less Stalinist. DSOC, and European so-

cialists, are hopeful about "Eurocommunism" precisely because it may mean those parties are in the process of rejecting communism. That Lynch should be disturbed by DSOC's solidarity with Portuguese socialists struggling to ensure their revolution's democratic character against one of western Europe's most Stalinist communist parties only puts in doubt her own democratic commitments.

—David Aron
Boston, Mass.

...or on the beam?

Editor:

Roberta Lynch's column on the DSOC (*ITT*, April 5) was on the beam. I would add the following.

Of all the major capitalist democracies the U.S. has the narrowest and most retrograde politics. Policies and ideas regarded as old hat in Tokyo, Bonn or Paris are still considered "radical" here (the U.S., for example, remains the only industrial state without a national medical scheme for all of its citizens).

Given this sad reality, DSOC can claim to be "socialist" on the basis of a program that would put the right-wing leaders of the German Social Democrats, French Gaullists or Italian Christian Democrats to sleep. And it can get away with this precisely because the American political dialog is so arid, and because our people have been insulated not only from real socialist ideas but even from the main political currents in other capitalist countries.

DSOC will have to move to the left of Bismarck or de Gaulle (both of whom "nationalized" industries and supported far more extensive social welfare measures than anything yet contemplated here) if we are to take it seriously. Somehow, I tend to doubt its willingness to take such a "radical" step.

—Pete Karman
Middletown, Conn.

Most heartening

Editor:

Unlike a number of writers whose letters have appeared in your pages, I am delighted with your newspaper's quality, emphasis, and political orientation. Let the would-be Lenins put together their own newspaper (or revolution). I prefer your brand of democratic socialism, and I think most Americans do too.

Keep at it. You've helped spark the most heartening political trend in years!

—Larry Wittner
Niskayuna, N.Y.

A tremendous service, but...

Editor:

Your reporting of the strike at Preterm clinic in Brookline, Mass. (*ITT*, March 30) was a tremendous service to these courageous workers. What was lacking (an oversight, I hope) was your mention of the union itself—District

1199 of the National Union of Hospital and Health care employees. Your analysis of the ramifications of the strike also is not limited to abortion clinics. Boston is the center of the health care industry in New England and as recent organizing campaigns have attested in some of the hospitals—very anti-union. A victory at Preterm will contribute to organizing efforts elsewhere in the industry. Keep up the good work.

—Steve Courtney
Columbus, Ohio

Socialism and the CIA

Editor:

Your general editorial position on CED and DSOC (*ITT*, March 23) is both appealing and well-reasoned. We take strong exception, however, to particular support for the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee.

Not all so-called socialist efforts to invade the electoral process are equally deserving of support. Socialist groups may decide to play down a rhetoric that is threatening to many exploited and alienated American men and women. But we do not believe that those of us who call ourselves "independent socialists" can let this tactic tie us to the staunch anti-communism that seems firmly rooted in DSOC. Their support of Mario Soares and the Portuguese Socialist Party at the very time when they were joining with center and right groups to fight a left that was trying to transform Portugal from a fascist to a socialist regime must read DSOC out of the left movement and from any support from you. It has been acknowledged for over a year and a half that Soares and his party have accepted funds (and who knows what else) from the CIA.

The left should be open to new alliances if we are to broaden our base among those whose material interests or beliefs make them open to socialist programs. But we *must* also be clear about who is the enemy. Capitalism and imperialism are intimately related. State agencies, the CIA above all, are the agents of American imperialism that have sought to thwart revolutionary movements throughout the world. Can we forget or forgive Vietnam, Chile, Guatemala, Iran?

Continue to support your vision of socialism and the strategy towards which your analysis leads you. But make critical distinctions. Not all groups that call themselves socialist and have an electoral strategy deserve your editorial encouragement.

—Philip Brenner
—Paul Goldman
Washington, D.C.

(More letters on next page.)

CORRECTION

The photographs accompanying our centerfold story on Cuba last week were incorrectly credited. They were taken by Rebecca Switzer.