

IN THESE TIMES

Editorial

'Dr. Castro, I presume...!'

After an interlude of quiet, the cold war drumbeats are once again sounding from the executive recesses of Darkest Washington. Though few outside the inner sanctum are certain of their exact meaning, they sound much the same as those heard prior to American intervention in Indo-China: Soviet (or was it Chinese?) aggression must be stopped to save some portion of the world from communist imperialism.

In the old cold war days, anti-Soviet (and anti-Chinese) hysteria was directed not only at the two big communist powers *per se* but, equally as important, it served to mobilize western opinion against socialism at home and revolution in the "third world." In the latter sense, the Cold War has never ended and Carter is seeing to it that the beat goes on.

As with the Vietnam intervention, so with the latest uproar over Zaire, the administration is portraying what is essentially a civil war as primarily a matter of foreign aggression by communists. As then, so now, the U.S. is backing a corrupt and despotic regime against a revolutionary movement. As then, so now, American intervention is beginning with logistical support, supplies, advisers, and covert operations.

In the present campaign the Soviet Union and Cuba are serving as surrogates for three other real enemies of the Carter administration: western disunity, black revolutionary movements in central and southern Africa, and the Congress of the United States.

The administration is joining the former colonial powers, Britain, France, West Germany, and Belgium, in an old-fashioned concert of powers designed to avert old imperial rivalries (e.g., France against Belgium), secure Zaire's mineral wealth to multinational corporate exploitation, and establish a central African base for containing black revolution against white domination in southern Africa.

At this writing, the intra-western rivalries have prevented a definitive agreement among the five governments. But their Paris meeting and the upcoming Brussels bankers' meeting are aimed at imposing an old-style colonial regime in Zaire with Mobutu as titular head. Western government advisers and bankers would control Zaire's government, finances, and armed forces in what one candid western official at Paris called a shadow government. Except, Mobutu would be the shadow (a shade of Yuan shih-kai?). There is talk, also, of moving from that base into "hot pursuit" of Shaba revolutionaries across the Angolan border, to destabilize or overthrow the Angolan government, or at the very least to divert Cuban forces now aiding Zimbabwe revolutionaries.

As for Congress, the administration is using the present campaign to stampede it into restoring the Imperial Presidency's free hand in foreign affairs and rescinding congressional controls on foreign policy-making put in place since 1973.

This is not to say that the Carter administration is not genuinely concerned about Soviet and Cuban influence in Africa. But the U.S. government cannot credibly assert its right, and that of its allies, to intervene in other countries' affairs, and deny it to the Soviet Union and its allies. Indeed, the Soviet Union and Cuba have been good students of their American teacher.

More to the point, for whatever reasons, the Soviets and the Cubans are on the side of movements that have the sympathy and support of most sub-Saharan

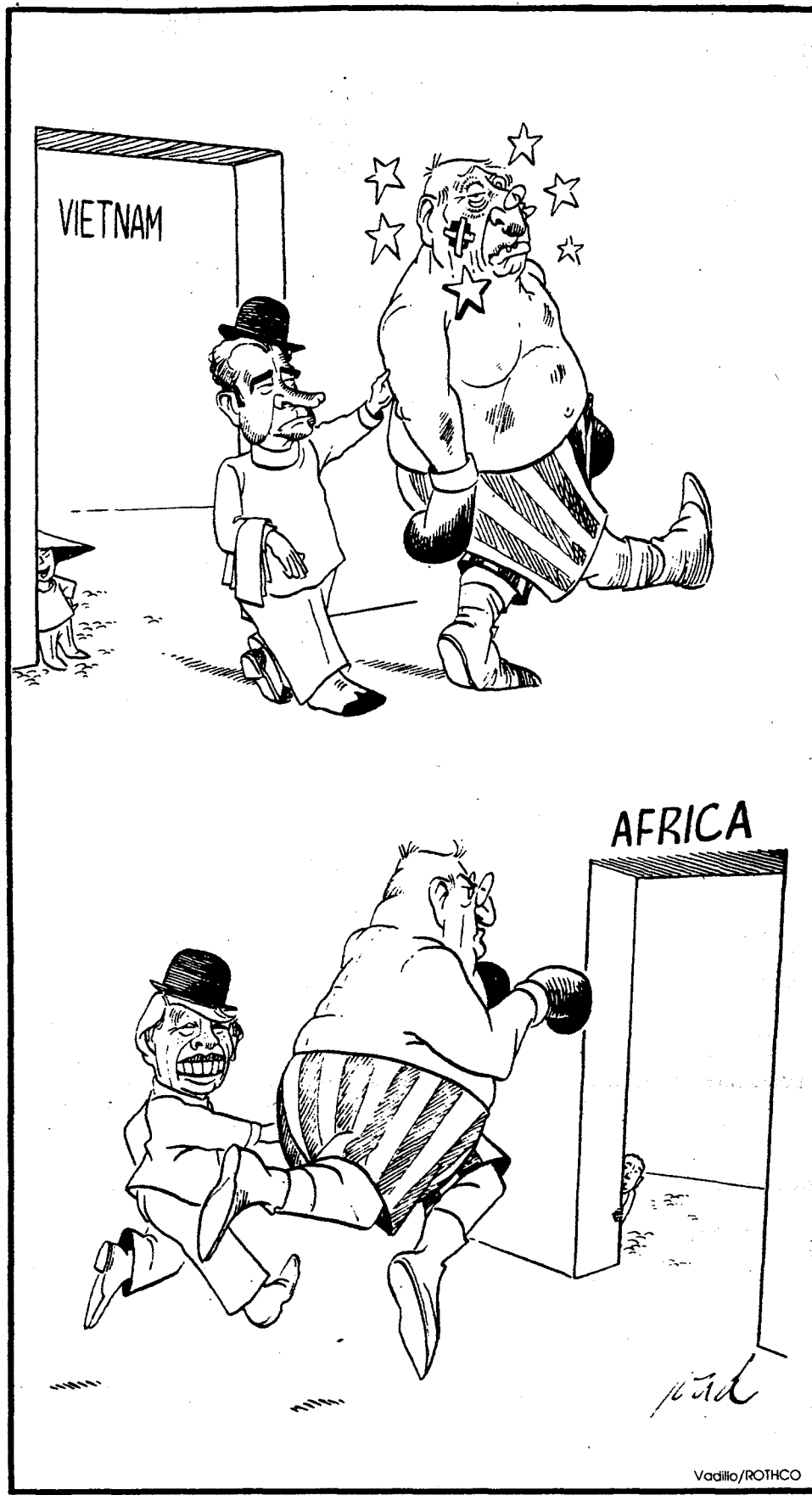
African governments and the preponderance of African public opinion. The same cannot be said for the U.S. and its allies. In contradiction of Carter's claims, Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere, whom Carter praises for his independence and sincerity, now says that Africans welcome Soviet and Cuban aid against white domination and colonialism, but resent the present role of the U.S. and its allies.

The U.S. can have detente, or cooperation, with the Soviet Union in Africa by supporting the same movements the Soviets are supporting and giving them the leverage to deal with both the U.S. and the Soviets and remain non-aligned. Why not?

Carter is not entertaining such an option. Instead he is opting for the cold war drumbeat. He is taking the path of another Vietnam which, now that the Soviet Union's global power is much greater than in 1965-70, could lead to a confrontation that would be disastrous to Africans and could escalate into a nuclear world war.

Over a hundred years ago, *New York Herald* editor James Gordon Bennett sent journalist Henry M. Stanley to find the English missionary David Livingstone somewhere in the Congo (Zaire). His "Dr. Livingstone, I presume...?" is still famous. Carter's and Brzezinski's "Dr. Castro, I presume...!" may become just as famous, but more in the way "Remember the Maine" or Johnson's Gulf of Tonkin dispatch is now famous as a pretext for interventionist actions rather than as a statement of a real find. It cannot be other than suspicious that Carter refuses to make public, or share with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the alleged evidence of Cuban or Soviet involvement in the Shaba fighting.

The latest Carter-Brzezinski gambit only reaffirms the need for Congress to retain and strengthen its check upon the Executive in foreign policy matters, and for the people to say "No" when their leaders beat the drums of more cold war. ■



In the wake of Jarvis-Gann

The almost two-to-one approval by California voters of the Jarvis-Gann initiative, which cuts property taxes and requires two-thirds majority votes for new state or local taxes, is part of a national trend. In Ohio, voters rejected new taxes for public education. In New Jersey, Jeffrey Bell, promising to fight for a 30 percent cut in the federal income tax (see Inside Story, Apr. 19), defeated Sen. Clifford Case for the Republican senatorial nomination. In most other states moves are underway, with large popular support, to cut taxes and limit government spending.

We think people on the left—those, including liberals, who put human rights before property rights and favor an equalitarian and democratic society—need to draw some urgent conclusions from the voter trend. We suggest the following for starters.

It is no longer enough to work for tax-funded social programs without basic changes in the property and class system. Without such changes, the programs are funded through what become in effect regressive taxation and inflationary prices. These in turn, by dividing middle income working people against themselves and against those of lower income, drive them into the arms of the right.

This is another way of saying that the era of Corporate-Liberalism based on

"welfare" through economic expansion instead of the redistribution of wealth and power is coming to an end. The millions of Americans who participate in electoral politics, at any rate, are seeing to its end. We on the left, who have long been predicting and hoping for just that, need to recognize the genuine article now that it is under our noses and absorb the implications. Not the least of these is a growing political polarization that will skew massively to the right in the absence of a credible alternative on the left.

We will have to recognize that we can not serve the cause of an equalitarian and democratic society if we remain a weak or inconsequential electoral force. We cannot deal with the issues pivotal to the polarization process—issues of taxes, prices, employment and social services—simply in workplace or community organizations divorced from the electoral arena. And we cannot become a determining electoral force without a program that both wins a sizeable portion of current voters and brings millions of poor people into electoral politics as new participants and voters.

But a credible alternative depends upon the left's championing tax reduction for the middle and lower income majority through graduated real estate and income taxes falling heavily on corporate wealth,

and at the same time an expansion and improvement of social services, reasonable prices, and a full employment economy.

Since such taxes would inevitably bring capital flight and a depressed economy, their advocacy cannot be credible without simultaneously building popular support for a social investment system that will replace the corporate rich as the dominant authority in the determination of employment, and free the people to provide themselves with the jobs and social services they want and need.

In short, an effective left will have to be a credible electoral force, and a credible left will have to be explicitly socialist—whatever the label preferred. Nothing short of that is "practical" any longer, except the continued rightward drift toward an America of growing inequality, injustice, and authoritarian repression.

To those on the left of "the-worse-the-better" persuasion, we say that in modern times in the western world "the worse" has never led to "the better" but has proved a very long-cut extending far beyond the foreseeable future.

To those on the right basking in their present successes, we say thanks for the message—we needed it. Jarvis-Gann may prove the occasion of a wake on the left even as it draws a corporate-liberal dirge. ■

Letters

Beans, rice, news...and thou

PLEASE RENEW MY SUBSCRIPTION to your fine commie rag. These last few weeks have been trying ones. Weekly I travel miles of bone rattling dirt road to procure another seven-day supply of beans, rice and news—the three essentials to living successfully in rural poverty. Since the termination of my sub I have been trying to supplement my diet with daily doses of *San Francisco Chronicle*. The results have been devastating.

Typical of most metropolitan dailies the *Chron* is riddled with uninteresting human “interest” vignettes and an overall absence of news. Most of the paper’s weight is comprised of headlines, advertisements and photographs. Only the classifieds provide any sustained reading material. Still, with all its faults, one *Chron* led to another and before I knew it I was a junk news junkie making three trips a week and still not getting enough.

My life ran the course of neglect and ruin. Birds ate the strawberries, bobcats offed the chickens and my truck cried out for a new set of shocks. With Herb Caen runnin’ all around my brain I was in no condition to even notice, much less deal with, all the deterioration around me.

Then came your reminder. Relief was as near as a bogus check and a 15¢ stamp. Though I’m a Nixon man and don’t think much of your editorials, and even less of your readers, I’d like to get another 12-month prescription. So

Come on Ellen

Send it quick.

This ol’ Herb Caen done made me sick.

Yours forever: addicted,

—Craig Reynolds
Miranda, Calif.

I do, I do, dammit

ABOUT THE ENCLOSED CHECK: why can’t I think of a meaningless, perhaps unconscionable expenditure for the receipts of my frivolous labor (I edit commercial arts trade magazines) in Gotham? Why can’t I content myself with the pap, sales-pitches, and distortions of the monopolized media? Why can’t I clude the burden of careful reading necessitated by your incisive, well-written, thus provocative analyses of the ills and antidotes entwined with us in today’s corporate states?

Is it because you know that I need to subscribe to you? Even so, by putting me on your subscription list this instant, you’re going to document discontent with excruciating accuracy every week! You can’t help but keep me on the keen edge of indignation at the machinations of the multitude of misanthropes gun-running our economy and swamping our sensibilities and our children with the sophistry of greed.

You think I really want to know fact-for-fact how it’s done, who’s doing it, and how in the name of humanity it can be remedied?!

Yes! Yes, I do, dammit, and you’re the best seers I’ve read in years of seeking help to confront mammon with mind. In these times none but the brave are aggrieved, but not without recourse.

—Kurt C. Wilner
New York, N.Y.

Democratic cloak

AS A MEMBER OF THE SOCIAList Labor Party I would like to voice my disagreement with your evaluation of Zolton Ferency’s candidacy for governor in Michigan (*ITT*, May 31) which I feel is sadly utopian.

Socialism is a movement. Ferency is only one man. Socialism cannot be built on the tails of one man, no matter how

many votes he may get and regardless of whether or not he even wins. Where is his organization? Where is his power base? Many a populist has risen against control by big business and been elected only to vanish in the evening mist. Alende had an organization behind him and still failed. What can we expect of just one man?

There is no shortcut to building our own organization. We are not going to build socialism by snaking Democratic voters. I’m sure the Democratic Party leadership has no intention to be snaked out of existence. Furthermore, the idea that the “people” are in the Democratic Party is sheer myth. Nearly half the electorate doesn’t even vote.

The people are where they work and live, not in the state houses or the halls of Congress or the White House. *ITT* and similar-thinking socialists would do better to expend their efforts at building a socialist movement which stands on its own feet than to waste their time trying to make the Democratic Party less bad. If you really believe “that the American people are tired of being patronized and will respond to an appeal to their intelligence, maturity and good sense,” why hide behind the cloak of the Democratic Party?

—Christopher Farrand
Ithaca, N.Y.

Bank loans to South Africa

AS A PART OF THE NATIONAL campaign to end banks loans to South Africa, activists here in New York City are continuing to organize for two days of demonstrations and rallies in mid-June. The focus of these efforts is the second anniversary of the Soweto uprising, Friday, June 16, which has been termed an International Day of Action Against Apartheid by the UN and a host of organizations and individuals around the world. The Committee to Oppose Bank Loans to South Africa (COBLSA) is co-ordinating the activists which will include anti-bank loan demonstrations on that Friday and rallies on Saturday, June 17, in the two major NY black communities of Harlem and Bedford-Stuyvesant.

There are three major demonstrations planned for June 16th at noon: one, at the Manufacturers Hanover Trust HQ on Wall Street, one at the MHT branch office on 125th St. and 8th Ave. in Harlem, and one at the MHT branch office on Fulton St. and Bedford Ave. in Bed-Stuy. In addition, smaller pickets and demonstrations are being organized for other branches around the city.

On Saturday, June 17th, both Harlem and Bed-Stuy will be hosting rallies protesting American support for South Africa and emphasizing the ties between the struggles of black people in South Africa and the U.S. While planning continues for each of these efforts, they will likely consist of cultural-political presentations (songs, dance, theatre, films, etc.) and speeches by South Africans representing the people and liberation movements as well as black community speakers. For more information about events or to volunteer services, phone (212) 838-5030.

—COBLSA
New York, N.Y.

Age d’or?

BILL RUSHTON’S GUSHING praise for New Orleans’ “Golden Age” for “black” Creoles (*ITT*, May 31) combines racist assumptions and historical distortion.

The “Golden Age” of New Orleans and Louisiana during the 18th and 19th centuries can be described as such for the “gens de couleurs libre” (mulattoes, quadroons, etc.) but not for blacks. The “black” Creole poetry and other accomplishments that Rushton mentions were not the creations of blacks, nor did blacks enjoy the same economic and legal status of the “free people of color.” To say that blacks shared all the advantages open to either mulattoes or mixed caucasians is a gross distortion of historical and sociological fact.

For the Creole, racial mixture was the

rule, not the exception. Rushton underplays the importance of this fact. Rushton may consider it racist for a mulatto to be favored above a black, but he might as well face the fact that a mulatto can be a white person’s child and a black cannot.

Though Rushton acknowledges the independent identity Creoles have sought to maintain, he denies it as fervently as the blatant racists he condemns. True, people like Ernest Morial adopt the “black” term for political expediency, but to imply, as Rushton does, that all non-Hispanic people with some known black ancestry should be considered black is an endorsement of a racist idea rooted in racist logic as well as a denial of the most basic right a human being possesses—the right to be oneself.

—Leonard Fabian
Ann Arbor, MI

Some proletarians are middle class

IN EITHER BUY NOR SUBSCRIBE to your paper since I believe a socialist newspaper is an anachronism in the jet age, but I read it now and then, thanks to the courtesy of a friend who gives it to me free after he has read it. I must say that, on the whole, *IN THESE TIMES* is a very good paper. But...

Your coverage of the killing of Aldo Moro and your editorial (*ITT*, May 24) were historically inaccurate and morally weak. First of all, no sane man or woman approves of murder, but can you believe our times are sane? Secondly, everyone in the business knows the brigatisti blew it and shot the majordomo and not the master, no doubt influenced by John Wayne movies where he always shoots at the horse first instead of the rider.

And thirdly, those “masses” that all American socialists are so infatuated with are pure mystification. When will you come of age...?

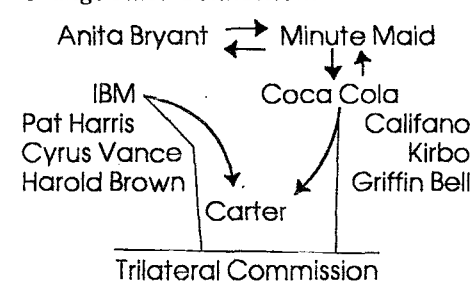
No revolution was made by “workers and peasants.” So, I hereby commit the ultimate socialist heresy! There are no better candidates for revolution than the children of the middle class and the well-to-do. These people have enjoyed freedoms since birth denied to the rest of us and that have given them perspectives that “the masses,” burdened with the endless toiling of the daily grind, cannot possibly attain.

I suggest you review your concept of “proletarian” and bring it up to date. We are all proletarians; corporate capitalism makes us so and, in a political universe dominated by multinational corporations, “the proletariat” has become truly international.

—Paul Tarsus
Washington, D.C.

Orange Juice Connection

AFTER THE GAY RIGHTS SECT of the St. Paul Human Rights Ordinance was repealed I composed the following “doodle” which I call *The Orange Juice Connection*.



—Cindy Hines
St. Paul, Minn.

Mind over viscera

IN HER REVIEW OF *SATURDAY Night Fever* (*ITT*, May 31) Roberta Lynch opted for a “gut” interpretation that brands it as “sexist.” With due respect to her viscera (and since she started the mind-body metaphor), we think Lynch’s cerebrum offered her a far better view of the movie.

We don’t think *SNF* is basically sexist, despite the instances of sexist behavior it depicts. *SNF* suggests that Tony, largely catalyzed by his relationship with Stephanie, manages to make a signifi-

cant break with the unthinking prejudices of his social milieu. Stephanie has the strength to insist that Tony apply the same moral standards to her that he has always applied to white males: mutuality of trust, honesty, and respect.

The relationship adds force to Tony’s own struggles with the limitations of his environment—the racism of his gang, the constraints of his job, the life-model of his parents. Stephanie’s attraction to Tony also undergoes some change: she modifies her newly acquired “middle class” prejudice against Tony, and goes some way toward accepting the honesty, sincerity, and vulnerability mixed with his come-ons. Both characters show their capacity to shed casual and opportunistic use of others for more genuine social relationships. *SNF* stresses the point that American society promotes—even requires—such predatory instrumentalism as a means of staying alive.

Some will revel in the “gang-bangs” in the movie, just as some will identify with the racist attitudes of Tony’s gang. But this is clearly not the main message of the movie, which is no more racist than it is sexist.

Lynch’s gut seems to want *SNF* to become a sort of socialist morality play, with just the kind of one-dimensional “working class heroes” which she admits are not credible. This might make her stomach calmer, but it’s better for art and the working class that *SNF* remain as it is.

Bill Burr
Keith Haynes
Paul Wolman
DeKalb, Ill.

Cancel another one...

THANKS TO CAROL WOLMAN for speaking the unspeakable. As Cold War children my sister and I took turns changing the water in five-gallon containers my mother kept in the basement with stacks of canned goods, a first-aid kit, toilet articles and other items.

It was a family joke and Mother suffered a lot of ridicule for attempting to establish a fall-out shelter. But now I understand the secret terror behind that quiet, loving woman’s effort to preserve her family from nuclear disaster.

In the years since, the two viciously competitive superpowers have continued to stockpile hundreds of nuclear warheads, proliferate nuclear weapons around the world (along with the economic “necessity” of war), and impose a nuclear energy system to further bond their peoples to the risky but profitable process of splitting atoms. The notion that these devices insure peace faded along with our faith in the political and military leadership that has led us to the edge of this abyss.

Our art and our popular culture are increasingly filled with images of the nuclear wipe-out we are heading for. Only those blinded by faith in “rationality” to prevail and faith that their own egos will continue to exist do not recognize the mushroom cloud at the end of the cul-de-sac we have been led into.

In the absence of a militant popular demand for immediate and complete disarmament, all your socialist theorizing about a popular electoral by-and-by is intellectual masturbation, ultimately useless except to pass away the time among yourselves until some struggle in the Mideast, or Africa, or anywhere detonates the devices of destruction that hold our world in the most paralyzing grip of tyranny in its history—the tyranny of potential man-made worldwide holocaust.

If your socialism cannot lead the people to disarmament, it only offers an alternative road to slaughter. Create for us a movement for disarmament and offer Americans and the people of the world a real alternative of hope and of life.

If you can’t do that, cancel my subscription.

—Ethel Beard
Downers Grove, Ill.

Editor’s Note: Please try to keep letters under 250 words in length. Otherwise we have to make drastic cuts, which may change what you want to say. Also, if possible, please type and double-space letters—or at least write clearly and with wide margins.