

Weinberger takes on E.P. Thompson

By Jeremy Harding

L O N D O N

Public sector divestment and high unemployment on the one hand, stiff defense spending projections and the first stage of Cruise missile deployment completed on the other—broadly stated, this is the domestic backdrop to last month's debate at the Oxford Union between U.S. Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger and English historian E.P. Thompson. The motion: there is no moral difference between the foreign policies of the U.S. and the Soviet Union.

The debate had been scheduled for last summer, but Weinberger withdrew, according to one columnist, on the advice of his British counterpart, Michael Heseltine, who felt that the U.S. defense secretary would not fare well in the free style of an Oxford Union debate. It is believed here that Washington expressed interest in the Oxford Union as a forum for U.S. policy debates following last year's defeat of a motion that the House would, under no circumstances, fight for Crown and Country—a replay of the famous motion put forward at the Union during the '30s, when it was carried. Whether or not the halls of the Oxford Union are a truer reflection now of public attitudes in Britain than they were 50 years ago, Weinberger's decision to debate Thompson paid off. The motion was defeated by 271 votes to 232.

Thompson spoke with characteristic strength and assurance, beginning his defense with praise for the openness of the American democratic process, in the tradition of Daniel Ellsberg or the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists. Without it, he said, there would be no information on U.S. arms deployment. In general, it compared favorably with the Soviet Union and Britain. He stressed the importance of efforts by European Nuclear Disarmament (END) to establish links between peace movements in the West and their unofficial counterparts in the East. All Europeans would now have to look out for themselves, he said, squeezed between "the born-again Christians" on one side and "the stillborn Soviets on the other." At the thick end of Soviet and U.S. foreign policies, from Afghanistan to El Salvador, no moral difference was discernible.

While Thompson was careful to keep a steady course down the center, he claimed nonetheless to see the "gulags" diminishing in the Eastern bloc, while a formidable U.S. presence around the world has increased the misery of American client states. And he warned that the cause of human rights would not be helped by pointing missiles at the offending regimes.

Neutrality, Thompson concluded, must assume a more positive dimension now. Until either of the superpowers could come up with



Der Spiegel

Defense Secretary Weinberger's decision to debate Thompson paid off.

ing out the recent emphasis on ground-launched Cruise to address the nuclear weapons issue as a whole. To begin with, it is calling for an information campaign on all Cruise missiles, with a particular focus on sea-launched Cruise. The SLCMs—thought to become operational in July—are described by the U.S. office of the chief of naval operations as "additional survivable Nuclear Forces for the Strategic Reserve Force" that "could be pivotal in the post-war balance and struggle for recovery."

CND is also mounting a full-scale education drive on non-nuclear defense to continue through the year. It plans a series of regional demonstrations April 14-15 at the major U.S. installations in Britain and a large demonstration in Coventry—site of heavy bombing during World War II—at the end of May. After the bitter disappointment of its uneasy alliance with the Labour Party in last year's elections, CND is increasingly cautious of any association with the political parties in this year's elections to the European parliament, though it plans to lobby candidates on their views about disarmament.

In contrast, the NATO governments are frozen in a position of relative disarray, despite the checkered success of the first Euro-missile deployments. The original deployment decision, as everyone now concedes, had a predominantly political character, designed as a show of U.S. support for its European allies and an intensification of posture in response to SS-20 deployment. Modernization of NATO nuclear forces was a comparatively minor point, even if the allies noted with consternation that 30 failures had occurred in the 114 Tomahawk test flights conducted before 1983 ended.

But like the defective test missiles, NATO's political gambit has aborted, and the Alliance, jolted by the size of its peace movements, is still in a state of slowly evolving crisis, now worsened by the failure of its 1979 "twin track" policy linking the deployment to arms negotiations. Last year's breakdown of the Geneva INF talks leaves only one track open—more deployment. Until the Soviet negotiators return to the talks, the prospect of forthcoming Euro-missiles represents only a further drop in the prevailing Cold War temperature, something the Alliance can ill afford as the peace movements regain their balance.

Change of heart.

In Britain itself, the picture is equally clouded for Margaret Thatcher's government, which is hanging on to its so-called special relationship with the U.S. by a hair. As Cruise arrived in mid-November, the Labour opposition alleged that the schedule had taken Defense Minister Michael Heseltine by surprise. Coming after President Reagan's failure to consult Thatcher over Grenada, this suggestion aggravated British misgivings about close links with the U.S. and the siting of U.S. missiles in Britain. A poll carried out in November found that 59 percent of respondents were less likely to trust the U.S. after Grenada, and that 76 percent favored some kind of dual key system for Cruise, making it impossible for the Americans to launch any of the missiles without the full consent of the British government. This poll was taken only a few days after an announcement to the House of Commons by Michael Heseltine that protesters at Greenham who managed to break into Cruise bunkers

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"an actual act" of disarmament, there could be no ethical distinction between them. In the meantime, it was the task of Europeans to struggle actively toward the creation of a neutral space between them and broker a new, genuine detente. His speech was greeted with prolonged applause.

Where Thompson had insisted on moral parity between both sides, Weinberger argued that the Soviet stockpile of guilt was the greater of the two. The virtue of U.S. foreign policy, he maintained, lay in the fact that it was an inevitable reflection of democratic procedures within the U.S. Subject to "consent of the governed," it was thereby susceptible to change. In a low-key address delivered in the style of a Defense Department press statement, Weinberger announced that a policy is moral if it advances certain basic principles laid down "by us in a letter to your government some 200 years ago." He told the House that the U.S. invaded Grenada to protect American citizens, adding that "we freed the islanders from a blood-thirsty regime, and left." There was no sign, he inferred, of the Soviet Union leaving Afghanistan—and no chance of the Soviet people voting their military home.

Reaching the end of what was in essence a carefully decontaminated and dethologized version of Reagan's celebrated Evil Empire speech, Weinberger told the House: "Great Britain could walk out of the Alliance tomorrow. If you told us to, we'd take our soldiers out of Great Britain. They'd be gone in a day or two. ...You live in a nation that freely joins and can freely leave any alliance that it wishes.... I urge your opposition to this motion, so that you can come again."

A tense stalemate.

Weinberger's participation in the Union debate falls at a time of tense stalemate between the NATO governments and the European peace movements. In Britain, the defeat of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) over Cruise installation in November has forced the movement to rethink its strategy. It knows it must keep up its momentum and redefine its intentions, once more open-

IN THESE TIMES



If labor sets out to "destroy Hart," it could be 1972 all over again.

Mondale: no life of the party

By John B. Judis

WASHINGTON

POLITICAL PROFESSIONALS who worry about the Democratic Party as an institution have two objectives in the 1984 presidential elections: first, to defeat Ronald Reagan, and second, to arrest the decline and disintegration of the Democratic coalition that has made the Democrats the majority party since 1932. It is too early to predict whether the Democrats will achieve their first objective, but one can safely say—on the basis of the primaries so far—that the Democratic coalition will continue to disintegrate.

Colorado Senator Gary Hart's early victories over former Vice President Walter Mondale—whatever the final outcome—have subverted the AFL-CIO's strategy for shoring up the Democratic coalition, while the Rev. Jesse Jackson's egregious indiscretions have exacerbated already tense relations between blacks and Jews, who, in recent years, have been the party's most loyal constituencies. The disintegration of the Democratic coalition may not affect the final result in November—it could, ironically, aid a candidate like Hart—but it will make it impossible for a Democratic president, whether in 1985 or 1989, to govern decisively.

The failure to date of the AFL-CIO strategy is of some importance to the American left. After the Reagan landslide of 1980, Kirkland and other labor leaders took two steps to reconstitute the Democratic Party and prevent a recurrence of 1980 or 1972, the other Republican landslide: first, with the support of Mondale and Kennedy aides, they weakened the key post-1968 Democratic Party reforms that had made possible the nominations of "outsiders" Sen. George McGovern in 1972 and Gov. Jimmy Carter in 1976; and second, they set up an endorsement process, by which the entire AFL-CIO would endorse a Democratic candidate before the primary. The party reforms were intended to provide labor with a veto power over the final nominee, while the early endorsement was supposed to provide labor with the candidate of its choice.

Kirkland, former United Auto Workers President Douglas Fraser and other

labor leaders wanted the Democratic Party to be structured more along the lines of the British Labor Party, where nominees are chosen by the unions and by party activists rather than through public primaries. Defending the Kirkland model, one high-ranking labor lobbyist said last week, "How can the people make a judgment? They have no way of really knowing the candidate. We have to deal with these guys on a day-to-day basis."

In 1982, Kirkland and his allies got the Democratic Party to adopt new rules that made life more difficult for outsiders and for candidates merely aiming to assemble a bloc of convention delegates. In March 1982, the Democratic National Committee (DNC) accepted proposals to bunch together the primary season, raise to 20 percent the minimum proportion of a vote that a candidate must get to win delegates in a voting district and make 1,329 out of the 5,257 delegates at the Democratic convention appointed rather than popularly elected. In October 1983, the AFL-CIO formally endorsed Mondale.

At its best, the AFL-CIO strategy was the first step in politicizing the labor movement, in bringing the accumulated wisdom of the leadership to bear upon the thoughts of the rank-and-file, and vice versa. Since the labor movement remains the largest and most important part of the American left, there was good reason to be encouraged by the AFL-CIO's adoption of this strategy. But at its worst, the AFL-CIO strategy was what one labor official described last week as "a technocratic quick fix." The AFL-CIO would simply buy itself a candidate through its phone banks and its clout in Washington.

In practice, the AFL-CIO strategy has far more resembled the latter. In Massachusetts, for instance, an important primary state for labor, the AFL-CIO's COPE (Committee on Political Education) hired a professional calling firm to read a message prepared in Washington to union voters. Only after a protest from the Massachusetts State Federation did national COPE consent to having union staff do the prepared followup calling.

Some labor officials don't believe that the strategy, in Kirkland's hands, could be anything other than a quick fix. One labor official said last week, "You can't energize your people every four years. And it doesn't happen without ideology. What we need is ongoing political educa-

tion, but Kirkland doesn't believe in it. You can't go playing around with Felix Rohatyn and Irving Shapiro [two major business figures to whom Kirkland is close] one minute, and give your people a sense of class struggle the next."

Labor and Hart.

So far, the campaign's events have also cast labor's strategy in the worst light. First came the Jackson challenge to the party rules. Jackson understandably wanted to change the rule that required a candidate to get 20 percent of the vote in order to get convention delegates. He was able to win tacit, but not active, support from the other candidates, including Walter Mondale, but could not budge Kirkland or DNC Chair Charles Mannatt. When Jackson's compromise proposal was rejected by the DNC last January, he blamed Kirkland and began attacking the AFL-CIO.

Labor's endorsement strategy has also fared poorly. Its early backing for Mondale prompted the other candidates, particularly Hart, Jackson and Sen. John Glenn, to attack the AFL-CIO and Mondale. Based on their past records, these candidates might otherwise have been friendly to labor in the primaries, even if particular unions had backed Mondale. Worse still, their attacks against Mondale as "Big Labor's candidate" seem to have succeeded in destroying Mondale's support among independents and among Democrats distrustful of Washington-based special interest groups. In all the early states except Iowa, the endorsement lost Mondale more votes than it won him.

With Hart's early victories, the endorsement strategy has put the AFL-CIO in a difficult position with respect to the eventual nominee. To make its strategy work, it has set out, in the words of one official, to "destroy Hart." In addition to pointing out genuine differences between Mondale and Hart on such issues as the teen wage, labor officials have dredged up votes Hart made two terms

ago. And Kirkland has derided Hart's proposals as "futuristic formulas for micro-chip minds"—a formulation that suggests the AFL-CIO's indifference to new kinds of industry and technology.

While Hart's record is not as consistently pro-labor as Mondale's, his record is quite respectable—a 79 COPE rating and 95 ADA in 1982—particularly in view of the largely non-union state he represents. The AFL-CIO's attacks will probably not seriously damage Hart against Mondale—Mondale's weakness remains voter skepticism about what he has to offer—and could create a gulf between the AFL-CIO and the possible nominee that is difficult to bridge; it may be 1972 all over again.

The AFL-CIO's strategy has not created any rifts between it and other Washington-based Democratic lobbies—NOW, for instance, also endorsed Mondale and major black organizations have opposed Jackson—but it has again revealed the yawning chasm between the AFL-CIO's old guard and an important part of the Democrats' post-1968 base: younger, college-educated voters. These voters, some of whom belong to unions, backed McGovern in 1972; Carter or Rep. Morris Udall (and not the AFL-CIO's favorite Sen. Henry Jackson) in 1976; some favored Rep. John Anderson in 1980; and in 1984, they are flocking to Hart. Those labor officials and political operatives close to the Coalition for a Democratic Majority refer to this group as "McGovernites" and believe that the Democrats can win general elections without them. But the 1984 primary is showing that they cannot win Democratic primaries without them.

Labor union officials like the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees' Gerald McEntee have blamed Hart's victories in the early primaries on the conservative electorate in the New England states. As another official put it, "The moral of the story is that you can't have relations to labor and you can't be a spender. It basically says that both the labor movement and the left are anachronisms."

But this explanation appears to be self-serving. Hart has not been perceived—whatever his actual record is—as "right" rather than "left." He has gotten a majority of the vote from those who identify themselves as "liberals." In the exit polls, the only factor that has distinguished Hart's support from Mondale's is the age of voters.

Labor officials, particularly those based in downtown Washington offices, tend to underestimate the anti-Washington, anti-establishment vote, which is also neither a "left" nor a "right" vote but reflects the public's understandable skepticism about the ability of politicians like Mondale—long identified with Capitol Hill and a member of the Carter administration—to solve the country's ills.

Indeed, the AFL-CIO strategy, which seems designed to circumvent popular sentiments in Oshkosh or Grand Lake, plays into this perception of Washington and of Mondale.

Even if labor is able to get enough of its people out to win the large industrial states for Mondale and to carry him the nomination in July, both the AFL-CIO and Mondale will have to face this problem of public perceptions again in November.

Jackson and the Jews.

The other serious problem that the Democrats will now have to face in July and then again in November is the relationship between blacks and Jews. Tension and hostility has existed between black and Jewish organizations since the mid-'60s, but Jackson's campaign has made it an issue inside the Democratic Party and with party voters, not just organizations.

Jackson was dogged by questions from Jewish groups about his Mideast policy since he announced his candidacy last fall. Some of the groups' behavior toward Jackson constituted harassment. One group organized by the Jewish De-

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