

What **LIES** ahead?



indicating that it may be inappropriate to discuss tax reform, which would only shift the tax burden, when tax increases are necessary to cut the deficits. But Rostenkowski, like the rest of his party, is unwilling to initiate tax increase legislation at this point. Thus if tax increases are proposed this year, they will probably be loophole closings on the corporate side.

Senate Republicans continue to oppose tax increases. Majority Leader Robert Dole (R-KS) bluntly says that ferocious business lobby opposition makes tax reform unrealistic, and that his top priority is the budget. The other Senate power-broker on taxes, Finance Committee chair Robert Packwood (R-OR), simply says that he likes the tax code as is.

Tax reform will be the subject of extensive congressional hearings in the spring, but the real negotiating won't come until the "dog days" of summer. Since no tax reform plan can avoid offending powerful interest groups, it will need strong presidential support to be approved.

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MX

By David Corn

THE FIRST MAJOR ARMS CONTROL vote of Ronald Reagan's second term is not looking too good for the president. The MX missile, a cornerstone of his strategic buildup, is slated to face a series of four votes in Congress sometime between mid-March and early April, which could determine the future of the beleaguered weapon. MX opponents need to win only one of these votes to prevent the production of the 21 missiles Reagan requested last year.

These votes promise to provoke a frenzy on Capitol Hill, second only to the stir inspired by the federal budget. Some lobbyists and congressional staffers have suggested that this may well be the final

showdown in Congress on the MX, the large and accurate land-based intercontinental missile that can carry 10 warheads. But, as critical as these votes are, the MX has time and again proved its staying power, and the occurrence of these up-or-down votes, while probable, is not completely guaranteed.

Congress is expected to vote on the production funds for the missiles that Reagan requested in his budget for fiscal year 1985. Last year, after a protracted debate, Congress approved a compromise, and these funds were "fenced." Under this agreement the \$1.5 billion for 21 new MX missiles—Congress had already approved the first batch of 21 missiles in 1983—could not be released until March 1, 1985, and then only after the president asks for the funds to be released. Once he does so, the Senate and the House each have to vote twice in favor of freeing the funds, in order for Reagan to get his missiles. Coming on the heels of the votes on 1985 funds will be a consideration of his request for \$3.7 billion for 48 missiles for fiscal year 1986.

With the changes wrought by the elections—MX opponents apparently picked up a net gain of one seat in the Senate and probably lost a few in the House—and all the new wild cards, such as the arms talks, that have been added to the deck, predictions are difficult. Congressional staffers, lobbyists and pundits all tend to use the word "flux"—as in "great flux"—in describing the situation.

But Jay Hedlund, a lobbyist for Common Cause (which opposes the MX) and a veteran of the past few go-arounds on the MX, says that "the atmospherics have changed to benefit" MX opponents. He points to the increased concern on Capitol Hill with military spending and notes that more moderate and conservative members have begun to question the MX program. "We're seeing members who are usually described as pro-defense conservatives airing substantive criticisms of the MX and saying, for

example, they're concerned about its vulnerability," adds Hedlund.

If there is a bottom line for MX opponents it is that within their grasp is a real opportunity to kill production funds for a strategic weapon already in production—which would be a historic first. The decision on 1985 production money could easily swing on the basis of only one or two votes.

A key vote belongs to Rep. Les Aspin (D-WI). In the past two years, Aspin, who has engineered several compromises to save the MX, has done more to confound MX opponents than anyone else. With his recent promotion to chair of the Armed Services Committee, Aspin is now even more visible, and many members are expected to take their lead from him once again.

As for Aspin's position on the MX in 1985, he has been keeping it to himself. But in a recent speech he hinted that he no longer viewed the MX as an effective bargaining chip. Does that mean a switch is forthcoming from Aspin? No one on the anti-MX side is counting his vote because in the same speech he warned the Congress should not "interfere too heavily" in the arms talks and should not "take away any bargaining leverage."

The administration has already begun to lean heavily on both chambers with a bargaining chip argument in support of the MX. Will it work? Many members won't buy it, predicts a House aide working with anti-MX members. "Will half-a-dozen buy it?" he asks. "That remains the question."

What's working in favor of an anti-MX vote are two prime characteristics of the missile—vulnerability and cost. "It can't be based with any reasonable degree of survival, yet we're pouring up to \$40 billion into it as a bargaining chip," says the Senate aide. He adds, "If you want to reduce \$50 billion in federal spending to cut the deficit, how can you do that and still build MX missiles?"

There is talk on Capitol Hill of compromises and a possible delay in a vote on the 1985 funds. Nevertheless, MX opponents are proceeding at full speed. Most expect

Reagan to ask for the funds and trigger the votes—though he might sit tight. What happens with those votes will heavily influence what happens to Reagan's 1986 request. Some anti-MX lobbyists have referred to the spring vote as *the* vote. But Jay Hedlund warns, "If we knock it out of the box in March, we must make sure to nail the coffin shut and then sit on the lid so that it doesn't again rise from the dead."

This is a shortened version of an article that appeared in Nuclear Times.

Contras

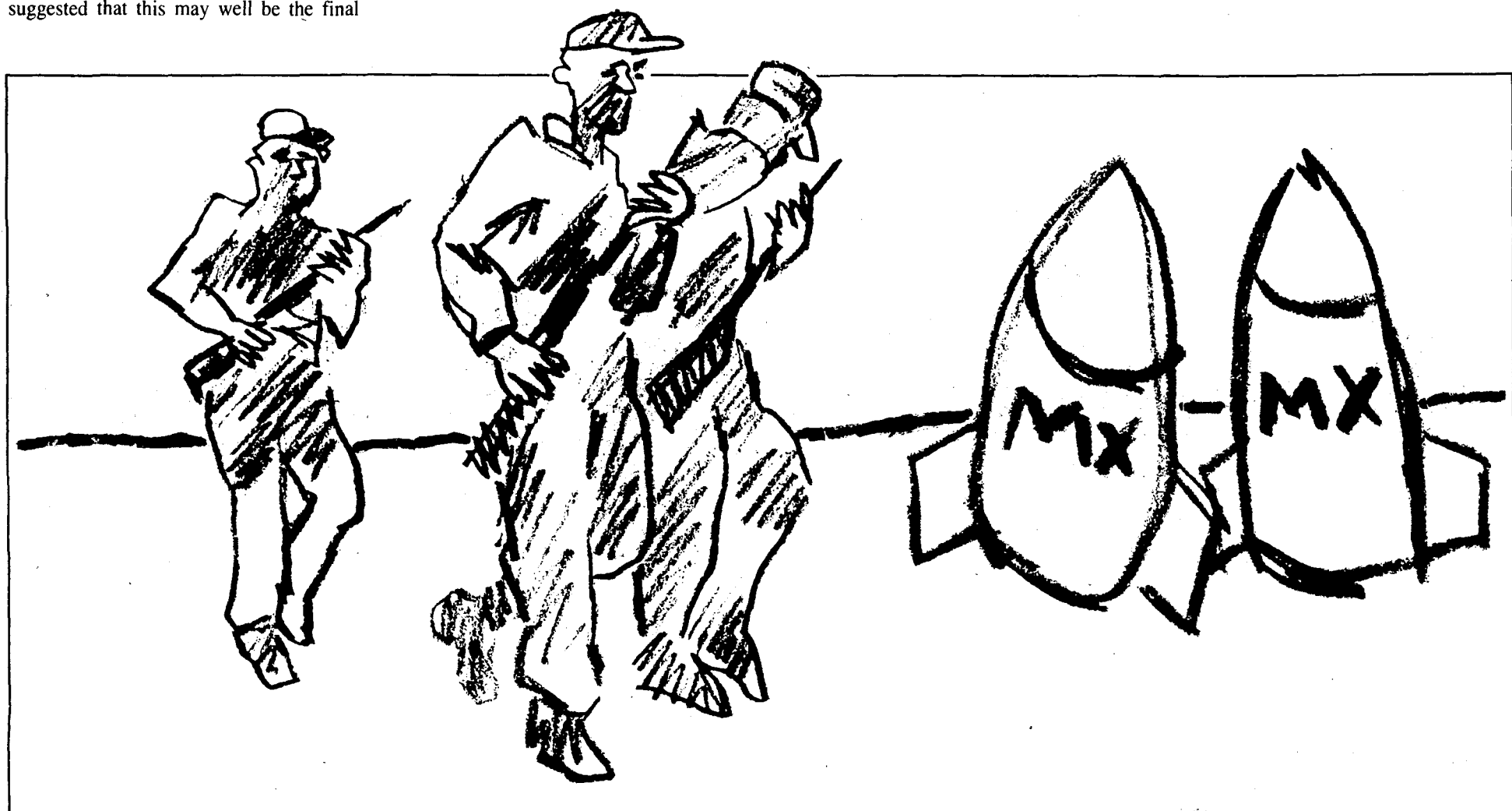
By Joy Hackel

IT IS INCREASINGLY UNLIKELY THAT the Reagan administration can garner congressional support for another renewal of covert aid to the counterrevolutionaries or *contras* in Nicaragua. Congress suspended aid to the anti-Sandinista rebels last year, stipulating that the funding could not be spent unless both the House and the Senate renewed approval after February 28.

House leaders remain firm in their opposition to the not-so-covert war, and members of the Republican controlled Senate have signalled recently that there is little hope for covert policy. In late January Sen. Richard Lugar (R-IN), new chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, argued that *contra* aid is not viable because it is no longer "covert." So if the administration opts to push for covert aid, it risks forcing a confrontation with both sides of the congressional aisle.

The more radical option of overt aid is reportedly under serious consideration by the administration. In this case the administration would "go public" with open financing and request aid before both houses' foreign affairs committees. An overt aid program is unlikely to get automatic support from the Senate. Republicans such as

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Budget

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freeze. Unable to cut this deal, he now says the Senate Republicans' budget proposal will be released February 19.

Much has been made of the Senate Republicans' independent campaign to draw up a budget, but their proposal and the administration's may not end up too far apart. "There is the impression that Dole is off to chart a different course than the White House," says a lobbyist who is a close observer of the budget process. "That may be true with defense and Social Security. But the documents that Dole has circulated to Republicans has them signing off on about 90 percent of the domestic cuts proposed by Reagan."

In the meantime, the Democrats have been lying in wait. Both Gray and House Speaker Tip O'Neill have said that everything is on the table, but they are giving the Republicans first crack at the budget, while they plot strategy away from the headlines. The Senate Republicans and the White House, according to a number of lobbyists and congressional aides, would like to see a quick agreement reached in the Senate so they can quickly pass the budget over to the Democratic-controlled House, placing the pressure on the Democrats. Whether this happens or not, Gray is expected to hold thorough hearings on the budget, though O'Neill has publicly promised that Democrats are "not going to be obstructionist in any manner."

How different will the Democrats' approach to the budget be? Gray told the *National Journal* last month that he can support an across-the-board freeze on federal spending, with no exceptions for Social Security or any other program. And O'Neill has said that Democrats would consider any proposal regarding Social Security offered by Reagan, but that Democrats won't cut Social Security on their own. An

aide to a Democratic senator notes that a Democratic package might contain a freeze on military spending and entitlement programs and cuts in domestic programs—all elements of Dole's original plan. The difference, he says, will be that the Democratic domestic cuts will be "thoughtful, not a rape" and that there will be some tax reform that would increase revenues.

Putting together a package that approaches the \$50 billion figure is a tough task for all involved. It is generally conceded that a package with a theme—such as freeze—stands a better chance than a piecemeal solutions. But how to pull all the disparate elements together? Dole hasn't been able to do so while working with members of his own party. Every aspect of the budget has its staunch defenders.

So far much of the preliminary sparring on the budget has occurred over military spending. The military budget will remain in center stage. Dole, who was forced to give up on a military spending freeze, still continues to do war with Weinberger, decrying the 6.7 percent real increase the Pentagon is demanding. The Republicans' effort to obtain deep domestic cuts and a limit on Social Security could hinge upon how much is denied the Pentagon.

"The Republicans were inches away from getting everything they wanted," says the Senate staff aide. "All they needed was to have the president say he would freeze military spending—they then could have deep domestic cuts and a freeze on Social Security—and also say once the point was reached when there is too much pain there would be some taxes thrown in. This would reduce the deficit and keep the economy going strong." It could also usher in a "Republican millennium," he adds, building momentum for the Republicans in 1986, when 22 Republican senators face re-election. And in 1988 Dole could run for president on the claim that he bailed out the economy.

If the Republicans remain unable to pull it all together—failing to convince either Reagan or Republican hardliners that a

roughly \$300 billion military budget is high enough—the Democrats might have an opening. But timing is crucial. How long can the Democrats sit back and let it look like the Republicans are doing all the work? Will the Democrats be able to present an alternative that isn't merely a milder version of a Republican initiative?

David Corn is a New York-based freelance journalist who covers politics.

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Lugar have publicly opposed overt assistance, arguing that this would be close to a "declaration of war" and that there is no current consensus for outright military intervention among the American people.

The Reagan administration is also exploring "back door" options to continue the *contra* war, including alternatives such as "humanitarian aid," a funding "wind-down" or other "temporary" measures that would ostensibly be used to relocate the *contras* and their families. Democrats such as Rep. Lee H. Hamilton, (D-IN), new chair of the House Committee on Intelligence, argue that they will fight covert aid, but admit that they are willing to leave the door open to administration proposals for alternatives to the covert aid program. These options could be used to sustain the *contras* while both the anti-Sandinista rebels and the Reagan administration search out new sources of support.

The recent reshuffling of members in congressional committees key to Central America legislation will likely provide additional obstacles for the administration. Sen. David Durenburger (R-MN), the new chair of the Senate Intelligence Committee, announced in September his opposition to renewal of covert aid and publicly declared his intention of blocking an administration request for aid. Under his leadership Durenburger claims, the committee will

"choose to play absolutely no role in this [Nicaraguan covert aid], turn it over to the political system and say this is a political issue." Although a critic of the *contras* covert war, Durenburger has reiterated his support for "any effort to undo the Marxist stranglehold [in Nicaragua], but within limits, and those limits are protecting the use of covert action as a national security tool."

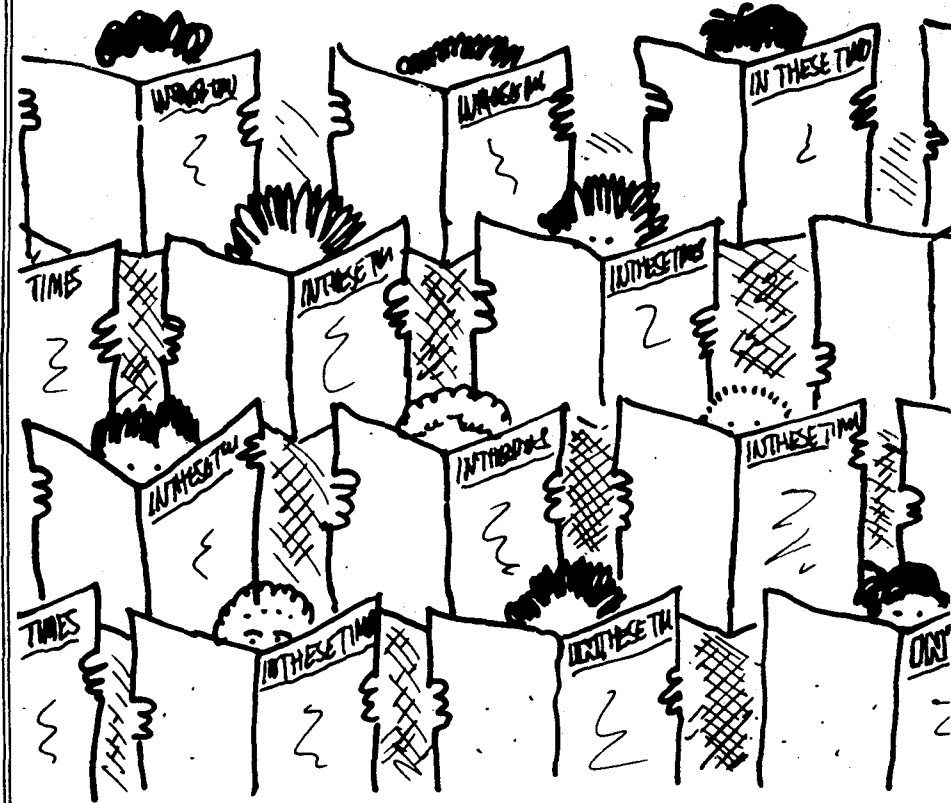
Incoming chair of the House Committee on Intelligence Hamilton is currently investigating reports that the CIA spent more than the ceiling of \$24 million for aid set by Congress for fiscal year 1984. Durenburger and Hamilton, along with the new vice chair of the Senate Committee on Intelligence, Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-VT), are all expected to be more critical of the administration's Central America policy than their predecessors.

While the Reagan administration is preparing a large-scale battle to win over congressional support for the *contra* cause, the upcoming debate over renewal of funding is unlikely to be a final referendum on the CIA's "covert" war. Despite last October's congressional mandate to suspend U.S. aid to the anti-Sandinista forces, well-supplied rebels continued daily raids, penetrating deeper into Nicaraguan territory. The Nicaraguan Democratic Force, the largest of the *contra* groups, sustained a consistent level of combat without suffering a cash-flow shortage, according to the group's leaders.

In recent months the rebels have been buoyed by at least several million dollars in aid from U.S. corporations, individuals, conservative groups and "friendly" governments such as Israel, Taiwan and Argentina, according to published reports. And the Reagan administration has also admitted that Honduras and El Salvador, both heavily dependent on U.S. military and economic aid, have emerged as key sources of aid to the anti-Sandinista rebels.

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ITT GOES TO COLLEGE



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Crime

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have been inordinantly victimized by American racism, they argue, adding that increased federal assistance for ameliorative social programs is the way to stem the rise in crime. But, as Starr points out, crime rises despite large expenditures on various social programs.

Another barrier to a racially focused assault on crime has come from many left-liberal theorists who have often been reluctant to place any special onus on blacks for the problem of crime. Because slavery, Jim Crow laws and institutional racism have so crippled black Americans' development, they reason, certain deficiencies should be tolerated and indulged. Sometimes this sociopathic behavior is even romanticized; the noble ghetto hustler, fighting against racism and injustice the only way he knows how, has fueled many a picaresque imagination.

Meanwhile, an insidious kind of criminality has seeped into the lifestyles and cultural attitudes of many black inner-city youth. Many urban communities have become virtual no-man's-lands with the growing pervasiveness of black-on-black violence. And though many in the black community have long warned of this development, they've received little help from their leadership.

When the Black Panther Party launched its campaign against what it called "illegitimate capitalists" in the late '60s, it received enthusiastic support from the crime-ravaged core of the black community. Established black leadership and many of the same white people now applauding Goetz denounced the Panther's campaign as errant vigilantism. When H. Rap Brown organized a New York-based group dedicated to wiping out the heroin trade, he was set up, arrested and dismissed as a common criminal. When the Nation of Islam sends

its missionaries into the very den of the underclass, compiling a record of rehabilitation successes that would put most reform agencies to shame, they are accused of exploiting misery for their own questionable ends.

But all of these outbursts of indigenous anti-crime activities have been triggered by black leadership's refusal to treat the problem with the concern it warrants and by a sense that official law enforcement is at best unconcerned with positive developments in the black community.

This apparent acquiescence to the crime epidemic by black leadership and the left has also enhanced the appeal of right-wing demagogues, who readily attribute all crime problems either to certain racial characteristics or to sinister wealth distribution schemes. To many crime-weary people, these right-wingers seem to be the only ones unafraid to tell it like it is. Theirs are among the loudest voices praising Goetz's action.

When someone like psychologist Kenneth B. Clark correctly chides Goetz's supporters for ignoring significant problems and advocating simple-minded and possibly dangerous solutions, he is dismissed as one of those irrelevant liberals. Yet his vision probably holds the key to the solution.

"For a variety of reasons," notes Clark, a venerable authority on racial matters, "our society does not ask itself: 'how do so many young people become mindlessly anti-social and, at times, self-destructive?' A painfully disturbing answer to this core question is that 'mugged communities,' 'mugged neighborhoods' and, probably most important, 'mugged schools' spawn urban 'muggers.' Given this fact, a more severe criminal-justice system, more prisons and more citizen shootings will not solve the problem of urban crime."

But while we wait for something that will solve the problem, a fearful population contemplates desperate action. And somebody like Bernard Goetz becomes a hero for shooting some black guys in the back on the subway.