

By Diana Johnstone

PARIS

**L**AST WEEK'S INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON chemical weapons here was a milestone in the shift from an East-West to a North-South division of the planet. It was designed by the Reagan administration, which came up with the idea, not so much to advance the outlawing of chemical weapons as the outlawing of Third World states the U.S. does not control.

The accusations against Libya for building a chemical weapons plant—whether true or false—were part of that design.

The significance of the Paris conference was related to the following major developments in the chemical weapons problem:

- the U.S. program to build binary chemical weapons as part of its "Airland Battle" strategy for missile-borne chemical weapons against Third World adversaries;

- ongoing Geneva negotiations on a worldwide ban of production and stocking of chemical weapons that only recently seemed close to success; and

- the recent massive use of chemical weapons by Iraq.

All three developments were obscured by the Paris conference. The U.S. used the Paris conference to divert attention from a comprehensive ban to stopping "proliferation" of chemical weapons. Certainly, the Iraq example raised the problem of getting everybody to adhere to an eventual agreement. However, the U.S. raised this problem in a discriminatory way, putting it in terms not of the necessary universality of a worldwide ban, but of depriving a particular category of countries of chemical industry.

**A message for the media:** The Paris conference, unlike the Geneva negotiations, was a media event. The U.S. is more skilled at setting the agenda for the media than at constructive diplomacy. Even though most journalists try to write honest reports, the tone is set by insider editorialists and columnists who play up the themes provided by the administration.

In his Paris speech, Secretary of State George Shultz stressed preventing the spread of chemical weapons to "terrorist groups" or to governments "known to sponsor terrorism." He also referred to President-elect George Bush's statement that guilty nations must "pay a price." The U.S. Navy fighters that shot down two Libyan planes off the coast of Libya demonstrated what he might mean.

The same message was delivered more clearly by the U.S. No.1 ally, Israel. Foreign Minister Moshe Arens said a final chemical weapons ban might take "several years at the least." For the "interim," he suggested "actions which do not require lengthy procedures." First was a ban on chemical agents—called precursors—that can be used in chemical weapons manufacturing, as well as a "ban on export of know-how."

Arens further suggested strengthening the authority of the United Nations secretary general for on-the-spot investigation so "world public opinion would be able to react." Asked what form such reaction might take, Arens said that "in democratic countries, there is no significant difference between public opinion and the action taken by the government. When informed, public opinion will catalyze the government into action." This sums up the Shultz-Israeli approach. The "democratic countries" with the



Last year an Iranian clergyman (left) and Revolutionary Guard (right) visited the war front investigating purported Iraqi use of chemical weapons.

## U.S. arms formulas brew chemical imbalance

requisite military power—meaning the U.S. and Israel—are to "punish" culprits in response to their own domestic "public opinion." But as the latest uproar over Libya illustrated, "public opinion" is created by the administration, which directs the indignation of the media toward countries it wants to bully.

**And now the history:** Imperial Germany, the leading chemical power of its time, initiated the use of poison gas on the World War I battlefield in April 1915. In pre-nuclear times, gas was the most horrifying weapon of mass destruction. In 1925 the Geneva Protocol banned its use in wartime. But production and stocking were not banned, and many signatories—including the U.S.—"reserved the right" to use gas in retaliation.

This reservation undermines the ban, inasmuch as any country that uses gas can accuse the other side of using it first.

In classical ground battle, poison gas can blow back on the forces that use it. (Which can explain how a few Iraqi soldiers were also apparent casualties of gas in the Gulf War.) This may be why none of the belligerents in World War II initiated battlefield use of chemical weapons. The Nazis reserved the use of gas for secret extermination of civilians, especially millions of defenseless Jews.

Battlefield chemical weapons were nevertheless developed, produced and

stored during World War II. Both the U.S. and the Soviet Union inherited stocks of unused German chemical weapons and went on to build arsenals of their own. Laboring under Leonid Brezhnev's delusion that the Soviet Union was as big as its arsenals, the USSR went on making them in the '70s, when the U.S. was stopping. This was a stupid mistake, which the present Soviet leadership acknowledges and regrets.

In the Vietnam War the U.S. made massive use of new kinds of chemical weapons that only indirectly attacked people and therefore, it could be argued, were not the sort of chemical weapons outlawed by the Geneva Protocol. Instead the chemicals used

**At the international conference last week on chemical weapons, the U.S. and France found themselves on the defensive, accused of blocking a possible worldwide chemical weapons ban.**

against the Vietnamese were defoliants that destroyed the ecosystem. They were weapons of ecocide rather than genocide—although the line may be thin, considering the dioxin left behind and the lasting damage to life systems.

After a long pause, the U.S. renewed chemical weapon production in December 1987. The Reagan administration decision to produce a "new generation" of binary chemical weapons seems to have been dictated by two factors: perfection of the technological capacity to make binaries, that is, weapons which keep two relatively harmless substances separated until actual use, thus making them safer to store than earlier chemical weapons; and the development, growing out of the Vietnam experience, of a capacity for long-distance military strikes on Third World countries unable to strike back.

Thus from the start the binaries were probably designed for use in the Third World rather than on the European battlefield. However, to win consent from Congress, the Pentagon had to give two standard justifications: a chemical weapons capacity was necessary to deter enormous Soviet chemical forces, and the new binaries would be "bargaining chips" in negotiations for worldwide abolition of chemical weapons.

Thus promotion of the binary program was coupled with declared efforts to further the Geneva negotiations for a worldwide ban. For a while American binary enthusiasts could count on the Russians to block a successful chemical disarmament agreement by their suspicious reluctance to allow on-the-spot inspection.

The situation changed dramatically in 1987 when the new Soviet leadership under

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# INSHORT

By Joel Bleifuss

## North gets away

In late December six current Reagan administration officials got together and decided not to release key evidence to the special prosecutor who is investigating wrongdoing by five former Reagan administration officials. A conflict of interest? No, a question of national security. At least that is what Secretary of State George Shultz, Secretary of Defense Frank Carlucci, Attorney General Dick Thornburgh, National Security Adviser Colin Powell, CIA Director William Webster and National Security Agency Director William Studemann would have us believe. The six officials cited security concerns in their recent decision to deny Special Prosecutor Lawrence Walsh the classified documents he needed to prosecute Lt. Col. Oliver North, the first of five former administration officials to face trial in the Iran-Contra case. That decision forced the independent counsel to drop two of the 14 charges facing North.

**Hook, line and sinker.** A source involved in the North case told *These Times* that he was "surprised" the media had not raised more of a fuss over this apparent conflict of interest. Yes, one would have thought the administration's use of a national security escape clause and the resulting derailment of the Iran-contra investigation might be cause for outcry. After all, Reagan administration officials have spent eight years plugging one official lie upon another. Who could believe them now? The *New York Times* R.W. Apple Jr. for one. He wrote: "It was suggested, though not very widely in Washington political circles, that Mr. Reagan's minions had decided on this classification not on national security grounds but to force Mr. Walsh to give up. The reason that this conspiracy theory got short shrift was simple: Had they got the slightest wind of such an operation, both Judge Gerhard Gesell, a crusty old New Dealer, and Mr. Walsh, a tough nut who has invested his time and his considerable reputation in this case, would surely have blown the whistle." Though colorful prose, Apple's reasoning is tenuous. If these six top Reagan officials had conspired to short-circuit the Iran-contra investigation, would they allow that news to reach anyone other than the president or president-elect? Of course not. Unfortunately, Apple's blind acceptance of the administration line was the media norm. A notable exception was his colleague at the *Times*, Linda Greenhouse, who summed up the situation this way: "The administration's stance was inherently suspect for the obvious reason that both the departing president and the incoming one had nothing to gain from a trial that threatened to dissect a mortifying foreign policy debacle. The failure of the North prosecution raises questions about whether the independent counsel is sufficiently independent to handle a politically explosive case. The independent counsel, contrary to theory, proved this time to have to answer to the president's men. The president himself still has to answer to history."

## Par for the course

New documents indicate that FBI Director William Sessions, successor to current CIA Director William Webster, misled Congress last September on the extent of the bureau's investigation of U.S. dissidents. Ross Gelbspan of the *Boston Globe* reports that documents recently released to former FBI agent Frank Varella under a Freedom of Information Act request substantiate Varella's charges about FBI surveillance of U.S. citizens and American organizations that disagree with U.S. policy in Central America. From 1981 to 1984 Varella, based in Dallas, was one of two men who coordinated the bureau's probe of the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES). Varella's recently released 2,400-page FBI file is packed with interesting information. For example:

- Sessions and others in the FBI have repeatedly maintained that Varella is an unreliable informant. It now appears that after Varella went public with his charges of FBI misconduct, the bureau altered the results of a polygraph test he had previously passed.

- In September, Sessions told Congress that the FBI's domestic spying operations were due to "mistakes in judgment" and "lax management" on the part of FBI field supervisors. But at least one supervisor realized what he was getting into. A handwritten note on one of the newly released documents reads: "Stress... that we're all going to be writing depositions for the litigious vampires at the next swing of the pendulum."

- Varella charges that he helped fill the FBI's "terrorist photo



## Reilly given environmental portfolio

"Businesses can meet their social responsibility and benefit greatly by integrating the support of conservation into their commercial strategies." So wrote World Wildlife Fund (WWF) President William Reilly, the new administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), in the introduction to a WWF brochure titled "Conservation and Business Sponsorship."

According to the pamphlet, "Pan Am and WWF teamed up to create this attention-grabbing message: 'Pan Am can show you the world today. World Wildlife Fund makes sure you can see the same world tomorrow.'"

For its part, WWF has become the fastest growing conservation organization in the U.S., tripling its budget and doubling its membership in Reilly's three-year tenure as president. Now, as EPA administrator, Reilly will both retain his environmentalist mantle and vastly expand his opportunities to serve industry.

Corporations like Chevron have been well served by an identification with WWF. The brochure reports, "Chevron Corporation found WWF's 'Future in the Wild' program an ideal way to increase its identity among families nationwide."

And the Cooperative Bank of Concord, Mass., kicked off a new investment account with the curious slogan, "An investment account to make all others extinct." Mutual of Omaha, Ralph Lauren, Rolex and Jaguar have all teamed up with the WWF to tap into conservation's "popular appeal" and "enormous audience."

Who is William Reilly, and what

does he stand for? First, he's no Anne Gorsuch Burford or James Watt. Debonair Reilly has none of the sleazy and abrasive qualities of Reagan's early environmental appointees. But, like Bush, he is more at home talking corporate responsibility with captains of industry than leading the victims of toxic spills in the battle for appropriate recourse.

In 1987, for instance, he hosted a conference on alternatives to chlorofluorocarbons—the chemical agents that destroy the Earth's ozone layer. This concern did not, however, prevent him from flying to Europe on the supersonic Concorde—also believed to be harmful to the ozone.

Since 1973 Reilly has been president of the Conservation Foundation, a Washington-based environmental think tank. This group has published booklets, convened conferences and hosted "dispute resolution" sessions. While the organization prides itself on its "moderate" and "responsible" positions, many environmentalists consider it an industry front. One reason is that the Conservation Foundation is heavily indebted to industry coffers. Its list of corporate sponsors is a shocking catalog of environmental wasters — Du Pont, Dow, Exxon, Monsanto and General Electric.

Samuel P. Hays writes in his book *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency* that the Conservation Foundation forms a fifth column within U.S. society, claiming neutrality and objectivity while advancing industry efforts to delay or oppose regulation. The foundation has supported deregulation, the use of cost-benefit and risk analyses and regulations that gain industry compliance through incentives rather than penalties.

Last September the chairmen of 16 congressional committees and

subcommittees sent a letter to EPA administrator Lee Thomas asking him not to grant the Conservation Foundation a contract for a two-year study of the EPA's Superfund program. The 16 Congress members were concerned about reports that the foundation was planning to supplement the EPA's \$2.5 million payment for the project with money solicited from a coalition of chemical and insurance companies. They wrote, "If this occurs, there will be questions of undue influence and bias which will undermine the credibility of a costly research effort."

In 1985 the Conservation Foundation and the WWF consummated a merger that made Reilly head of both. From their opulent headquarters in two floors of a building in Washington's fashionable West End, Reilly has led what he calls the environmental movement's "third wave." He believes that strict regulatory penalties and deadlines—derisively called "command and control regulations" by his industry-minded protégés—have outlived their usefulness.

"Industry knows these [environmental] laws aren't going away," Reilly told the *Los Angeles Times*. "And environmentalists have come to realize that it's going to take cooperation from industry to get the laws working." According to this view, less adversarial approaches, like soliciting cooperation rather than demanding compliance, are more successful. Environmentalists, Reilly believes, should spend less time protesting, boycotting and screaming and more time exploring the "costs" and "benefits" of various "options."

World Wildlife's fundraising brochure concludes, "Ask our staff for a detailed presentation on how your company's activities could be enhanced by linking up with conserva-



tion." If Reilly's offer to advance corporate interests through his environmentalist credentials still holds good

as administrator of the EPA, he could cause as much damage as his Reagan-appointed predecessors—

and with less public opposition.

—John Green

## Pinochet's going out of business sale

Gen. Augusto Pinochet's 57-to-43 percent defeat in October's Chilean plebiscite has prompted the dictator to push for increased privatization of the economy. Pinochet has put eight largely profitable state-owned companies on the block—the national oil company, the national mining company, the national marine transport company, Santiago's subway system, Chile Films, two large regional electric utilities and the national insurance institute.

The government press office says Pinochet "has decided that a series of important factors have come together to create the optimum environment in which to sell the state-owned enterprises." The 16-party opposition disagrees, but is powerless to stop the sale.

This current wave of privatization is the third to hit Chile since the Nixon administration overthrew democratically elected president Salvador Allende in 1973. From 1974 to 1978, the government privatized

259 industrial concerns and 10 banks, resulting in a new concentration of wealth. But despite its original pledge to "eliminate" state-owned property, the junta resisted selling "strategic" enterprises.

During the recession of 1982-84, government economists had to swallow their rhetoric. The "Chicago Boys," as they are known in Chile for their adhesion to the economic fancies of former University of Chicago professor Milton Friedman, were forced to bail out several bankrupt banks and enterprises.

In 1984 the government resumed privatizing national industries, including those it had just bailed out. Private hands grabbed up more than \$1.2 billion in assets as 21 communications, energy, mining and steel companies underwent varying degrees of privatization. The typical buyer was a multinational corporation with ties to members of the local economic elite.

This helps explain why so many multinationals have shown up in Chile in recent years. Bankers Trust of New York, unknown in Chile a few

years ago, now owns part of 13 companies. Aetna Insurance of Hartford, Conn., participates in six Chilean companies.

In the world economy, steel and energy are reliable indicators as to who wields economic power. Several of Chile's steel and energy firms, once considered too strategic to sell, are now the object of privatization. When traditional producers such as the U.S. and Europe saw their steel output fall in the '80s, many assumed Third World nations filled the power vacuum. But—as will be the case in Chile—it is multinational corporations, not the countries themselves, that fill the vacuum.

The selling frenzy will continue at least until the December elections, when an unlikely coalition of 16 parties covering the entire political spectrum will have to unify in order to defeat the 72-year-old general's designated candidate. This is the first step in preventing the loss of industries that, according to Hortensia Bussi, Allende's widow, has "taken the Chilean people years to build."

—Kevin O'Donnell

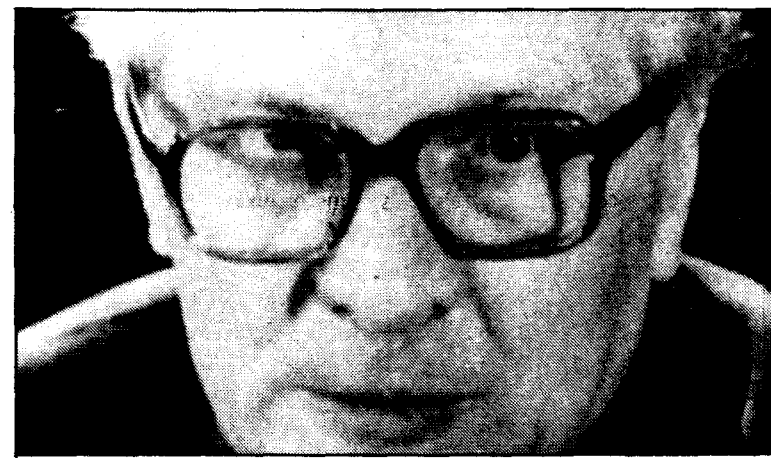
## Old Red dogs won't learn new Soviet tricks

WEST BERLIN—Fast Germany, whose aging leaders are increasingly busy heading off *glasnost* and *perestroika*, is not likely to have fresh blood flow in its ruling Communist Party until at least 1990. Rumors of the impending resignation of state and party chief Erich Honecker, 76, fueled by public spats with Moscow over liberalization have been quashed by the announcement of a May 1990 party congress with Honecker as key speaker.

That news was released from a year-end meeting of the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED), East Germany's ruling party. The December session also produced warmed-over Cold War tirades against the West and a new batch of thinly veiled rejections of Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachov's economic and political reforms.

Honecker's reconfirmation as SED general secretary and chairman of the council of state—posts he has held since 1971 and 1976, respectively—came in the wake of an ideological battle with Moscow.

In November East Germany banned the Soviet magazine *Sputnik* for an article that partially blamed the late Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin for Adolf Hitler's rise to power. Also banned were several Soviet films dealing with the Stalin era—a formative period for many Communists now in ranking positions in the SED. The SED daily *Neues Deutschland* (New Germany) blasted *Sputnik* for "insulting" German Communists and



Party chief Erich Honecker sees red.

for violating the East German constitution by "the excusing, the cleansing of Hitler."

The *Sputnik* article blamed Stalin for splitting opposition to Hitler by ordering European Communists to quit their membership in anti-fascist fronts. The article said Stalin issued the command after the Soviet non-aggression pact with Germany in 1939.

Honecker, who spent 10 years in prison under the Nazis, must have been upset about the implication that Communists had helped Hitler, whose defeat plays a prominent part in East German state ideology.

At the December Central Committee meeting Honecker dismissed the furor at home and in West Germany surrounding the *Sputnik* ban as the "moans and cries of philistines gone wild," philistines who were trying to rewrite Soviet history in a "bourgeois manner."

Honecker used traditional rhetoric to say good things about the Soviet reforms, that they would "strengthen world socialism and secure peace." But he also distanced himself from Moscow. "We have

never considered copying to be a substitute for the necessity of our own theoretical thinking and practical action," he told the 165-member Central Committee. He warned against the Soviet Union's "little friends" in the West who were telling the SED to "march into anarchy."

Backing for this conservative line came from Potsdam delegate Guenter Jahn, who said, "A socialist democracy that would offer space and playroom to the enemies of socialism and anti-democrats would be suicidal."

And a thoroughly unreformed Cold War note was sounded by East German Foreign Minister Oskar Fischer, who used Gorbachov's East-West rapprochement phrase "a common European home" to justify the continued existence of the Berlin Wall and the militarized border to West Germany. "Don't houses have supporting walls?" Fischer asked. "Supporting walls—they are to be compared with secure state borders." And, it seems, in East Germany so are secure party lines.

—Marcus Kabel

album" with, among others, the names and mug shots of U.S. senators and representatives who opposed administration policy. The FBI denies that it catalogued members of Congress as terrorists. And while admitting such an album did exist, the FBI downplays its significance. But according to one document, the FBI "has compiled over 1,000 photos of individuals known to have participated in leftist activities in El Salvador and the U.S. [The] Dallas [field office] will periodically supply pertinent photos and background to the bureau...for inclusion into the Terrorist Photograph Album."

● Varelli has testified that he went to El Salvador at the request of the FBI to open communications with the Salvadoran national guard. Varelli says that on his return, he gave the FBI a list that contained the names of more than 700 Salvadoran leftists—a list that was compiled by El Salvador's national guard, the Ministry of Defense and the death squads. Sessions has never told Congress of any contact the FBI has had with the government of El Salvador. However one of the documents released to Varelli is a 1981 letter Sessions wrote to various U.S. agencies, including the Immigration and Naturalization Service, the State Department, the U.S. Secret Service, the U.S. Customs Service and "perhaps the CIA," according to the *Globe's* Gelbspan. Most of that letter is blacked out, but the final paragraph is legible. Sessions writes: "All receiving agencies are requested to conduct name checks on all potential victims [and advise the FBI of their results]." Varelli told the *Globe* that the "potential victims" referred to in the letter include some of the names on the "hit lists" he brought back from El Salvador.

### Team spirit

The hooded executioner of yesteryear is gone, along with the scaffold and block. In his place, at least in the U.S., is the "death-watch team." American University Professor Robert Johnson recently spent some time with such a team at an unnamed prison in an unnamed state. He reports his findings in the January 13 *Commonweal* magazine. The job of the death-watch team, says a prison administrator, is to make sure the state-sanctioned killing is a "proper, professional, dignified undertaking...done the way it's supposed to be done—without any sensation." The team leader is the man responsible for making sure the execution goes smoothly. As past experience has taught him, that takes practice. "The execution team is a nine-officer team and each one has certain things to do," he tells *Commonweal*, explaining that the process of electrocuting a person is broken down into very small steps "so people won't get confused. I've learned it's kind of a tense time. When you're executin' a person, killin' a person—you call it killin', executin', the man dies anyway—I find the less you got on your mind, why, the better you carry it out." Each man on the team is a specialist. Says one officer: "My assignment is the leg piece. Right leg. I roll his pants' leg up, place a piece [electrode] on his leg, strap his leg in... I've got all the moves down pat." The death-watch team begins its work 24 hours before the execution. The members' objective is to keep the prisoner alive and "on schedule." Or as one team member puts it, "to get the man ready to go." There is the last meal to get through. Most condemned men have little appetite. Then the prisoner puts all his worldly possessions in a box. These are inventoried. One team member explains that this is the point when to begin watching the condemned prisoner closely, since the execution is now "picking up momentum, and we don't want to lose control of the situation." The prisoner is then stripped to his underpants, handcuffed and his head and right leg shaved to facilitate electrocution and minimize burning. The team encircles him to make sure he behaves. As one death-watch officer says, "Come eight o'clock [three hours before execution time], we've got a dead man. Eight o'clock is when we shave the man. We take his identity; it goes with the hair." The prisoner is then showered and dressed in a white cotton garment, held together with velcro—metal buttons and zippers burn the flesh and cause an unpleasant odor. The victim is now ready to die. Johnson, who witnessed an execution for his report, describes what he saw: "The execution team worked with machine precision. Like a disciplined swarm, they enveloped him. Arms, legs, stomach, chest and head were secured in a matter of seconds. Electrodes were attached to the cap holding his head and to the strap holding his exposed right leg. A leather mask was placed over his face...The mask, made entirely of leather, appeared soiled and worn...The faceless man breathed before us...His last act was to swallow, nervously, pathetically, with his Adam's apple bobbing."