

Congressional Closeup by Ronald Kokinda and Susan Kokinda

Melcher hits 'meddling' with the Philippines

Senator John Melcher (D-Mont.) blasted the State Department for "misguided" policies toward the Philippines and for "persistent meddling" at the expense of the Marcos government.

Whether or not to end the Marcos government "is a decision for the Filipinos to make," Melcher said, "not for the United States to dictate."

Speaking on the Senate floor on Jan. 28, Melcher charged that "for the past 18 months or longer, relations with the Philippines have been misguided. The State Department has blocked sales of wheat, dairy products, and other goods, while orchestrating a chorus of charges of corruption about the election process and the principals involved. . . . This course loses sight of the objectives of the election itself."

Melcher reminded senators that "whatever internal changes the State Department is promoting in the Philippines, our job as Americans is to mend our vital military, trade, and cultural, alliances regardless of the outcome of the election." The Philippines, he noted, is the leading market for U.S. wheat and other agricultural products, and further, "there are no worthy substitute base locations" for U.S. forces in the Pacific.

"The slippage in United States-Philippines relations in recent years is the result of persistent meddling by the U.S. State Department in the long-standing trade and economic policies between our two countries," Melcher said.

"It is this inconsistency that is resented by the Filipinos and . . . is damaging to United States producers—especially farmers and ranch-

ers—whose products are exported to Southeast Asian markets."

Melcher's attack came as Rep. Stephen Solarz (D-N.Y.) escalated his blatant attempts to topple the Marcos government. The Mossad-linked Solarz has been holding hearings in an effort to scrape up some evidence that the Marcos family has funneled huge amounts of funds into New York real estate.

Response to the Shuttle disaster

The cynical attempt by the Soviet Union and its satraps to make propaganda hay out of the disaster which befell the U.S. Space Shuttle Challenger, drew sharp responses from some members of Congress.

Speaking on the House floor the day after the tragedy, Rep. Robert Lagomarsino (R-Calif.) declared that "the shock of yesterday's events is compounded by what I learned this morning of the reaction of the Salvadoran guerrillas to this tragedy." The FMLN rebels had hailed the shuttle destruction as a victory against the "militarization of space," and characterized two of the Challenger crew as "war criminals."

Lagomarsino was seconded by Rep. William Broomfield (R-Mich.), who asked how this "Communist umbrella group," or "any group which claims national aspirations, dare to vilify the names of dedicated men and women who gave their lives in the exploration of space."

But as they spoke, Moscow's fellow travelers in Congress were proclaiming that the tragedy 1) proved that the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) was unfeasible, and 2) underscored the need for "reevaluating"

(read: scrapping) the U.S. space program.

Senator Frank Lautenberg, a liberal Democrat from New Jersey and a member of the Senate space appropriations subcommittee, wanted to know: "Can we expect programs as exotic as SDI to be able to continue?"

Representative Bill Green (R-N.Y.), the ranking member of the House subcommittee on NASA appropriations, proclaimed: "There clearly is a need to pause and reevaluate the program. It will also reopen the debate about the value of manned space exploration vs. unmanned missions."

These are among the many indications that foes of the SDI, and of American technological superiority in general, intend to use the Challenger disaster, plus the Gramm-Rudman budget cuts, to slash funding for the missile-defense program, and to ice such key components of the U.S. space program as future shuttle flights and the manned space station scheduled to be built in the 1990s. As the *New York Post's* Niles Lathem commented Jan. 29: "Space cuts may now look enticing to those searching for ways to live under the constraints" of the balanced-budget law.

Will Gramm-Rudman decouple NATO alliance?

The Gramm-Rudman bill is giving new life to the strategy, associated with Henry Kissinger and Zbigniew Brzezinski, among others, for "decoupling" the United States from Western Europe.

According to Norman Ornstein, a scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, an allegedly conservative Washington, D.C.-based think tank

with strong influence in the Reagan administration, the budgetary pressures Gramm-Rudman will exert on defense spending will force the United States to significantly reduce its troop strength in Europe.

He reports that several key members of Congress, including House Armed Services Committee chairman Les Aspin (D-Wisc.) and Sen. Sam Nunn (D-Ga.), will soon start raising the issue of withdrawing and demobilizing American troops now stationed in Europe, as both a cost-saving device and a strategic necessity. Nunn was the chief sponsor of an amendment to halve the number of American troops in Western Europe, which was narrowly defeated in June 1984.

Ornstein penned an op-ed for the Jan. 26 *Washington Post* in which he predicted that Congress will react to Gramm-Rudman's escalating cost-cutting pressures "by finally cutting the number of American troops in Europe." Ornstein believes that the United States must withdraw and demobilize a minimum of 90,000 troops, plus support personnel.

Ornstein's proposal is finding receptive ground in Congress. A top staff director on the House Armed Services Committee, who is in contact with Ornstein, confirmed that there is "serious talk" on the Hill that the United States may well have to drastically cut back its military presence in Europe because of the so-called balanced budget law.

"You have two choices under Gramm-Rudman," he explained. "You can either keep your force structure intact—but that would mean stopping procurement for an entire year, which is crazy; or, you can cut back on your force structure. The question is: Do we cut back on troops in Europe or in Kansas?"

The staffer disclosed that Aspin will be making speeches and holding hearings, in which the question of cutting back on European troop strength could be discussed in the broader context of American strategy and commitments. "Intellectually, we will have to take a new look at the issues of overall NATO structure and the future of Europe," he said.

Ted Kennedy gets his marching orders

At the invitation of the Moscow Supreme Soviet, Sen. Ted Kennedy (D-Mass.) trots off to the Soviet Union in early February for a three-day visit, which will include a meeting with General-Secretary Mikhail Gorbachov.

According to a statement issued by his office, Kennedy will discuss a wide range of issues with the Soviet leader, including nuclear arms control and the progress of the Geneva arms talks. Kennedy will also meet with members of the Supreme Soviet and the Soviet Academy of Sciences.

One can expect him to return to the United States spouting new attacks against the U.S. military in general, and the Strategic Defense Initiative in particular.

Government becoming 'a debt collection agency'

Rep. William Dannemeyer (R-Calif.) blasted the high cost of debt service on the federal debt, in a House floor speech Jan. 29, entitled "Gramm-Rudman Prescribes the Wrong Medicine." Dannemeyer said that servicing the federal debt will cost \$200 billion

for FY86, or 40% of federal tax revenues.

The congressman said that Congressional Budget Office projections show that this ratio will rise to 48¢ of every tax dollar by 1990, and that "Gramm-Rudman, for all its massive spending cuts, will not be able to change this outrageous ratio substantially, because no substantial reduction in the cost of debt-servicing is envisaged.

"Unless something more imaginative than the Gramm-Rudman proposals are adopted," Dannemeyer warned, "this government will be reduced to a collection agency, not to say a foreclosure agency, acting on behalf of the coupon-clipper class."

With these strong words, Dannemeyer laid the blame squarely on catastrophically high interest rates. "The cost of debt servicing is high because the value of the dollar was destabilized in 1971, sending interest rates into outer space," he said.

House Democrats demand protectionism

Congressional Democrats have seized upon new figures showing the U.S. trade deficit at a record \$148.5 billion, to push protectionist measures. The Democratic Leadership Council on Jan. 31 proposed a nine-point plan which would give the United States broader power to retaliate against unfair foreign trade practices, would require the U.S. Trade Representative to set targets for increased exports to a number of countries, and would establish a "war chest" to combat foreign export subsidies.

"We need to try to force open the doors of other markets," said sponsor Rep. Dan Mica (D-Fla.).