

Congressional Closeup by William Jones

Gephardt: Bush policy 'adrift, without vision'

In an obvious campaign speech by a contender in the 1992 presidential race, House Majority Leader Rep. Richard Gephardt (D-Mo.), in a speech to the Center for National Policy, a liberal think tank, on March 6, called the Bush foreign policy "a policy adrift, without vision, without imagination." Gephardt characterized administration policy as government, "of the polls, by the polls, and for the polls."

Gephardt called for increased aid to the Soviet Union, in particular U.S. food aid, and the waiving of a variety of trade restrictions, including those on high-technology exports.

Since the military threat has significantly diminished as a result of the changes in the Soviet Union, reasons Gephardt, the money for such aid should come from a greater cuts in military spending. "Rather than pouring more and more money into weapons systems, we should be investing in our own self-interest. At some point," said Gephardt, "it is the job of the President to summon the nation to meet new challenges on the horizon."

Gephardt compared such a policy with the postwar Marshall Plan. Although the Gephardt statements will provide fuel to those congressmen who want to slash even the Bush defense budget, it is the first indication that forces in Congress are prepared to "put their money where their mouth is" in their loudly expressed support for the newly independent East European nations.

But Gephardt's call for more help to Gorbachov may not gain him the support he wants, even among his own party members. Focusing on the Bush administration's "lack of vision" is, however, putting pressure on what

is indeed the Achilles' heel of a President who is more and more seen as catering to public-relations tricks, rather than formulating clear-sighted policies.

SAC chief protests strategic dismantling

In an interview given previous to his testifying to the House and Senate Armed Services Committees on March 6 and 7, Gen. John T. Chain Jr., the head of the Strategic Air Command, expressed opposition of the military chiefs to cuts in the B-2 Stealth bomber program and in the mobile nuclear missile program.

If Congress kills the B-2 program and refuses to fund either of the two mobile missile programs, the MX and the Midgetman, Chain indicated, the military chiefs would reconsider their previous support for a Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, expected to be concluded this year. The military support for START was premised on continuing strategic modernization, which included the B-2 bomber program and the mobility for the ICBMs, said Chain in an interview at his Omaha headquarters in February.

Chain's views reflect a growing concern among the military that the U.S. defense "build-down" is not taking into account recent improvements in Soviet strategic capabilities.

Democrats divided over defense cuts

Liberal Democrats who met on March 1 with House Speaker Thomas S. Foley (D-Wash.) to present their program for more radical defense cuts, came away somewhat discouraged

after Foley told them that their views were shared by only "one-third of Congress," according to several participants contacted by the *Washington Post*.

"It was a very discouraging meeting," said Rep. Dale E. Kildee (D-Mich.), who was present at the meeting. "I really feel there is sentiment for greater cuts than what Aspin and Murtha have in mind." Rep. Les Aspin (D-Wisc.) is the chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, and Rep. John Murtha (D-Pa.) heads the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense.

A leadership source acknowledged that the tone of the meeting had been "argumentative." The meeting, called on the initiative of Rep. Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.) and also attended by Majority Leader Richard A. Gephardt (D-Mo.), followed a rancorous Democratic caucus on the Budget Committee the previous week. The liberal group wanted to reduce the \$293 billion budget proposal to \$289 billion, \$14 billion below the President's proposal, with much deeper cuts to follow. The Schumer grouping was getting tough resistance from pro-defense Democrats, who feel that more radical cuts would badly hurt their districts.

Intelligence committee to probe CIA-S&L ties

Spurned by the CIA in his attempt to get answers concerning allegations raised by the *Houston Post* regarding S&L fraud linked to CIA covert Iran-Contra operations, Rep. Frank Annunzio (D-Ill.), chairman of the House Subcommittee on Financial Institutions, turned to the House Intelligence Committee for assistance. In-

telligence Committee Chairman Rep. Anthony Beilenson (D-Ca), is expected to take up the investigation.

Regarding the *Post's* stories, Anunzio wrote to Beilenson, "Quite frankly, Mr. Chairman, when I first heard of the allegations I was not convinced of their total validity. It was for that reason that I asked the CIA to come before the subcommittee to set the record straight. The refusal of the agency to respond to the subcommittee's staff has led me to believe that at least some of the allegations have validity."

The *Houston Post* on Feb. 8 reported that federal authorities who were investigating the failure of a Kansas bank during the mid-1980s were advised to back off of a key figure in its collapse because, according to sources, he had ties to the CIA.

Rep. Wise calls for building infrastructure

In floor statements made on March 6, Rep. Robert Wise (D-W.Va.) attacked the Bush administration's negligence in allowing the nation's transportation infrastructure to collapse, and called infrastructural investment the real spur to raising productivity.

"In 1960," said Wise, "this country was investing over 4% of its Gross National Product in infrastructure. Today it is less than half of that. In real dollars, in constant dollars, in 1980 this country was investing in transportation infrastructure alone \$29.1 billion a year."

Focusing particularly on the degeneration of our highway system and bridges, Wise characterized the administration's budget as a "disinvestment budget." He attacked the idea that simply cutting the budget would

have any positive economic benefits for the nation. "If I can demonstrate to members," Wise continued, "that an increase in infrastructure investment, an increase in spending for highways, for airports, for bridges, for sewer systems, for all those things that are so important, will produce more return than we can get from simply a one-year reduction measure, we should be looking at that."

Wise noted that "there is an already demonstrated link between infrastructure spending and productivity increase. . . . Infrastructure, investment, increase in tax revenue, increases in competitiveness, go hand in hand. I want to invest in this country, Mr. Speaker. I think it is time to start with our nation's infrastructure."

Senate asks ban on loans to Red China

On March 1, the Senate passed a "Sense of the Senate" resolution by a vote of 79-18 calling on the President to oppose loans and financial assistance from international financial institutions, specifically the World Bank, to the People's Republic of China "which are not purely natural disaster relief or basic human needs, until it is clear that the human rights practices of the government of the People's Republic of China have dramatically improved."

"It is a very serious concern on the part of this senator," said Sen. Gordon Humphrey (R-N.H.), "that we have failed to take a tough and consistent moral stand against the repressive leadership in China, while at the same time alienating and abandoning the younger generations of Chinese leaders, a generation which, without doubt, will soon come to power and

which obviously favors democratic reform."

Rep. Traficant blasts CIA links to Al-Kassar

Rep. Jim Traficant (D-Ohio), appearing March 6 on the Phil Donahue Show, further exposed the CIA's involvement in drug trafficking by detailing the agency's collusion with Syrian narco-terrorist Monzer Al-Kassar.

Responding to a series of questions from relatives of passengers killed aboard PanAm Flight 103 who were in the audience, Traficant stated: "The CIA had come across an individual by the name of Monzer Al-Kassar. They found out that he had a drug run. But they also found out that he was the key individual helping to get those hostages released. So they were sort of turning their back, trying to get him to help with the hostages. And it was a local CIA crew. There's no question now. We don't know if Langley knew it was happening. We found out that we have such an octopus there, we wonder if anybody knows what's really going on. But the bottom line is, the [PanAm] report states that Turkish baggage handlers had taken a known narcotics bag, replaced it with the bomb that Ahmed Jibril had tried to get on—and that was the best place to get it on—and that led to Lockerbie, the disaster over Lockerbie. Now, what we want to know is this. The government is vehemently denying it. They denied the mining of the harbors in Nicaragua, the U-2 incident, the Bay of Pigs. I want to know what happened to that 103 flight, and I think the American people should know, and those families should know. And right now, our government is not giving us those facts."