

Congressional Closeup by William Jones

Croatia independence resolution gains support

House Concurrent Resolution 224, which calls for U.S. recognition of the independent republics of Slovenia and Croatia and urges President Bush to "work for the cessation of hostilities," is garnering increasing support in Congress. Introduced by Rep. Elton Gallegly (R-Calif.) on Oct. 22, the resolution now has 24 cosponsors—nine Democrats and 15 Republicans.

In comments on the House floor on Nov. 7, Rep. Frank Riggs (R-Calif.), one of the cosponsors of the resolution, demanded that the United States "no longer bear idle witness to the death and destruction that has left more than 1,000 people dead and an estimated 200,000 homeless in five months." Riggs noted that the European Community had "proven themselves impotent" in dealing with the Serbian aggression against Croatia, with the EC's negotiating efforts "proceeding at a snail's pace, while people die."

A similar Sense of the Senate resolution, introduced by Sen. Alfonse D'Amato (R-N.Y.) on Nov. 7, calls on the Bush administration to "establish diplomatic relations with the sovereign states of Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Macedonia." D'Amato, who characterized Serbian communist leader Slobodan Milosevic as the "butcher of Belgrade," emphasized that it was the responsibility of the United States to "stop this killer."

A similar resolution introduced by Sen. Al Gore (D-Tenn.) on Nov. 1 calls on the U.S. to recognize Croatia and Slovenia if Serbia fails to comply with the cease-fire, and to offer humanitarian assistance to the Republic of Croatia.

In an attempt to forestall action against the Serbian aggression, Rep. Helen Bentley (R-Md.), listing al-

leged violations committed by Croats against the Serbian minority in Croatia, appealed to her colleagues on Nov. 7 to "correct their vision" before "making pronouncements or assigning blame to one party or the other." Bentley repeated the Serbian argument that the Serbians were merely defending "minority rights." This flimsy pretext continues to be used despite the fact that Croatia officially recognizes the rights of the Serbian minority, and that Serbian military attacks have been aimed against Croatian cities with no significant Serbian minorities.

Senate demands more say on U.S.-Soviet treaties

Senate ratification of the CFE Treaty, which reduces conventional forces in Europe, and the START Treaty, which would limit strategic nuclear arms, is headed for a confrontation with the Executive Branch. The treaties were negotiated with central Soviet authorities before the formation of the newly independent republics, and the administration is insisting that the Senate agree to the treaties before any adjustments are made. Congressional leaders are demanding greater say in the final versions.

Sen. Joseph Biden (D-Del.), chairman of the Foreign Relations Subcommittee on European affairs, is seeking assurances that the administration will not make any changes without seeking congressional input. Biden is supported by Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Claiborne Pell (D-R.I.) and Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.), the ranking Republican on the committee. Helms had earlier expressed concern that the START Treaty was perhaps no longer

binding, since it had been negotiated with central Soviet authorities whose jurisdiction is doubtful, at best.

In Ukraine and Belorussia it is estimated that there are 37,000 pieces of Soviet equipment that are to be destroyed under the terms of the CFE Treaty. Although Ukrainian leaders have said that they will abide by the terms of the START and CFE accords, they have indicated that they want to be a party to the dismantling of equipment on their territory. Even with the elimination of nuclear weapons called for by the START Treaty, there will still be Soviet nuclear weapons remaining on Ukrainian territory.

Emergency Soviet fund meets heavy opposition

A proposal to include in the Defense Appropriations Bill a \$1 billion aid package for humanitarian assistance to the former Soviet republics, has met with a blistering critique in both houses. The proposal, which would also allow the White House to use the funds in deploying U.S. troops to deliver aid to the Soviet Union, has received little support from the White House, leaving Democrats to weather attacks of "bankrolling the Soviets" while the U.S. "suffers."

"We've got the votes" for the resolution, said Armed Services Committee Chairman Rep. Les Aspin (D-Wisc.), one of the authors of the proposal, "but we need some cover." House leaders have indicated they will drop the program if the White House continues to stonewall.

Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Sam Nunn (D-Ga.), a supporter of the proposal, appealed for support for the measure in floor comments on Nov. 7. "Today we have

an opportunity to invest wisely in a modest program that could produce dramatic dividends," claimed Nunn.

Sen. Alfonse D'Amato (R-N.Y.) objected that the "United States can't play Santa Claus to the Soviet Union" when Americans are hungry and jobless.

The bill also provides for the creation of a commission to help the Soviets with military conversion. Sen. Chris Dodd (D-Conn.) complained that U.S. defense workers have been "fighting for years [for conversion assistance] and haven't gotten a penny of it."

Mitchell compares Bush to Herbert Hoover

The comparison of George Bush to President Herbert Hoover, made months ago by presidential candidate Lyndon LaRouche, has begun to catch on. Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell (D-Me.) used the analogy in televised comments at the end of October.

"I see nothing in the present situation that is either menacing or warrants pessimism," said Hoover's secretary of the treasury, Andrew Mellon, in 1930," noted Mitchell. "There is nothing in the situation to be disturbed about," echoed his commerce secretary, Robert Lamont. Hoover himself predicted the crisis would end by the spring of 1930."

On Nov. 6, Rep. George Miller (D-Calif.) also indicated the striking similarities between Bush and Hoover. "I am reminded," said Miller, "of the unwarranted 'new era' optimism that filled President Hoover on the eve of the Great Depression. Amid stock crashes, mounting unemployment and business collapses, Hoover and his Cabinet maintained a rosy outlook

for the economy." Miller said that Bush failed "to acknowledge, or understand, that a true crisis exists."

Gore calls for speedy elimination of CFCs

Sen. Albert Gore (D-Tenn.) introduced a resolution Nov. 7 for speedier elimination of the production of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs). Gore and 23 other senators, citing recent reports that significant levels of ozone depletion have been observed for the first time in the summer months, also sent a letter to the White House demanding that President Bush accelerate the "phase-out schedule" for the elimination of "ozone-destroying substances."

The Clean Air Act provides that when "significant new evidence" is found about increased ozone depletion, the administration is required to speed up the phase-out of those chemicals allegedly responsible for that depletion.

The so-called ozone hole varies seasonally and is most affected by sunlight and volcanic activity. Loss of CFCs will disrupt the food chain, by causing the loss of cheap refrigeration, and lead to millions of deaths.

Gates confirmed to CIA post by wide margin

Whatever opposition there had been to the nomination of Robert Gates as head of the CIA folded as the Senate approved his nomination in a 64-31 vote on Nov. 5, with 22 Democrats joining with 42 Republicans.

The critical support given to the Gates nomination by Sen. Sam Nunn (D-Ga.), chairman of the Armed Services Committee, and Sen. David Boren (D-Okla.), chairman of the Se-

lect Committee on Intelligence, helped get the support of many southern Democrats and took the steam out of the move by the Democratic leadership to use the nomination as a sounding-board for probing the Iran-Contra affair.

Gates's apologies for any mistakes he may have made in the past, combined with assurances that he would agree to closer scrutiny over the work of the agency by congressional committees, helped secure the support of Nunn and Boren.

Depression threatens NAFTA, supporters admit

Congressional supporters of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) told a Border Trade Alliance conference on Oct. 28 that the agreement could be threatened if the U.S. "recession" drags into next year. Supporters nevertheless urged that negotiations move forward, with some fearing that hesitation would doom the agreement.

In a vote on NAFTA, "the recession will be a factor in how the vote comes out," said Rep. Jim Kolbe (R-Ariz.). "Emotions on the issues dealing with the economy will be very high" in the elections, he added, indicating that the time Congress has to review a treaty under "fast track" procedures will make consideration of the treaty difficult in 1992. But, "if at all possible, we should do it in 1992," urged Kolbe. "I'm concerned about losing the momentum of this agreement as it drifts through 1992 and into January 1993."

NAFTA supporter Sen. Phil Gramm (R-Tex.) admitted that any vote now would be closer than the vote in May when Congress granted fast track authority for the NAFTA negotiations.