

Congressional Closeup by William Jones

Senate passes Contra aid bill in close vote

On Aug. 11, the Senate narrowly adopted a measure to provide \$27 million in "humanitarian aid" to the Nicaraguan Contras, after first rejecting a Republican proposal which would have provided military aid. The measure was attached to a Defense Appropriations Bill, and President Reagan has threatened to veto it if, as expected, the House attaches arms control language that he can't accept. Speaking of the Democratic proposal, White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater said, "We don't like it. It doesn't do the job."

The debate surrounding the measure was subject to considerable confusion. Senate Majority Leader Robert Byrd (D-W.Va.) expected most Republicans to back the Democratic plan, which he had been drafting for weeks in an effort to achieve a bipartisan consensus. Senate Minority Leader Robert Dole (R-Kans.), who was faced with a rebellion in his own ranks, could not support the Democratic plan, since he had not secured White House approval.

Byrd became so angry at one point that he accused the White House of negotiating in bad faith. "I'm sick and tired of dealing with a White House that has no more steel in its guts than this White House has," said Byrd.

The bill provides for the possibility of military aid to the Contras only on a request from the President, in which he certified that the Nicaraguan government had caused "an emergency situation in Central America" that was having "a critical impact on peace and stability of that region." The Senate would then have to vote on the request before aid would be forthcoming.

The uneasy compromise will

probably guarantee that the Contra issue will remain an important focus during the fall election campaign.

Helms questions usefulness of NATO

Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.), the erstwhile crusty warrior for the national security and against communism, has once again taken up his cudgel—against U.S. allies. In a speech on Aug. 9, he denounced the Germans, and even suggested that NATO has outlived its usefulness, and the United States should pull out.

"The purpose of NATO and the OECD," he said, "is to provide for the defense and economic cooperation of the West. If these organizations cannot fulfill this purpose through real and effective cooperation in denying the Soviet Empire the ability to wage war against the free world, the United States would do well to rethink its commitments to these organizations."

Helms ventured over his head into the murky waters of history, comparing the latest deal between the Kremlin and West German financiers, involving 500 million deutschmarks, to the way the German General Staff and German banks had supported the Russian Revolution, by financing Lenin and setting up agreements with the Soviets immediately following the revolution.

Helms attributed this to a Pan-German strategy to dominate Eastern Europe and Russia, and claimed that the present moves by West German financial interests are of the same nature, although pointing out (and leaving unexplained by his "theory") that among the participants in this bond

deal are Citibank, Shearson Lehman Hutton, Salomon Brothers, and Morgan Stanley.

Are these Anglo-American banks part of a Pan-German strategy? Perhaps Senator Helms must rethink his theory.

Why does this anti-communist crusader often end up doing a such damned good job for Moscow?

After the drought: locusts and grasshoppers

In floor statements at the end of July, after visiting the drought area in South Dakota, Republican Sen. Larry Pressler warned that grasshoppers and locusts could follow in the wake of the drought. "If the drought continues," said Pressler, "we could have a real problem with grasshoppers and locusts; counties and states may have to expand programs to assist farmers and ranchers control grasshoppers."

Pressler reminded his fellow legislators that this was not the first time that they had had such problems in the area. The Mormons during the last century were hit by a plague of grasshoppers and were saved by seagulls who came and ate the grasshoppers. Today in Salt Lake City there is a huge statue of a seagull commemorating the event.

"In the Old Testament," continued Pressler, "the Pharaoh had no defense against the grasshoppers and locusts. Locusts are mentioned throughout the Bible. Indeed, in Nahum 3:17: 'Thy crowned are as the locusts, and thy captains as the great grasshoppers, which came in the hedges in the cold day but when the Sun ariseth they flee away, and their place is not known where they are.' This is exactly the

case in parts of South Dakota.”

“Grasshoppers,” he said, “normally feed on grass in conservation reserve acres, rangeland, or other areas. With the drought, they are forced to move into nearby, small grain or corn fields. . . . It will be a bigger problem next year if we do not take preventive action this year.” Pressler emphasized that the cost of spraying would also have to be taken into account in any type of drought relief package worked out by the Congress and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Joint resolution would abrogate Panama Treaty

A joint resolution was introduced on Aug. 10 by Rep. Phil Crane (R-Ill.) and Sen. Steven Symms (R-Idaho), to abrogate the Panama Canal Treaty of 1977, which is to transfer ownership of the Panama Canal to Panama after 1999.

The Crane-Symms Resolution makes several claims as the pretext for abrogating the treaty. It claims, with a bit of sophistry, that Panama's Gen. Omar Torrijos did not have the power to “enter into international treaties and agreements” according to the Constitution of Panama. The resolution also claims that the treaty does not explicitly transfer sovereignty from the United States back to Panama, and therefore cannot annul the earlier 1903 treaty, which gave the United States sovereignty over the Panama Canal.

Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) has said that he would be a co-sponsor of the bill. Since U.S. plans for overthrowing the government of Gen. Manuel Noriega in Panama have been foiled time and again, the professional Noriega-bashers in the Congress have

decided to try another flank to try to destabilize the Panamanian focal point for Ibero-American integration.

Let Gorbachov renounce Hitler-Stalin Pact

On the occasion of the upcoming 49th anniversary of the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact on Aug. 23, Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) made reference on Aug. 10 to the secret protocols that allowed the Soviets to annex the Baltic states, and thus eliminate in one fell swoop the nations of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia, which have remained under Soviet domination to this day.

“Gorbachov must renounce the non-aggression pact and attempt to undo the damage that the pact has inflicted in the past half-century,” said Helms. “The non-aggression pact is a legacy of Stalin and the terror that surrounded his regime. The removal of such legacies is a prerequisite for any real *glasnost* to occur in the Soviet Union.”

The non-aggression pact as well as the secret protocols were read into the *Congressional Record*.

Dornan mocks Dukakis's foreign policy claims

In comments on the House floor on Aug. 9, Rep. Robert Dornan (R-Calif.) ridiculed presidential candidate Michael Dukakis's claims that he is closer to President Reagan's current views on U.S.-Soviet relations than is Vice President Bush. “If Dukakis wins,” said Dornan, “freedom fighters' efforts around the world are dead, and Dukakis even once drew his finger across his throat and said, ‘finished,’

for these young men and women, some of them teenagers, who lay their bodies on the line and die for the freedom of their country.”

Dornan went on to say that “Dukakis has completely fogged his whole image, and did it with some skill at the Democratic Convention.”

Speaking to the National Strategy Forum in Chicago, Republican Congressman Jack Kemp (N.Y.) had pointed out five dangers in the Dukakis foreign policy: endangering deterrence; unsound arms control policies; giving up Central America; unsound defense spending; and undermining the Strategic Defense Initiative.

Move to make Jerusalem Israel's capital

The *New York Times* reports that the new State Department telephone directory “has moved the Israeli capital to Jerusalem, with the other Foreign Service post there, Tel Aviv.” Quoting Sen. Daniel Moynihan (D-N.Y.) who says that “Jerusalem is now a post with a country,” the article notes how earlier editions of Department directories had listed Jerusalem as a posting in Israel, but separately, between its alphabetical neighbors, Japan and Jordan.

This occurs in the context of behind-the-scenes negotiations among the Soviet Union, Israel, and the United States, aiming at making Jerusalem the Israeli capital (see article, p. 40). Senator Moynihan has tried unsuccessfully in the past to pass legislation requiring that the United States move its embassy from Tel Aviv. Nancy Beck, a spokeswoman for the State Department, said that the Department “does take the senator's opinions seriously.”