

Eye on Washington by Richard Cohen



Where Zbig is working now

A certain kind of eeriness pervades any conversation here when the name Jimmy Carter is brought up. Jimmy has become the "forgotten man," or, more precisely, some people just don't want to remember. Official Washington has an efficient way of discarding what it considers its refuse, such as the Nixons, Hayses, and Abscam victims. But in the Carter case, Washington tells itself with actual relief, thank God he's gone and we can forget him.

What caught my eye recently, however, is that the member of Carter's entourage publicly acknowledged as the weirdest of all, Zbigniew Brzezinski, has remained. Zbig has landed a top job at one of the leading pseudo-conservative foreign-policy think tanks in D.C., the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), located in downtown Washington. What is more interesting is that CSIS is the home base of Henry A. Kissinger, or "HAK," as he is called at the center. Besides HAK and Zbig, CSIS houses a large number of Reagan foreign-policy transition

team leaders and high-level influencers, such as HAK's close friend David Abshire, director of the center and transition team chief on foreign intelligence.

Last week I decided to peer into the center to see what new foreign-policy suggestions they were offering the new administration. On the morning of Feb. 27, the center gave its stage to Prof. William Paddock. Widely portrayed as a population expert, he was speaking on, of all things, El Salvador. Paddock looks like a Midwestern farmer but his message would be congenial to Pol Pot. "El Salvador's problem is not land reform, industrialization, or even the Russians. It's overpopulated. What we will see in El Salvador is one military dictatorship after another until its population is halved.

"Technology is not the solution, it's the problem: more technology means more misery." Challenged for a solution by attendees from the AFL-CIO's land reform operation in Salvador, he said, "Nothing can be done. The land determines how it will be used, and there has never been a successful land reform in human history."

When members of the audience brought up examples of developing countries such as Taiwan and South Korea, whose populations have grown with industrialization and have remained relatively stable, Paddock shot back, "Oh, that's not my area. I'm an expert on tropical agronomy." He added, "For those who happen to be concerned about the political situation [in El Salvador], I would suggest that the best thing would be to back the current military and start working with the opposition immediately, and then start working with the opposition to the opposition." At that point one attendee, William Colby, got up and walked out.

George Will loves Islamic fundamentalists

Columnist George F. Will was the featured speaker the day before at CSIS's conference on U.S.-Egyptian relations. He managed to incite a virtual riot of Egyptian government, embassy, and Al Ahram Club officials when he praised the heroics of the pharaohs as exemplifying Egypt's non-Arab national character. This, he declared, is why Egypt can and must break with the Palestinians.

Will, a member of the new Committee for the Free World, also accused the PLO of being the instruments of a Soviet plot—the same formulation promoted by Maggie Thatcher during her Washington visit that week. The author of the concept is Lord Bethel, the key London controller of those great democrats, the Afghan rebels. He and Will, in a manner described by some intelligence sources as "crazy," portray the rebels as legitimate Muslim nationalists, who, unlike Palestinians, must be supported.

Finally, Kurt Biedenkopf, chairman of West Germany's Christian Democratic Union opposition party, delivered a speech at the center on Feb. 25, calling for a year-and-a-half wage freeze for West German workers as the solution to the economic crisis there. Biedenkopf ended his address with the suggestion that Madison Avenue techniques could be used more extensively to convince everyone to accept a lower standard of living.

I asked Biedenkopf what he thought about Chancellor Helmut Schmidt's persistent assault on high U.S. interest rates. He said that the government is merely attacking the Bundesbank—not Federal Reserve Chairman Volcker. This line continues to pop up here ever since.