

Elephants and Donkeys by Kathleen Klenetsky

Reagan in Disneyland

The world economy is a shambles. The international strategic situation is such that the Soviet Union fired six unarmed SS-20 missiles at the United States in a "practice exercise." And conflicts in the Persian Gulf and elsewhere are threatening to erupt into full-scale regional wars.

But you would never know that this is the state of global affairs from watching Ronald Reagan's television campaign ads. In fact, the ads are so far removed from reality that it's hard to differentiate them from Mary Poppins reruns.

The ad campaign is the product of a bevy of Madison Avenue advertising pros who are using Pepsi Cola's superslick commercials as a model. The theme of the ads is that Americans never had it so good, that Reagan has been able to turn back the clock to the simpler, happier times of the 1950s.

In 1980, Reagan's ads were just the opposite, showing him in the pose of a leader, speaking about the issues. The new ads will not show Reagan himself, but "scenes intended to summon up the good feeling that his aides think Middle America associates with him."

The series will consume at least half of the \$47 million Reagan campaign budget, and will be performed mostly by professional actors.

Palace Guard tells Reagan: downplay SDI

The tone of the commercials is just one sign of what's wrong with Reagan's reelection campaign. On the advice of James Baker III and the rest of the Palace Guard, who have told the President not to pursue "unpopular" issues during the election campaign,

Reagan has retreated from every positive initiative he'd previously undertaken.

This is most apparent—and most dangerous—in the case of the administration's beam-defense program, the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI). Reagan has downplayed the program, refusing to fight for needed funds, in favor of a strategy that calls for pushing the program *after* his re-election. And this despite mounting evidence that the Soviets are making rapid progress in developing their own ABM system.

Recently a senior administration official admitted that a decision had been made to put the SDI on the back burner because of election-year pressures. The official told a mid-June seminar on arms control sponsored by the Aspen Institute: "There was a conscious decision not to invest more in it [the SDI] this year, because it's an election year. [Reagan] has low-keyed it this year, but that does not reflect a lessened interest, because he does believe it's a moral imperative."

If the SDI is such a "moral imperative," why didn't Reagan put up a bigger fight? Several recently published polls have shown that the overwhelming majority of the American population favors the proposal. This suggests that if Reagan had gone straight to the public on the issue, he could have easily trounced his opponents and educated Americans on the key strategic issues of the day.

Instead, the President bowed to the Palace Guard. This gave the Kremlin's collaborators in the Democratic Establishment, the scientific community, and the Kissinger wing of the GOP an open field to agitate against the beam-weapons program. As a result, the paltry amount requested by the administration for the SDI has been cut even further by Congress.

Democratic Platform: Moscow's delight

The Democratic Party unveiled its draft platform June 18, to the unbounded delight of the Kremlin. The platform calls for canceling the MX and B-1 programs, instituting a nuclear-weapons freeze, and opening negotiations with Moscow for the purpose of withdrawing the U.S. Pershing and cruise missiles from Western Europe.

The statement takes a hard line against the Strategic Defense Initiative, charging that it "would create a vulnerable and provocative shield that would lull our nation into a false sense of security." The platform includes elements of the so-called Wiesner-Cranston plank, drafted by MIT pseudo-scientist Jerome Wiesner and Sen. Alan Cranston (D-Calif.) with help from McGeorge Bundy, which mandates the Democratic President to call for a mutual freeze on the production and deployment of nuclear weapons systems upon inauguration.

The platform also advocates "reproductive rights" for women and "equal justice" for homosexuals.

Yet the Democratic Party freezemeniks were not able to block out testimony from spokesmen for the rank and file of the party, which by no means endorses Moscow's line. Representatives from the National Democratic Policy Committee, the party's pro-defense and pro-industry political action group, testified in Houston, New York, and Washington against the platform and in favor of the SDI.

In the testimony in Washington, D.C., NDPC representative Ronald Kokinda drew applause from party regulars when he demanded that the party "halt its attempts to 'out-Chamberlain' Neville Chamberlain's appeasement of the 1930s, in its dealings with the Soviet Union."