

Bush picks a national security threat

by Kathleen Klenetsky

"I thought I was having a nightmare when Bush started bringing Kissinger and his gang back into power, but now I'm almost afraid to wake up." That was the response of one defense expert to the announcement that Richard Burt had been named the principal U.S. arms negotiator. He added, "It is incomprehensible to me how someone who leaked national security secrets to the media, virulently opposed the SDI, and has worked hand-in-glove with Armand Hammer can get appointed to a position where he will be privy to the most sensitive data imaginable. It just doesn't compute."

Unfortunately, it does "compute," given the direction that the Bush administration is moving. Bush's nomination of Burt fits perfectly with his administration's eagerness to strike a deal with Moscow, at whatever cost.

Burt may face some rough sledding during his imminent Senate confirmation hearings. A near-hysterical commentary in the April 2 *Sunday Times* of London charged that "a scurrilous whispering campaign is under way in Washington to blacken the character and record of Mr. Richard Burt. . . . The campaign could become more audible during Mr. Burt's impending confirmation hearings in the Senate, where one or two hard-right senators might ask some questions about Mr. Burt's past personal life, based on some unfounded allegations that have been touted around Washington for years." Insisting that "nobody is better qualified to be Mr. Bush's right-hand man on arms-control" than Burt, the *Sunday Times* called for his critics to be "silenced."

According to several sources, Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) and his network may be trying to block the nomination, although Helms's pathetic posturing on Lawrence Eagleburger's appointment as deputy secretary of state doesn't give much cause for hope. Helms will probably end up voting for Burt, like he did for Henry Kissinger's Eagleburger.

However, if any senator does have the brains and courage to oppose Burt's appointment, he will have no dearth of material to use against him.

Although the *Sunday Times* notably failed to mention the nature of the allegations now circulating against Burt, it compared them to those which undid John Tower's nomination as defense secretary, implying that they have to do with some sexual or related scandal.

Well, Burt did engage in some "swinging" behavior in the fleshpots of Europe during his stint as Reagan administration ambassador to West Germany. Burt was often seen in the company of Princess Gloria von Thurn und Taxis, traveling from one punk rock dive to another.

But questionable personal behavior is just one area which Burt's opponents could raise. His stand on strategic policy issues is a far more important—and fruitful—area that should be pursued. As the defense expert cited above indicated, Burt's policy record provides plenty of material to prove his unsuitability for any government post—much less chief arms negotiator.

Just for starters is the case of Burt's notorious leaking of vital national security information in 1978, while working for the *New York Times*—where he was widely known as a mouthpiece for then national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski. Burt wrote an article exposing classified details about the Chalet satellite system, used by the United States to detect Soviet violations of arms-control treaties, which nearly destroyed U.S.-Norwegian relations.

This dirty piece of work was brought to the fore by several senators during 1982 confirmation hearings on Burt's nomination as assistant secretary of state for politico-military affairs, and again in 1985, when Burt was named ambassador to Bonn. In explaining his opposition to Burt, Sen. Barry Goldwater (R-Ariz.)

of very highly classified material that nearly disrupted the relations between Norway and this country." Sen. Jesse Helms stated that Burt's action, "in publishing sensitive classified data . . . compromised his ability to serve the U.S. government [and] compromised our intelligence data."

As his subsequent actions proved, Burt's leak was hardly a youthful indiscretion. During his years at the State Department, Burt became one of the most rabid foes of the SDI within the administration, arguing that it was unworkable and should be considered a bargaining chip, at best. He also successfully fought for the Reagan administration to adopt a policy of "interim restraint" on the SALT II treaty, meaning that the United States should continue to abide by its restrictions, despite reams of documentation of massive Soviet violations.

Additionally, Burt collaborated closely with Armand Hammer to persuade Reagan that Mikhail Gorbachov was a new kind of Soviet leader, interested in reform and better U.S.-Soviet relations, to whom the United States should make significant concessions.

As ambassador to West Germany, Burt played into the Soviet strategy for neutralizing Germany and destroying NATO, by courting the Green Party, among other things.

Were Burt's nomination to be blocked at this time, it would send a desperately needed message to George Bush to stop trying to outdo Neville Chamberlain. But whether there is anyone in the U.S. Senate with the moral and political gumption to stop Burt, is questionable indeed.