

Congressional Closeup by William Jones

Helms: Use petroleum reserves for Lithuania

Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) will submit a bill which would mandate the use of the U.S. strategic petroleum reserves for relief to Lithuania, which has been cut off from its supply of oil and 80% of its supply of natural gas by the Soviet Union.

Helms also sent out a "Dear Colleague" letter to his fellow senators, proposing that Lithuanian President Vytautas Landsbergis be nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Another letter addressed to President Bush and signed by 31 senators, which was circulated by the office of Sen. Don Riegle (D-Mich.), encouraged the President to let Gorbachov know that the "Soviet use of force, under any pretext, to thwart Lithuania's peaceful drive for independence, or continued Soviet refusal to engage in good-faith negotiations with the democratically elected Lithuanian government, will have serious negative implications for U.S.-Soviet relations."

Much ado over elusive 'peace dividend'

Some liberal Democrats are demanding the allocation of the "peace dividend," the sum of money they assume will be available as U.S. defense cuts are implemented, to be spent on domestic programs.

Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.), who, along with Sen. Alan Cranston (D-Calif.), wants to allocate this (non-existent) quantity for a variety of social programs to thereby regain their Democratic Party "basic identity." Senator Cranston said that the "lion's share of the peace dividend" should be spent in six areas: education, health, drug control, housing, environmental protec-

tion, and public works.

Sen. Phil Gramm (R-Tex.) argues the money should be returned to the people in the form of lower taxes, while Sen. Warren Rudman (R-N.H.), the co-author of the debacle best termed the Gramm-Rudman-Gorbachov budget reduction plan, favors a new Marshall Plan to strengthen the new democracies in Eastern Europe.

In a speech in the upscale Georgetown neighborhood recently, Sen. Kennedy claimed that the "end of the cold war" would make it possible to "change our politics." The "peace dividend" debate is over nothing, since the cuts proposed for the defense budget will cost more than they save in the short term. And with the winds of glasnost blowing cold these days, the proposed destruction of U.S. defense capabilities will soon appear as the utmost folly to most U.S. citizens.

Gorbachov warns: Don't interfere in Lithuania

A Senate delegation to the Soviet Union, led by Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell (D-Me.), was warned on April 12 by Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachov against preaching "sermons" to the Soviet Union, referring to their criticisms of Soviet actions against Lithuania, since this would "cause resentment in our society."

Gorbachov met with the delegation for more than two hours and said that the economic crisis was the "most critical stage of perestroika." The Soviet leader said the Lithuanians were acting provocatively, leaving less and less room for a political approach to resolving Soviet objections to their March 11 independence declaration. "You don't need to teach us that political methods are better," he said. "But

not everything depends on us."

Mitchell told Gorbachov that any recourse to force in Lithuania would reverse détente and have "grave consequences" for U.S.-Soviet relations.

Gorbachov also told the senators that he wants "to speed up the work on START," the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty, and that he hoped Secretary of State James Baker will not arrive empty-handed in Moscow on May 16 for pre-summit talks.

Committee invites DoJ victims to testify

On April 11, the House Banking Committee invited four victims of the Department of Justice's witchhunt against savings and loan institutions to testify in Dallas, Texas. The *Wall Street Journal* said the congressional committee was attempting to gauge the effectiveness of the DoJ's Bank Fraud Task Force.

Invited to appear were four former owners of bankrupt Texas thrifts: Thomas Gaubert of Independent American Savings, Edwin McBirney III of Sunbelt Savings, Don Dixon of Vernon Savings, and Jarrett Woods of Western Savings. All have been the subject of extensive DoJ investigations, although only Gaubert has been charged with criminal wrongdoing, and was acquitted. None of the four agreed to appear.

Moynihan revives national identification card plan

Sen. Daniel Moynihan (D-N.Y.), at a hearing of his Senate Finance Social Security and Family Policy Subcommittee, tried to revive one of his pet projects of mandating "a plastic, counterfeit-proof Social Security

card" that could be used by employers to verify that job applicants are citizens or legal residents entitled to work in the United States. Moynihan is marketing his Orwellian idea, popular in such liberal totalitarian states as Sweden, as a solution to discrimination against foreign-looking job applicants.

Both Commissioner of Immigration and Naturalization Gene McNary and Social Security Deputy Commissioner Louis D. Enoff warned against converting the Social Security card into some kind of federal identity card. "It's important we don't come up with a national identification card that's going to be carried, that is going to cause people to feel they live under Big Brother," McNary said.

Defense budget on a downhill slope

House Democratic leaders on April 18 agreed to a compromise fiscal year 1991 budget plan which imperils the development of future defense programs. The proposal was billed as a compromise with more radical liberal Democrats who want even greater cuts in defense.

The Democratic proposal claims to cut the deficit by \$36 billion. It would cut \$7.9 billion in the administration's direct spending request for the Pentagon, but would seriously cut future spending. It would set Pentagon spending authority at \$285.9 billion, \$29 billion less than that needed to keep pace with inflation and \$20.9 billion less than the requested. Spending authority represents approval for federal agencies to enter into spending commitments, while outlays are sums actually spent.

A cut in spending authority would prevent Pentagon officials from ini-

tiating programs that would result in higher outlays in future years, sabotaging most of the more promising future defense technologies. "We can't do all the cuts we want this year," said liberal Democrat Rep. Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.), "so let's be damn-well sure to make the cuts in future years."

On April 20, the House Budget Committee voted approval of a \$1.2 trillion FY91 spending plan along straight party lines. It accommodated the liberal Democrats by lowering the spending authority from the proposed \$285.9 billion to \$283 billion. House leadership aides expressed confidence that the budget will win House approval without significant changes.

Conservative Democrats were not happy. "It gives a lot of us conservatives real heartburn," said Rep. Jerry Huckaby (D-La.). "There isn't a consensus among us whether we can support it."

Nunn calls for troop cuts in Europe

Sen. Sam Nunn (D-Ga.), chairman of the Armed Services Committee, called on April 19 for increased reductions in defense spending over the next five years by withdrawing 100,000 more troops and all battlefield nuclear arms from Europe, and scaling back the Navy by two to four aircraft carrier battle groups while putting more ships into the reserves.

Nunn said U.S. nuclear deterrence against Soviet attack "should be achievable at significantly lower levels of weaponry." Thousands of "ground-based nuclear missiles and nuclear artillery" shells in Europe "should be phased out." He claimed that a nuclear umbrella could be maintained in Europe by basing "air-deliv-

ered nuclear bombs and missiles" at airfields throughout the European NATO countries. Addressing the Navy, Nunn said the fact that "virtually all deployable ships have to either be at sea or be able to get under way within days becomes increasingly unnecessary and unaffordable."

Dole criticized for mooting Israel aid cut

Senate Minority Leader Robert Dole (R-Kan.) has come under attack by some of his colleagues for having suggested a cut in aid to Israel.

In an interview in the April 13 *Jerusalem Post*, Dole accused American Jewish leaders of "selfishness" on the aid issue. While making a week-long trip to the Middle East earlier this month, he said that a Senate resolution March 22 that called for U.S. recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital was a mistake that was disrupting peace efforts in the region.

In a joint letter to Dole, House Republican Whip Newt Gingrich (Ga.), Vin Weber (R-Minn.), and Bill McCollum (R-Fla.), members of the House GOP leadership, urged Dole to reconsider his comments. "I think it goes without saying that stereotyping people ethnically is not acceptable to Republicans," said Weber. "It's not what our party stands for. Further, it's simply not accurate."

Dole denied he urged repeal of the resolution but admitted that he thought it was a mistake to pass it, calling the remarks that appeared in the *Jerusalem Post* "out-of-context excerpts." "The clear context of the interview was my assertion that the leaders of the pro-Israel lobby were shortsighted and selfish, in their zealous efforts to protect Israel's aid levels at any cost," said Dole.