

## **Congressional Closeup** by William Jones

### **Gonzalez seeks files on Kennedy assassination**

Rep. Henry B. Gonzalez (D-Tex.) announced Jan. 14 that he will introduce legislation to open the files of the House Select Committee on Assassinations, the committee set up to investigate the assassinations of President John Kennedy and Martin Luther King.

Although the committee in 1979 published 27 volumes of material on the Kennedy and King assassinations, they nevertheless sealed 848 boxes of material and stored them in the National Archives. The records were sealed and were not to be opened until 2029, on the argument that the raw data contained unsubstantiated allegations, material embarrassing to innocent individuals, and matters of national security.

Gonzalez, who was a personal friend of the assassinated President, was instrumental in the creation of the House Select Committee on Assassinations, but later resigned as chairman when the scope of the investigation was changed and he felt he did not have the backing of the House leadership. He was replaced by Rep. Louis Stokes (D-Ohio), who chaired the committee at the time the decision was made to seal the documents. The renewed debate over the Kennedy assassination, sparked by the recent Oliver Stone film "JFK," has led to renewed interest in the investigation files.

The Gonzalez move is being supported by Sen. Christopher Dodd (D-Conn.) and by Rep. Harold Ford (D-Tenn.), both of whom served on the assassinations committee. Gonzalez said he had not been aware that the records of the investigation had been sealed and that he found that measure to be "abhorrent." He said that he would contact Stokes to have him co-sponsor the resolution.

Earlier in January, Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.), the brother of the murdered President, also called for the files to be opened.

The assassinations committee concluded in 1979 that Kennedy was the victim of a "probable" conspiracy involving a second gunman. This conclusion was at odds with the results of the Warren Commission, which concluded that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone in murdering the President—a conclusion which was pilloried in the Stone film.

### **Mitchell calls for cuts in defense spending**

Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell (D-Me.) called on Jan. 17 for cuts of \$100 billion or more in defense spending over the next five years to help finance middle-income tax cuts, anti-recession aid to state and local governments, and incentives for business investment and home ownership. He spoke at a luncheon at the National Press Club.

Mitchell's proposals anticipate a short-term increase in the \$350 billion deficit projected for this year to fund the "stimulus package." The Mitchell proposals would break the budget agreement worked out last year with the White House, permitting a shift of money from defense to domestic accounts. "The first step is to change the 1990 budget agreement," Mitchell said. "The Cold War is over. It's time to take down the artificial budget walls which prevent us from shifting priorities from abroad to here at home."

The cuts proposed by Mitchell include halting the production of the B-2 "Stealth" bomber, reducing funding for the Strategic Defense Initiative by \$15 billion, cutting troop strength by

\$15-20 billion, cutting \$20 billion from operations and maintenance, \$10 billion from nuclear weapons production, and \$15 billion from conventional weapons programs.

Democrats hope such cuts will enable them to squeeze out the funding needed for an income tax cut for the middle class, an election gambit, and will help alleviate the effects of the depression.

Critics have pointed out that, since much of military production represents an important part of U.S. high-tech capabilities, the cuts will reduce U.S. industrial capabilities, the only tool the country has in overcoming the depression.

Responding to attacks by President Bush, who criticized Mitchell's opposition to the Gulf war, Mitchell said that Bush "sounds like a panicky candidate in a losing campaign for the presidency rather than a President confidently seeking reelection. . . . Not since Herbert Hoover occupied the White House has a President been so consistently wrong in his judgment of the economy."

### **De la Garza appeals for safe water**

Rep. Kika de la Garza (D-Tex.), chairman of the House Agriculture Committee, appealed for steps to provide safe water for 200,000 Americans living along the U.S.-Mexico border, in a Jan. 8 letter to William K. Reilly, head of the Environmental Protection Agency.

The EPA is scheduled to release a proposal for the border region in February entitled "Integrated Environmental Plan for the Mexico-U.S. Border Area." Reilly, formerly head of the Conservation Foundation, has

consistently opposed water works development anywhere in the United States.

The U.S. Geological Survey warned in the 1970s that more people should not locate in the Rio Grande River Basin unless there were new water development projects; they were not built. De la Garza's wishy washy requests are to "establish a fund for the construction of basic water and wastewater infrastructure," and to "establish a loan and grant fund for water and wastewater hookups" for those who cannot pay for it.

## **A**tlantic Monthly editor urges end to Jap-bashing

In testimony before the House Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs on Jan. 14, James Fallows, the Washington editor of *Atlantic Monthly* magazine, said the United States should cease to "bully, cajole, force, or trick the Japanese" into changing their mode of operations. Calling the Japanese practices "unfair," Fallows said, "was neither accurate nor useful."

Fallows called the differences between the U.S. and Japanese systems a reflection of "a different economic philosophy rather than an unfair application of our philosophy and rules." Some parts of Japan's performance, especially its very high investment rates, "are unquestionably admirable," he said.

The postwar system of free trade, Fallows explained, "was not America's principle or policy during its years of most rapid industrial growth in the late 19th and early 20th century." Rather, the economic doctrine which encourages the cheapest possible imports from anywhere regardless

of their effects on U.S. domestic industries, "was applied as a retrospective explanation for American strength only after World War II, at a time when American industry had no rival anywhere.

"The country needed to strengthen its industries to avoid being colonized in the 19th century," Fallows noted. The Japanese, who wish "to strengthen the industrial and technological base within Japan's borders or under control by Japanese-owned firms," are doing the same thing in their own way. "The United States should have a plan, rather than acting in spasms," he said, referring to President Bush's recent visit to Japan. The U.S. should attend to its own domestic problems, he insisted, rather than trying to force the Japanese to change their behavior.

Fallows called for a more "supportive government policy" toward industry. He cited the aircraft and aerospace industries, the medical equipment and pharmaceutical industries (government funding for health), and agriculture as examples where such a policy has reaped tremendous benefits.

## **G**ates: U.S. concerns will target Third World

CIA director Robert Gates indicated that the new mission of the U.S. intelligence services would be to clamp down on technology transfer to Third World countries, in testimony before the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee on Jan. 15. With the demise of the Soviet Union, Gates claimed, the major threat facing the U.S. is nuclear proliferation.

The Gates testimony confirms that the Bush administration is proceeding to use the proliferation issue to target high-technology exports to Third

World nations and introduce, in effect, technological apartheid. "Most of these technologies are so-called dual-use technologies. This makes it difficult to restrict trade in them, because we would be limiting the ability of developing nations to modernize," Gates said.

Gates pointed to the collapsing economy of the former Soviet Union and the emigration of Soviet scientists to Third World nations as particularly threatening. The willingness of the former Soviet republics to export high-tech products was also cited as a target of U.S. intelligence interests.

"We expect to see attempts by the former Soviet Union's defense industrial sector to market dual-use technologies of concern, notably for nuclear power and space launch vehicles," Gates said. "Keeping track of burgeoning foreign military capabilities will be one of our greatest challenges in years ahead. The potential for technological surprise in the Third World is growing, as some international restrictions on foreign access to dual-use technologies are loosened."

Gates also indicated that, in addition to increasing surveillance of technology transfers to Third World nations, the administration was also intent on continuing the economic strangulation of Iraq until Saddam Hussein is overthrown. "In our opinion," said Gates, "Iraq will remain a primary proliferation threat at least as long as Saddam remains in power."

Gates also targeted North Korea as "our most urgent national security threat in East Asia," downplaying the recent agreement signed between North and South Korea to make the peninsula "nuclear-free." Such an agreement, Gates continued, would not have any value until it was clear what type of inspection regime the North Koreans would be willing to accept.