

National News

U.S. press lying about Afghanistan, says IPS director

The American press and government officials are doing a good deal of lying about what is happening in Afghanistan, says Fred Halliday, writing "On Afghanistan, with Skepticism" from London. "The first casualty of war is always truth..." he states, after reviewing the facts, and comparing U.S. reports.

Halliday is assistant European director of the Transnational Institute, Amsterdam, the international affiliate of the Institute for Policy Studies (IPS) in Washington, D.C.

"Reporting in the American press has exaggerated the overall level of Afghan opposition to the Soviet intervention, the degree to which the Afghan Army has collapsed, and the offensive capacities of the rebels," he declares flatly. There may be some bloody fighting after the snow melts, continues Halliday, and there have been protests in Kabul. "But ... we should be a bit skeptical of the claims put out by Afghan rebel sources or by the 'reliable sources in Kabul' on whose say-so much reporting is based."

"A revealing article by a British journalist ... related how U.S. Embassy officials providing briefings in Kabul were systematically fabricating stories about Soviet casualties. Then there is Zia Nasri, an Afghan rebel leader who recently arrived in the United States, has stressed that newfound 'unity' of the Afghan rebel groups has more to do with the prospects of Saudi funding than with any real harmony.

"... The exile leaders do not control tribal forces active in the country and ... many of the rebels are concerned about loot rather than a sustained military campaign. ... Western reporters have as a whole been more than reticent about the training given to Afghan rebels in a number of Pakistani military

camp both by Pakistani and to a lesser extent Chinese personnel, while giving too much credence to the disintegration of the Afghan Army. It is worth pointing out that it was the Afghan Army more than the Russians that was patrolling the streets" in Kabul during the protests, says Halliday.

He concludes, "The Moslem world's main concern remains not Afghanistan but Palestine, and if America is serious about guaranteeing uninterrupted ties with the oil producers, then it would be better advised to exert its influence upon Israel to bring about an acceptable solution of the Arab-Israel dispute, namely a two-state solution.

"Many of the basic premises of current American foreign policy thinking are therefore rather questionable. They amount to official wheel-spinning and are no substitute for an informed, realistic assessment of the international situation facing the United States."

Vance: "Detente is still a possibility"

The United States will not lift sanctions or rescind its boycott of the Moscow Summer Olympics until the Soviet Union leaves Afghanistan, but "some cooperation" and detente are still possible, despite strained relations between the superpowers. That was the message of U.S. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, who addressed the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations March 5.

The *Baltimore Sun* reported that "Mr. Vance appeared to define U.S. policy more precisely than any U.S. official has done since the Soviet invasion on December 25. It amounted to both warning and reassurance to Americans and U.S. allies.

Vance said the U.S. must impose a "heavy price for aggression," but at the same time, "We seek no return to the Cold War, to the indiscriminate confrontation of earlier times." Vance appeared to direct most of his remarks to Europe, where America's NATO allies

have almost universally rejected Carter administration "hard line" reactions to the Soviet action in western Asia.

"We are not asking our allies to dismantle the framework of East-West relations," he said. "We do ask that they take measures designed to bring about the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan and to deter the Soviets from new adventures. ... Detente cannot be divorced from deterrence."

The speech came on the eve of a visit by West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt for talks at the White House. Schmidt has led much of Europe in refusing to impose economic sanctions against Moscow, and has not yet committed himself to boycotting the Olympics.

Kennedy: down in New Hampshire, sagging in Illinois

In the March 2 issue of the *Chicago Tribune*, political editor F. Richard Ciccone contributes a front-page lead article slugged "Kennedy Trailing Badly Here." Ciccone cites a recent poll showing Kennedy's support at about 17 percent in Illinois.

That indicates that Kennedy is doing significantly worse in Illinois than in New Hampshire. In the latter state's Feb. 26 primary election, the senator actually polled less than 24 percent of the Democratic votes cast, the falsely reported higher percentage of Kennedy votes there almost entirely gained as votes stolen for Kennedy by election officials now facing criminal charges in preparation.

The poorer support Kennedy is showing in the poll used by the *Tribune* is probably an accurate indicator. Chicago's Mayor, "Ayatollah" Jane Byrne is alienating larger portions of both the Cook County and down-state voters day by day. Not only is Mayor Byrne a product of the "Kennedy machine"; her public endorsement of the senator's

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presidential candidacy has hung Byrne's growing unpopularity around the Senator's neck, "like an albatross," as some put it locally.

Mayor Byrne was one of the nation's first backers of Kennedy's presidential bid. She first alienated state Democrats when, one day prior to Kennedy's formal declaration of candidacy, she forced the Cook County Democratic Party to commit its delegates to the Massachusetts senator. Under former Mayor Daley, Cook County delegates had always maximized their influence by going to the convention uncommitted.

LaRouche to Byrne: 'This has gone far enough'

Lyndon LaRouche, Democratic Party candidate for president, attacked Mayor Jane Byrne for her racist, anti-labor policies which have left 18 dead in Chicago over the course of a 21-day firemen's strike.

"I fully support the efforts of citizens' groups in Chicago to recall Mayor Jane Byrne from office," LaRouche stated. "Byrne has demonstrated in the course of this strike that she is morally and psychologically unfit to hold office.

"Her determination to destroy the firefighters' union, without any concern for the safety of the people of Chicago—especially minorities—has led to the deaths of 18 people, all of the minority-group members, most of them children. "This has gone far enough."

Tens of thousands of Chicago citizens have demonstrated that they fully agree with Mr. LaRouche's statements. This morning the *Chicago Defender*, the prestigious black daily newspaper, ran a banner headline, "Byrne: let them burn; 17 dead in 21 days." Their lead article blasted the mayor's actions. Within hours, another casualty was added to the toll.

Citizens for Chicago, a group which began a recall movement against Byrne

last December when she launched her first assault on city unions, reports that several hundred signatures per day are being gathered on recall petitions from firefighters alone.

Two days earlier, LaRouche called for Frank Muscare, the leader of Chicago firefighters, to be released from jail. "Muscare committed no crime. Yet he is in jail. Byrne has endangered the city by replacing trained firefighters with inexperienced, unqualified personnel."

LaRouche scored 18 percent in a presidential preference poll among the Lake County Young Democrats March 1.

House passes Nicaragua aid bill

The U.S. House of Representatives passed a \$75 million aid package for Nicaragua Feb. 27 including \$5 million in grants and \$70 million in loans. But amendments on the bill place strict conditions on the use of the money.

Among the stipulations are requirements that anything purchased with the aid money be bought from the United States; no money be dispersed to schools where Cuban teachers are employed; and that free elections must be held within a "reasonable time."

The Nicaraguan government has not yet stated whether it will accept the credits. In previous statements, members of the junta have made clear they will not accept any aid which places restrictions on the nation's sovereignty. But, of the \$2.5 billion originally projected as needed for recovery from the civil war, only \$500 million in loans or aid has been received.

Nicaragua was left devastated and its treasury penniless by former dictator Anastasio Somoza. It has been forced to maintain a relatively large armed force, due to the threat that Somozan forces might attempt to stage an invasion.

● **FROM THE TOP**, was the answer administration sources gave when asked where the decision was taken on the U.S. vote in favor of a United Nations resolution condemning Israeli settlements on the West Bank. The Security Council, thanks to the U.S. decision, voted unanimously against Israel for the first time. President Carter subsequently "apologized" saying it had been a mistake. But according to the sources, the State Department and special Mideast envoy Sol M. Linowitz had favored abstention, while Donald McHenry, U.N. Ambassador, appealed directly to the president for instructions to vote in favor. McHenry was successful, with Carter's "apology" a later capitulation to Zionist lobby pressures.

● **THE WHITE HOUSE** is adhering to an "anti-inflation" policy that has produced a nearly 20 percent inflation rate because administration officials are confident that the public doesn't know the difference, thanks to Carter's foreign policy. "There's no question we've benefited politically from what's happened in Iran and Afghanistan," said one presidential adviser. "One way we've been helped is that people aren't reading the financial pages so much."

● **JOHN CONNALLY** accused the Carter administration of "conning" the American people on the hostage situation in Iran and using it for his own political benefit. Connally, a Republican presidential candidate, made the statement March 3 in South Carolina. "You ask yourself in whose political benefit it is that the hostages stay imprisoned," Connally told a college audience. "They've been there a long time."