

EIRSpecialReport

Will Democrats survive Carter's nomination?

The Democratic National Convention's renomination of James Earl Carter in New York last week confronts the nation with two potential disasters in the weeks ahead. Even now, a splintering of the party is in progress across the nation, and could lead to the destruction of the Democratic Party and the two-party system as it has existed for the past century. Second and even more pressing, Carter's renomination shored up and strengthened those White House policy advisers who effected an official change in U.S. nuclear warfighting doctrine only two weeks ago. This could lead to the destruction of the United States itself.

Of the many issues never raised at the convention—because almost every issue would have been an embarrassment to the President—the most fundamental strategic issue was the Carter administration's adoption of so-called "limited nuclear war" as official policy under Presidential Directive 59 (PD 59), issued by the office of National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski. The convention did indirectly reflect this issue in the much-publicized debate over the MX missile, a weapons system devoid of military value except as a first-strike capability in what Brzezinski and Defense Secretary Harold Brown believe will be a "limited nuclear exchange" with the Soviet Union.

Nevertheless, the issue is not the MX, but the lunatic "limited war" or "counterforce" doctrine itself.

The PD 59 theatre doctrine makes nuclear war more likely. But add to that the impulses of an underdog President to provoke an international crisis between now and election day, and it becomes clear how close general war looms.

PD 59 has already caused an international uproar, with almost daily denunciations from the Soviet Union, and from America's own European allies. But the closest the Democratic Convention came to challenging PD 59 was in Kennedy "Minority Report #23," which stated: "The Democratic Party will oppose accelerated development of the land-mobile MX missile system and conduct a complete and impartial analysis of all feasible alternatives. . . ."



Photo: Carlos Wesley/NSIPS

Given the gravity of the issue, how could Jimmy Carter have put through a travesty of policy like PD 59 without even the semblance of debate? The answer is the same as to the question of how Jimmy Carter got the nomination: thuggery and cowardice.

In what one newspaper described as “the biggest guns ever seen on the floor of a convention,” the Carter campaign pulled nine cabinet secretaries out of Washington and into New York to “work over” the state delegations. Hundreds of delegates were pulled off the floor and shunted to hastily convened “briefings” on the platform by Defense Secretary Brown and NSC chief Brzezinski. Only hours earlier, Carter had made a sudden phone call to pull Brown out of a conference with defense commanders in Norfolk, Virginia, demanding he come to New York and intimidate the Democrats “to help turn the tide.”

A threatened revolt of Carter delegates in the Minnesota caucus was ironed out by a series of telephone exchanges between State Attorney General Warren Spannaus and Walter Mondale. White House staff, Brzezinski and Brown met with other caucuses, and every delegate was shown a handwritten letter on White House stationery signed by the President. Any delegate not complying with the administration position was “guilty” of not being “committed to defending our country.”

The AFL-CIO, under Trilateral Commission member Lane Kirkland, aided the administration by endorsing the MX missile as a “jobs program.”

When all the pressure and coercion was done, Carter won the vote 1,873 to 1,276. All real debate on the most

fundamental strategic question facing the nation was eliminated.

Jimmy Carter’s renomination was inevitable by the end of the convention’s first day. The most unpopular incumbent president in history—within his own party—rammed through a set of bind-and-gag rules that forced delegates to vote for him. Carter’s renomination thereby effectively disenfranchised the farmers, labor and minority constituencies who have traditionally given the Democratic Party its strength, but whose living standards have fallen by 13 percent in the last year alone. It also set up the Democratic Party for Republican scandalmongering over the notorious Libyan connections of the Carter family and administration.

Had the “Billygate” affair been pursued forcefully in the weeks before the convention, Carter’s renomination would have certainly been killed. But Reagan and Anderson forces, both effectively controlled by the Trilateral Commission, held back in their revelations until after they could be sure that fellow Trilateral Commissioner Carter muscled through his renomination. That accomplished, an explosion of revelations about administration links to “Islamic fundamentalism” and terrorism in coming weeks could set the stage for even greater fracturing of the Democratic Party than Carter’s renomination has already caused.

That means a constitutional crisis, or a sure Reagan victory in November. The likelihood of these results, even without Billygate, has already prompted many to begin restricting their attention solely to local races, or even deserting to the Anderson or Reagan camps.

An open convention steamroller began to take shape over the final few weeks before the convention, uniting representatives of the Kennedy campaign, Henry Jackson, Lyndon LaRouche, and uncommitted delegates, in particular among farmers. The McGovernite wing of Senator Kennedy's campaign effectively sabotaged the drive. Lacking leadership from a "white horse" figure other than the broadly discredited Kennedy, and lacking a unified will to push programmatic issues, the open convention movement was picked to pieces by the heavy thuggery and bribery wielded by Robert Strauss and the Carter campaign generally.

One could say that it was Ronald Reagan who gave Jimmy Carter the clout to keep the convention closed. Numerous Democratic officials in a position to know have asserted that the Reagan campaign provided millions of dollars to the Carter campaign for political payoffs. Thousands of dollars per delegate were spent when necessary—often in the form of needed help with college tuition, hospital bills, and so forth—to ensure that Carter won the crucial Monday-night rules vote.

Even so, up until Sunday night the Carter campaign was unsure of its ability to control the convention.

The open convention fight

But while the Kennedy campaign, especially Kennedy himself, fought until the end, and the LaRouche campaign, which had taken the lead in the open convention fight months before, addressed more than 30 delegations on their "real moral commitment to exercise the informed judgment of citizens of a republic," the delegates could not hold out against Carter pressure.

Several last-minute developments might have saved things. Secretary of State Muskie, prior to his appointment, had pledged to quit the administration if ever he were bypassed in important policy deliberations the way Cyrus Vance had been. Muskie was in fact excluded from the crucial PD 59 policy shift.

At the time, Muskie was already being mooted as a third candidate. Had he resigned on the eve of the convention, not only would PD 59 have been thrust forward as a major issue, but Muskie himself might have intervened as the needed alternative to Carter's renomination. Otherwise, either a nod to LaRouche by powerful Democratic Party fixers, or prominent leadership by Henry Jackson might have swung the situation. Neither came to pass.

The McGovernite wing of the Kennedy campaign significantly weakened the open-convention drive. With the all-important rules fight underway, they diverted their attention to their "special interests"—"homosexual rights," the Equal Rights Amendment, and voting rights for Washington, D.C. This helped prevent LaRouche from obtaining the number of signatures re-

quired under the Carter rules for a presidential nomination on the floor. Had he done so, the noted economist and presidential candidate would have had the right to address the convention for 15 minutes.

In the end, everyone knew the Carter nomination victory was a sham. His acceptance speech was the most poorly received in the party's remembered history. Carter won the nomination, and lost the convention. Carter won the nomination, but lost the Democratic Party. His speech on themes of austerity, sacrifice and conservation proved that he can never deliver on his "deals."

The coming debacle

The President's own men admit readily, if privately, that unless Reagan "blows it," Carter has absolutely no chance. All see a debacle.

This was highlighted by the boycott of the convention by 51 of 59 Democratic senators, 232 of 274 Democratic congressmen, and nearly every Democratic governor. Many other state and local powerbrokers who normally appear at conventions chose to "sit this one out," staying home to focus on Congressional, state and local races.

The convention's emotional response and tremendous applause for Senator Kennedy's Tuesday night address was an anti-Carter outpouring from hundreds of delegates who were not Kennedy supporters, who would never want him nominated, but "have had it" with Carter. Offered a Jackson, a Muskie or a LaRouche to vote for, they would certainly have bolted from Carter on the crucial rules vote. But without those names in nomination, and with the full powers and largesse of the White House to police delegates, Carter was able to win.

Carter will run for re-election, and after November that will be the end of Carter. The big question on every Democrat's mind is, what happens to the party?

The big emphasis will be around the Congressional and state races, with the overall goal being the re-election of as many Democratic officeholders as possible under the circumstances. Every wing of the party is maneuvering to position itself for 1982 and 1984. That is Kennedy's clearly visible gameplan.

The McGovernite liberal-radical wing of the party, whose presence as a powerful current within the Kennedy campaign did more than anything else to wreck the Senator's effort to secure the nomination, are embarked on a project reminiscent of their 1972 operations to dismember the party as much as possible, and use the remainder as an ultraliberal slingshot. They have to confront the LaRouche wing, which intends to create a "safety net" for November and vastly strengthen the party's constituency machines among labor, farmers and minorities.