

Congressional Closeup by William Jones

Gorby GOPers pay homage to Honecker

Iowa Republican Sen. Charles Grassley was unsuccessful in his attempt to sponsor a visit to the United States by Gregor Gysi, head of East Germany's communist party, the SED. Gysi was to be given the red-carpet treatment, with speaking engagements at the Washington National Press Club, the Council on Foreign Relations, and Johns Hopkins University.

At a time when the East German citizenry is declaring the SED party and regime bankrupt in huge demonstrations in Leipzig and other cities, the Gysi tour was designed by GOP Gorby-lovers to prop up the communists and slow down the process of German reunification. Gysi was also invited to speak at the prestigious National Prayer Breakfast. The trip was canceled due to the decision to hold elections in East Germany earlier than planned. The East German embassy says that the visit will be taken up at a later date.

Token reparations for Panama invasion

President Bush announced on Jan. 25 that he would seek from the Congress \$500 million in "new money" to help Panama rebuild its economy. Although the impression is given that this will go to help businesses, housing, and other needy beneficiaries in the economy, a *Washington Post* report prior to the official announcement revealed that a major portion of the money is intended to "revitalize Panama's banking and justice system."

"A large sum," reported the *Post*, "is also earmarked for helping the country to catch up with unpaid interest on its foreign debt." The U.S.-installed Panamanian President Guiller-

mo Endara said that he was "satisfied" with the plan, although most observers estimate the damage from looting alone at over \$1 billion, not to mention the damage and destruction caused by the U.S. bombings and shelling.

Former defense chief calls for radical cuts

Adding his "two bits" to the plethora of voices calling for a draw-down of U.S. forces in Western Europe, former Defense Secretary James Rodney Schlesinger, testifying before the Senate Armed Services Committee on Jan. 26, demanded more radical cuts in conventional forces than the 10% U.S. reduction proposed by President Bush at the 40th anniversary summit of NATO in June.

"It was a prudent and productive proposal," said Schlesinger, "but in my judgment time has now overtaken it." Claiming that the revolutions in East Europe will ultimately force Moscow to pull out their troops from Eastern Europe, Schlesinger claims that waiting until the conventional force reduction talks have come to some resolution, would "legitimize" the long-term presence of Soviet forces in Eastern Europe. The adaptive Mr. Schlesinger was CIA director under Nixon, defense secretary under Ford, and served the Carter administration as energy secretary.

Space budget escapes budget austerity knife

One major item which was not cut in the President's proposed U.S. budget was the appropriations to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), where the administra-

tion requested \$15.1 billion, a 20% increase over this year's appropriations. The Space Station Freedom, which has been short-shrifted in the budget since 1985, is slated for \$2.6 billion, a considerable increase over the \$1.75 billion allotted to it in the 1990 budget. The Moon-Mars program, announced by Bush last July, also got a significant boost, with new starts for the Lunar Observer to do high-resolution mapping of the entire Moon, and Lifesat to improve knowledge of the effects of space on living systems.

Exploration technology programs will be increased nearly seven-fold to \$180 million to begin detailed studies of the transportation, nuclear propulsion, life support, and other technologies the Exploration Initiative will require.

Virginia Democrats want Spannaus off the ballot

LaRouche Democrat Nancy Spannaus, the only announced candidate in Virginia against against Republican incumbent Sen. John Warner, condemned on Feb. 1 the "East-bloc communist measures" of the Virginia Democratic Party to choose a candidate against Warner, "in order to prevent myself and my program from getting a hearing among the rank and file of the Democratic party."

The Virginia Democratic Party apparatus is attempting to find some legal pretext by which the Democratic State Committee could "appoint" a candidate for Senate, without going through a primary, convention, or even a caucus as stipulated by the party constitution. "This revives a racist, exclusionary tradition which the election of Douglas Wilder [as governor] was supposed to mark the end to," said Spannaus. "Clearly the Democratic

Party really doesn't want to challenge Warner at all."

Spannaus noted that it is ironic that "while Eastern Europe is moving toward freedom, the U.S. Democratic party is moving in the opposite direction." Spannaus's husband was jailed in a Justice Department-organized political railroad against Lyndon LaRouche and his associates, which was aimed at eliminating LaRouche's policy-influence from the U.S. political scene.

In similar moves recently, the Illinois State Elections Board ruled 7 to 1 to eliminate the LaRouche Democrats from the ballot in Illinois, where in 1986 two LaRouche candidates won nominations to the posts of lieutenant governor and secretary of state.

LaFalce assails RICO as free speech violation

Rep. John LaFalce (D-N.Y.) on Jan. 31 read into the *Congressional Record* an article by civil rights activist Nat Hentoff attacking the Racketeering Influenced and Criminal Organizations (RICO) legislation as a danger to the First Amendment rights of Americans.

"An anti-pornography organization in Florida was accused of extortion," said LaFalce, "a crime included in the list of acts which can legally be considered racketeering. By using RICO, publishers, magazine sellers and, ironically, defendants of free speech can sue for triple damages and attorney fees as well as label these protesters as racketeers. . . . These alleged racketeers sent letters and postcards, picketed, threatened a boycott, and threatened to hold a press conference."

"As Mr. Hentoff states," continued LaFalce, "this misapplication of RICO threatens our essential right to

free speech." LaFalce called for a "careful examination" and "clarification of RICO" as a priority for this session of the 101st Congress.

Seidman wants more money for S&L bailout

The \$50 billion approved by Congress last year to bail out failed savings and loan institutions will be exhausted by mid-1991 and more money will probably be needed, L. William Seidman, chairman of the Resolution Trust Corp (RTC), told the House Banking Committee on Jan. 31.

Seidman said that the new agency created to dispose of insolvent thrifts could handle another 100 failed institutions with the \$50 billion on top of the 333 already put under its management. He said, however, that thrift regulators believe between 225 and 295 more thrifts are so shaky they are likely to fail. "Someone will be back to ask for more money some day," he told lawmakers.

Seidman said that if the caseload does not grow more than another 100 thrifts or another \$40 billion in liabilities, the borrowing authority provided by the new law would be adequate. "Beyond those numbers, additional funding to absorb losses will likely be needed."

Congress revs up attack on Bush budget

In what is threatening to become a rough-and-tumble session of the second session of the 101st U.S. Congress in this congressional election year, Democrats have begun opening fire at the just-presented Bush budget.

The \$1.23 trillion budget for fiscal 1991, will slow military spending, and makes substantial cuts in major social programs like Medicare, farm subsidies, meal subsidies for children above the poverty line, but calls for no new tax increases.

The Democrats, however, don't believe that the President has gone far enough in cutting the defense budget. Sen. James Sasser (D-Tenn.) characterizes it as a "listen-to-what-I-say-and-forget-what-I-do" budget. Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell (D-Me.) called the defense expenditures "unrealistically high."

Rep. Bill Frenzel (R-Minn.), the ranking Republican on the House Budget Committee, although calling the spending plan "a good start," admitted that it could provoke "a long and difficult budget process," what Senator Sasser characterized as a "long, divisive, and potentially paralyzing debate."

Already on Jan. 30, Budget Director Richard Darman was the object of heavy attacks by Democrats when he presented the budget. Rep. Jim Slattery (D-Kan.) called Darman's appearance "Act One of the smoke-and-mirrors game." Rep. Marty Russo (D-Ill.) condemned a budget process "that stinks and lies," and accused Darman of perpetuating fiscal dishonesty.

Leading Democrats claim that deeper cuts in defense spending should be made because of the alleged "sweeping political changes" now occurring in the East bloc. Although Gorbomania is still going strong on Capitol Hill, as well as at the White House, a sudden change in the status of Mikhail Gorbachov, as was rumored this week, could throw a monkey wrench into all the various budgetary game-plans, by knocking out the key prop on which all these wishful illusions are based.