

Congressional Closeup by Kathleen Klenetsky

Chappell: Pulling troops from Europe a mistake

In the midst of a spate of new demands for the decoupling of the United States and Western Europe, the new chairman of the House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee has issued a strong warning against proposals to withdraw or cut the number of American troops now based in Western Europe.

In an interview with Reuters May 13, Rep. Bill Chappell (D-Fla.), said a troop withdrawal or cut "would send the wrong signal. . . . It would indicate a reduction in our own will to stand prepared and stand willing against an aggressor."

Chappell sounded a very different theme from many of his colleagues, who went on an anti-NATO binge after most Western European governments failed to give public backing to the U.S. military strike against Libya May 15.

NATO "is almost daily improving," said Chappell. "We're learning better how to work together as a community of nations. . . . I think we're beginning to be more cohesive. . . . I think we're learning how to exchange technology better than we have in the past."

Chappell, whose influence over the defense budget rose significantly with his takeover of the subcommittee, indicated he will take the Pentagon's side in the dispute over the proposed Midjetman missile. Chappell told Reuters he believes the missile should be transformed from a single-warhead launcher—as originally envisioned by Henry Kissinger, Brent Scowcroft, and the Trilateral Commission crowd—into a multiple-warhead missile.

But on the issue of the SDI, Chap-

pell proved a disappointment. Citing budget restraints, he said that the full \$4.8 billion which the administration has requested for the program could not be supported.

House to Moscow: 'You've got a friend in D.C.'

Soviet warplans may have been dealt a setback by the Chernobyl disaster, but the U.S. Congress is doing its darndest to compensate for the loss.

On May 15, the House of Representatives delivered up a budget that must have brought tears of relief to Moscow's rulers. A product of the House Budget Committee, the plan proposes to cut the administration's FY87 military spending plan by a gigantic \$35 billion—\$16 billion more than the underfunded budget approved by the Senate earlier in May.

That's not all that's wrong with the plan. It increases taxes by \$7 billion, and specifies that the new revenues can be used only for debt repayment, whereas the Senate budget, which also hikes taxes, asks that they be invested in the military. The House bill also slashes U.S. foreign aid by 10%.

House endorsement of the measure came despite impassioned pleas by President Reagan not to "cripple" the U.S. military.

Reagan had fired off a letter to the House Republican leadership prior to the vote, charging that the "radical anti-defense" Democratic budget would "cripple the combat readiness of our conventional forces and take unacceptable risks with our national security.

"It would be wasteful and irresponsible to cut short this program by denying the funding necessary to car-

ry it out," the President wrote.

But House Budget Committee chairman Bill Gray (D-Pa.) called the White House criticism "mindless poppycock. . . . No one in their right mind thinks that the Russians are coming up the Potomac."

To which we can only reply: You may be in for a helluva surprise, Congressman.

Congress takes up cudgels against strategic defense

Given Chappell's generally strong pro-defense posture, his claim that the Strategic Defense Initiative doesn't stand a chance for full funding is a surefire indicator that the program is heading into some extremely rough waters.

With the SDI budget now being debated on the Hill, the "Better Red than Dead" crowd has launched a frenzied mobilization aimed at influencing how much money Congress allocates to the program.

In early May, a coalition of over 100 labor, anti-nuclear, church, environmentalist, and assorted nuclear-freeze groups, sent off a letter to Congress calling for SDI spending levels to be held down, on the grounds that "the Star Wars program . . . [will] be ruinously expensive . . . destroy the entire fabric of arms control and expand the arms race into outer space."

A week later, the announcement came that 6,500 engineers and scientists have taken a pledge not to participate in the program. Their action—frighteningly reminiscent of the 1930s, when the appeasement faction of that day protected Hitler's war preparations by promoting the so-called "Oxford Pledge"—was unveiled at a Cap-

itol Hill press conference hosted by Rep. George Brown, the California Democrat whose close friend and ally in the anti-SDI movement, Carol Rosin, was unmasked as a KGB agent two years ago. Brown said the "pledge of resistance . . . represents one of the most compelling statements yet made against" the SDI.

Meanwhile, the Defense Department's plan to establish an independent think-tank to provide advice on the development of the SDI has drawn fire from another vehement foe of strategic defense, Sen. Carl Levin. The Michigan Democrat is charging that the Pentagon is jeopardizing the independence of the new institute by inviting only pro-SDI scientists to join, and by insisting on a voice in choosing senior personnel.

What really has Levin so upset, sources tell *EIR*, is the prospect that the creation of such a think-tank would build up an SDI lobby so strong, that shutting the program down or financially starving it would become impossible.

Congress fears 'radical actions' on debt

The Joint Economic Committee issued a study May 10 on Third World indebtedness reflecting the growing concern in some quarters that Ibero-America may soon be compelled to take "radical action" to deal with its debt.

The study charges that the Reagan administration, in attempting to deal with the debt problem, has pursued policies which reward the big American banks "whose unwise lending policies helped precipitate the crisis," while penalizing American agricul-

ture and industry.

U.S. farmers, the report asserts, have been badly hurt by a dramatic decline in exports to Latin American countries, which tumbled from \$6.9 billion in 1981 to \$4.5 billion last year, while the Latin American debt crisis "has also contributed to the collapse of numerous farm banks" in the United States.

But the study's most interesting feature is its sharp warning that unless the United States agrees to some form of debt restructuring, the whole international financial system could be turned on its head.

The report dismisses the administration's Baker Plan as entirely inadequate, saying it does not differ "significantly" from existing policy "aside from changing the rhetoric from austerity to growth and shifting responsibility from the [IMF] to the World Bank."

Instead, it proposes two alternative policies: decreasing or eliminating the spread which U.S. banks charge on loans to financially troubled debtor nations; and, far more politically significant, limiting interest payments to 25% of each debtor-nation's export earnings.

The latter proposal, in particular, indicates just how frightened certain policy-making circles are that Ibero-America may simply decide to follow Peru's Alan García and stand up to the IMF.

"In the future," the report ominously concludes, "some negotiated arrangement limiting debt service payments may be the best way to avoid more radical, unilateral actions by Latin American debtors. During his 1985 inaugural address . . . Peruvian President Alan García announced that his country would devote only 10% of

its export earnings to interest payments. As the debt crisis continues to fester, with no permanent solution in sight, additional Latin American leaders might conclude that this sort of solution is the only way to restore growth and improve standards of living. If they unilaterally begin to limit their country's interest payments to 10%, or even 15%, of export earnings, the impact on bank profits, capital, and solvency will be even more severe."

Byrd tries new 'war powers' tactic

Senate Minority Leader Robert Byrd (D-W.Va.), still whining about President Reagan's alleged failure to sufficiently consult Congress before ordering the U.S. retaliatory strike against Libyan targets last month, has introduced a bill to prevent Presidents from having such freedom in the future.

Joined by Sens. Claiborne Pell (D-R.I.), Sam Nunn (D-Ga.) and Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.), Byrd introduced a "Counter-Terrorism and War Powers Resolution," to create an 18-member group of lawmakers with whom U.S. Presidents would have to consult before taking military action abroad.

Byrd said that it is obvious that Reagan cannot consult with all 535 members of Congress and this makes it necessary for Congress to clarify in legislation "what consultation should be and should not be." The proposed group would include the Speaker of the House, the Senate Pro Tempore, the majority and minority leaders of both chambers, and the House and Senate chairmen of the intelligence, armed services, and foreign relations committees.